

Role of the Speaker

A practical guide to the constitutional, procedural and institutional role of the Speaker of a Provincial Assembly, with reference to the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab.



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Purpose and scope

This handbook is written for students, public officials, professionals, journalists and general readers. It explains the office in clear language while retaining the principal constitutional and parliamentary rules.

Scope: The discussion concerns Provincial Assemblies in Pakistan and uses the Constitution of Pakistan and the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab as the main sources.

Educational publication. It does not replace the Constitution, legislation, authoritative Rules of Procedure, formal rulings of the Chair or professional legal advice.

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1. Introduction

The Speaker is the principal presiding officer of a Provincial Assembly. The office exists to make collective decision-making possible. The Speaker calls sittings to order, recognises members, regulates debate, applies the Rules of Procedure, puts questions to the House and announces decisions.

The Speaker does not govern the Province and does not make laws alone. The Provincial Government is led by the Chief Minister, while legislation is approved by the Assembly. The Speaker manages the constitutional and parliamentary process through which the House debates, scrutinises and decides public business.

Core idea: The Speaker is the custodian of the House. The office protects orderly procedure, the rights of members and the institutional authority of the Assembly.

2. Constitutional Position

The constitutional foundation of the office is found principally in Articles 104, 108, 115 and 127 of the Constitution of Pakistan. Article 108 requires a Provincial Assembly, after a general election, to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speaker from among its members before conducting other business. Article 127 applies important National Assembly provisions to Provincial Assemblies with the necessary substitutions, including provisions on oath, absence, resignation, removal, voting, quorum, requisitioned sessions, privileges, rules, the Secretariat and the Finance Committee.^[1]

The Speaker is therefore both a constitutional office-holder and a parliamentary authority. The Constitution defines the office and certain core powers. The Rules of Procedure explain how those powers are exercised in daily Assembly work.

Important distinction: The Constitution is supreme. Rules of Procedure, rulings and parliamentary practice must operate within it.

3. Election, Oath and Entry into Office

Election

At the first sitting following a general election, members first take their oath. The Assembly then elects the Speaker by secret ballot under the Punjab Assembly Rules. A member cannot preside over an election in which that member is a candidate. After the Speaker is elected and takes the prescribed oath, the Assembly proceeds to elect the Deputy Speaker.^[2]

Oath

The oath requires the Speaker to discharge the office honestly, faithfully and in accordance with the Constitution, law and Rules of the Assembly. It also requires the office-holder to act without fear, favour, affection or ill will and to protect the Constitution.^[1]

Institutional effect

Once elected, the Speaker ceases to function merely as an ordinary participant in debate. While the Speaker remains a member, the authority of the Chair demands restraint, fairness and consistent application of procedure.

4. Neutrality, Fairness and Authority of the Chair

The credibility of the Speaker depends on perceived fairness. Most Speakers enter the Assembly through party politics, but the office requires the Chair to regulate government and opposition members under the same rules. Neutrality does not mean avoiding every difficult decision. It means giving decisions for a legitimate constitutional or procedural reason.

Fairness in the Chair normally requires:

- equal application of speaking and conduct rules;
- reasonable opportunity for different sides to be heard;

- clear reasons for important procedural decisions;
- protection of minority participation without permitting obstruction;
- protection of the majority's right to decide after proper debate; and
- separation of personal or party preference from the exercise of parliamentary authority.

What neutrality does not mean: The Speaker is not required to admit every notice, tolerate disorder or avoid enforcing time limits. A firm ruling can still be neutral when it is grounded in the Constitution and Rules.

5. Conducting Assembly Sitings

The Speaker takes the Chair at the appointed time, calls the sitting to order and proceeds through the approved Order of the Day. Members speak when recognised by the Chair and address their remarks through the Speaker rather than directly confronting another member.

During a sitting, the Speaker may:

- call each item of business;
- decide the order in which members speak;
- require speeches to remain relevant;
- fix or enforce speaking limits under the Rules;
- put motions, amendments, clauses and questions to the House;
- announce the result of a vote;
- suspend proceedings temporarily when order cannot be maintained; and
- adjourn the sitting in accordance with the Rules.

The Speaker's control of the floor is essential. A member who speaks without permission may not have that speech included in the official proceedings.^[3]

6. Maintaining Order and Decorum

The Speaker must preserve order and decorum and has the powers needed to enforce decisions. Under the Punjab Assembly Rules, the Speaker may direct a grossly disorderly member to withdraw, require absence for the remainder of a session, or suspend a member who wilfully and persistently obstructs Assembly business. The Assembly may later terminate a suspension by motion.^[3]

The Speaker may also regulate admission to the galleries, order galleries to be cleared and direct the removal of persons who disrupt proceedings or enter restricted areas.

