



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement  
Western Cape Provincial Parliament  
IPalamente yePhondo IeNtshona Koloni

**CONDUCT IN THE CHAMBER  
AND RULES OF DEBATE**

**FACT SHEET 4**

REVISION 1, 4 JULY 2016

It is the responsibility of the Presiding Officer to ensure that proper consideration of matters takes place. In order for the proper consideration of sometimes controversial issues, it is essential that some rules of order apply and – very importantly – that self-restraint is exercised. The use of “parliamentary language” is, therefore, fundamental to consider issues in an orderly fashion.

The standing rules, *inter alia*, require that:

- Every Member who wants to speak must do so from his/her place and address the Chair in one of the official languages of the province;
- Members must speak to the question before the House and not digress;
- Members may not use offensive or unbecoming language;
- No Member may speak after the Chair has put the question;
- Members may not reflect upon any decision of the House taken less than six months earlier;
- Members may not reflect upon the honour or competence of a judge of a superior court or the holder of an office whose removal is dependent upon a decision of the House;
- No Member may anticipate the discussion of a matter appearing on the Order Paper;
- No Member may refer to any other Member by his/her first name only;
- A Member may take charge of a motion or an order of the day in the absence of the Member in charge, provided he/she has been authorised to do so by the absent Member; and
- No Member may refer to any matter on which a judicial decision is pending.

On entering the Chamber, a Member should check who is speaking and not pass between the Member who has the floor and the Chair. If a Member passes between the Member speaking and the Chair, it is referred to as “breaking the (imaginary) line” and the Member will be instructed to go back to where he/she has come from. The customary slight bow on entering or leaving the Chamber is a general one of respect for the House, not for the Presiding Officer personally.

For the enforcement of the rules and conventions of the House, the Chair has disciplinary powers ranging from ordering the withdrawal of unparliamentary remarks to “naming” Members and the suspension of the sitting.

Note: Fact sheet 14 deals with “unparliamentary language”.