Unparliamentary language

The Chair may stop offensive, defamatory, treasonable, seditious or unparliamentary expressions. Improper words may be excluded or expunged from the authentic record. This power protects the dignity of the House and reduces the misuse of parliamentary privilege.

Practical example: If a member repeatedly ignores the Chair and prevents the next item of business from being taken up, the Speaker may first call the member to order, then direct withdrawal, and in a serious case use the suspension power provided by the Rules.

7. Points of Order, Rulings and Directions

A point of order concerns the interpretation or enforcement of the Rules or constitutional provisions that regulate Assembly business. It is not a device for making a political speech, asking for information or explaining a personal position.

The Speaker decides whether a matter is a valid point of order and, if so, rules on it. The Rules state that the decision is final within the parliamentary proceeding. The Speaker may hear members before ruling, but debate on a point of order is not a right. A previous ruling may be reviewed for reasons recorded in writing.^[3]

Rulings create procedural guidance for future cases. Consistency matters because members organise their notices, speeches and motions around the practice established by the Chair.

8. Role in Legislation

The Speaker does not decide the political merits of an ordinary bill. The role is to ensure that the bill moves through the Assembly under the Constitution and Rules. Depending on the type and stage of the bill, the Speaker may:

1. determine whether notice and other procedural requirements have been met;
2. allow the motion for introduction to be taken up;
3. refer the bill to the relevant committee where required or permitted;
4. regulate general and clause-by-clause debate;
5. decide the procedural admissibility of amendments;
6. select among identical or substantially similar amendments;

7. put clauses, amendments and the final motion to a vote;
8. announce whether the bill has passed; and
9. direct correction of patent, incidental or consequential errors after passage where the Rules permit.

Institutional boundary: The Assembly passes a bill. The Speaker supervises the process and authentic procedural record. The Governor's assent process is governed separately by the Constitution.

9. Money Bills and Financial Business

Certification of Money Bills

Article 115 gives the Speaker a specific constitutional responsibility. If a question arises whether a provincial bill is a Money Bill, the Speaker's decision is final. Every Money Bill presented to the Governor must bear the Speaker's certificate, and the Constitution treats that certificate as conclusive.^[1]

Budget proceedings

The Provincial Government prepares and presents the budget. The Speaker manages the House's consideration of it by regulating the general discussion, demands for grants, admissible cut motions, voting and the parliamentary timetable. The Chair must distinguish between expenditure that may be discussed but is not voted upon and demands that require the Assembly's vote.

Why certification matters: A Money Bill follows a distinct constitutional route. The Speaker's classification determines that route and limits the Governor's ability to return the bill for reconsideration.

10. Questions, Motions, Resolutions and Privilege

Questions

The Speaker decides whether questions comply with the Rules. A question may be rejected, edited or transferred when it is argumentative, hypothetical, outside provincial responsibility, improperly worded or otherwise inadmissible. The Chair also regulates supplementary questions.

Motions and resolutions

Adjournment motions, calling-attention notices, resolutions and other notices must satisfy their own procedural tests. Admission signifies compliance with the Rules. It does not signify the Speaker's agreement with the political argument.

Questions of privilege

An alleged obstruction of the House, a committee or a member in the performance of parliamentary duties may raise a question of privilege. The Speaker decides whether the matter can proceed and may refer it to the Committee on Privileges under the applicable Rules.

Practical test: The Chair asks whether the notice is definite, urgent where urgency is required, within provincial competence, supported by facts, and not barred by another rule.

11. Voting, Casting Vote and Quorum

Putting the question

After debate is complete, the Speaker states the question in clear terms and obtains the decision of the House. The method may include voice vote, members rising, formal division or secret ballot where the Constitution or Rules require it.

Casting vote

The person presiding ordinarily does not vote. If the votes are equal, the presiding officer may cast the deciding vote. This rule preserves the Chair's normal separation from partisan voting while ensuring that an equality of votes can be resolved.^[1]

Quorum

If the Chair's attention is drawn to the absence of the constitutionally required quorum, the Speaker must suspend the sitting or adjourn it until the required number is present. Quorum is therefore not a matter the Chair may simply overlook after a valid objection.

12. Committees and Detailed Scrutiny

Committees allow detailed examination that is difficult on the floor of the House. Bills, public expenditure, departmental performance, privileges, petitions and other matters may be considered in committee.

Within the framework of the Rules, the Speaker may:

- refer matters to the appropriate committee;
- constitute or facilitate special committees where authorised;
- nominate members to committees where the Rules so provide;
- issue directions to resolve procedural difficulties;
- receive and arrange the presentation of committee reports; and
- protect the authority and orderly functioning of committees.

The Speaker's role should not replace committee deliberation. It should help committees function within their mandate and report to the House.

13. Assembly Secretariat and Administrative Leadership

The office also has an administrative dimension. Through Article 127, the constitutional provisions on a separate parliamentary Secretariat and a Finance Committee apply to Provincial Assemblies. The Speaker chairs or participates in the institutional arrangements through which the Assembly controls expenditure within authorised appropriations and manages its secretarial establishment.^[1]

Subject to law and applicable service rules, the Speaker's institutional responsibilities may include:

- oversight of the Assembly Secretariat;
- direction of parliamentary records and publication;
- security, access and conduct within the precincts;
- committee support and research services;

- member facilities and parliamentary capacity-building; and
- financial and administrative governance of the Assembly.

The Secretary General is the senior procedural and administrative officer who supports the House and implements lawful directions of the Chair.

14. Official Record, Broadcasting and Secret Sitings

The Rules require preparation and publication of an authentic report of proceedings in the form directed by the Speaker. The Chair may order improper words removed and may regulate audio, video and public access in accordance with law and Assembly policy.

For a secret sitting, the Rules impose tighter controls. The Speaker may determine who may be present, how the record is kept and when secrecy may be lifted through the prescribed parliamentary process.^[3]

Why the record matters: The official proceedings provide evidence of what the House debated, decided and directed. Accuracy protects members, government departments and the public.

15. Requisitioned Sessions

Normally, the Governor summons and prorogues a Provincial Assembly under Article 109. A separate constitutional route applies when at least one-fourth of the total membership submits a valid requisition. Through Articles 54 and 127, the Speaker must summon the Assembly within fourteen days of receiving the requisition. Once the Speaker summons that requisitioned session, only the Speaker may prorogue it.^[1]

This safeguard enables a substantial group of members to require the House to meet even when the Provincial Government has not advised an ordinary session.

16. Acting as Governor

Article 104 provides that when the Governor is outside Pakistan or is otherwise unable to perform the functions of office, the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly performs those functions until the Governor returns or resumes duties. If the Speaker is absent, another person nominated by the President may perform them.^[1]

This is a temporary constitutional arrangement. It does not merge the offices permanently. During the period in which the Speaker cannot perform Assembly functions, the Deputy Speaker or another authorised presiding member manages the House under the constitutional and procedural framework.

17. Deputy Speaker and Panel of Chairpersons

The Deputy Speaker acts when the office of Speaker is vacant or when the Speaker is absent or unable to perform the functions of the office. The Speaker may also delegate specified powers to the Deputy Speaker by written order under the Rules.

At the commencement of a session, or from time to time, the Speaker nominates a panel of not more than six Chairpersons. If the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are absent, the member having precedence among those present takes the Chair. A member presiding has the same powers as the Speaker for that sitting.^[2]

18. Resignation, Removal and Continuity

Resignation

Through Articles 53 and 127, the Speaker may resign by a written instrument addressed to the Governor.

Removal

A resolution for removal requires at least seven days' notice. The Speaker cannot preside while the resolution is considered. Under the Punjab Assembly Rules, at least one-fourth of the total membership must support leave to move it, voting is by secret ballot, and removal requires the votes of a majority of the total membership of the Assembly.^{[1][2]}

Continuity after dissolution

The Speaker continues in office after dissolution until the Speaker elected by the next Assembly enters office. This prevents an institutional gap between two Assemblies.

19. Limits on the Speaker's Powers

The office is powerful but not unlimited. The Speaker must act within the Constitution, statutes, Rules of Procedure, privileges and legitimate parliamentary practice.

The Speaker may	The Speaker may not
Regulate debate and enforce procedure	Create a law without the Assembly's approval
Decide points of order	Replace the Chief Minister or Cabinet
Classify and certify a Money Bill	Approve expenditure outside the constitutional process
Discipline members under the Rules	Ignore quorum or mandatory voting requirements
Exercise procedural discretion	Turn personal preference into a binding rule without legal basis
Temporarily perform the Governor's functions	Treat that temporary role as a permanent transfer of office

Courts generally respect the internal proceedings of legislatures under Article 69 as applied through Article 127, but constitutional limits remain important. A procedural power should always be linked to the purpose for which the Constitution or Rules confer it.

20. Practical Scenarios

Scenario A: Urgent public issue

An opposition member submits an adjournment motion about a major failure in a provincial service. The Speaker checks provincial responsibility, urgency, definiteness, public importance and any procedural bar. Admission means the notice meets the test. Rejection must likewise rest on the Rules.

Scenario B: Disorder during debate

Members interrupt continuously and refuse to obey the Chair. The Speaker calls the House to order, warns the members, may suspend the sitting briefly, and may use withdrawal or suspension powers against persistent obstruction.

Scenario C: Disputed financial bill

Members disagree on whether a bill is a Money Bill. The Speaker examines its substantive provisions against Article 115. The Speaker's constitutional decision determines the classification and the bill carries the required certificate when sent to the Governor.

Scenario D: Equal division

A motion receives equal votes for and against. The Speaker may exercise the casting vote and announces the decision. The official record notes the result.

21. Principles of Effective Speakership

1. **Know the Rules:** Authority is strongest when decisions are textually grounded.
2. **Hear before ruling:** On difficult issues, a short hearing can improve fairness and accuracy.
3. **Give clear reasons:** Important rulings should identify the rule, constitutional provision or established practice applied.
4. **Use discipline proportionately:** The response should match the seriousness and persistence of the disorder.
5. **Protect both sides:** The majority must be able to decide, and the minority must be able to participate.
6. **Preserve the record:** Accurate proceedings are part of institutional accountability.
7. **Separate politics from the Chair:** The office must remain larger than the office-holder's party position.

22. Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Speaker a member of the Assembly?

Yes. The Speaker is elected from among the members.

Does the Speaker vote on every matter?

No. The person presiding normally votes only when the votes are equal.

Can the Speaker reject a question or motion?

Yes, when it fails the constitutional or procedural tests applicable to that type of business.

Can the Speaker suspend a member?

Yes. The Punjab Assembly Rules provide withdrawal and suspension powers for gross disorder or persistent and wilful obstruction, subject to the terms of the Rules.

Who presides when the Speaker is absent?

The Deputy Speaker normally presides. If both are absent, a member from the Panel of Chairpersons may take the Chair.

Who decides whether a provincial bill is a Money Bill?

The Speaker of the Provincial Assembly. The Constitution states that the decision is final.

Can the Speaker be removed?

Yes, through the constitutionally prescribed resolution and voting procedure.

23. Parliamentary Glossary

Term	Meaning
Adjournment	Temporary ending or postponement of a sitting.
Chair	The person currently presiding over the sitting.
Casting vote	A deciding vote used by the presiding officer when votes are equal.
Division	A formal method of recording members' votes.
Expunction	Removal of improper words from the official proceedings.
Money Bill	A bill dealing with the financial matters specified in Article 115.
Motion	A formal proposal placed before the Assembly for decision.
Order of the Day	The official agenda for a sitting.
Point of order	A question concerning the interpretation or enforcement of procedure.
Prorogation	Formal ending of a session.
Quorum	The minimum number of members required for the sitting to continue after attention is drawn to it.
Resolution	A formal expression of the opinion or decision of the House.
Session	A series of sittings between summons and prorogation.
Sitting	A meeting of the Assembly on a particular day.

24. Key Takeaways

- The Speaker is elected by the Provincial Assembly from among its members.
- The Speaker presides over the House but does not head the Provincial Government.
- The Chair protects order, procedure, participation and the authority of the Assembly.

- The Speaker decides points of order and the admissibility of many parliamentary notices.
- The Speaker normally votes only when votes are equal.
- The Speaker's decision and certificate on a provincial Money Bill have special constitutional force.
- A valid requisition by one-fourth of the membership requires the Speaker to summon the Assembly within fourteen days.
- The Speaker may temporarily perform the functions of Governor under Article 104.
- The Speaker remains bound by the Constitution, law and Rules of Procedure.

Primary Legal Sources

1. **Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**, Fourteenth Edition, amended up to the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, 21 November 2025. Relevant provisions include Articles 53-55, 69, 87-88, 104, 108-109, 115-116 and 127, and the Third Schedule. https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/6926e060076ed_467.pdf
2. **Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab**, consolidated PDF dated November 2024, especially Rules 9-16 on the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Panel of Chairpersons. https://www.pap.gov.pk/uploads/downloads/rop_nov_24.pdf
3. **Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, official Rules chapters**, including Chapter III and the general rules on debate, points of order, maintenance of order and the official record. https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/18 and https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/33

Sources checked on 11 July 2026. Where a later constitutional amendment, law, rule or authoritative ruling conflicts with this handbook, the later authoritative text prevails.