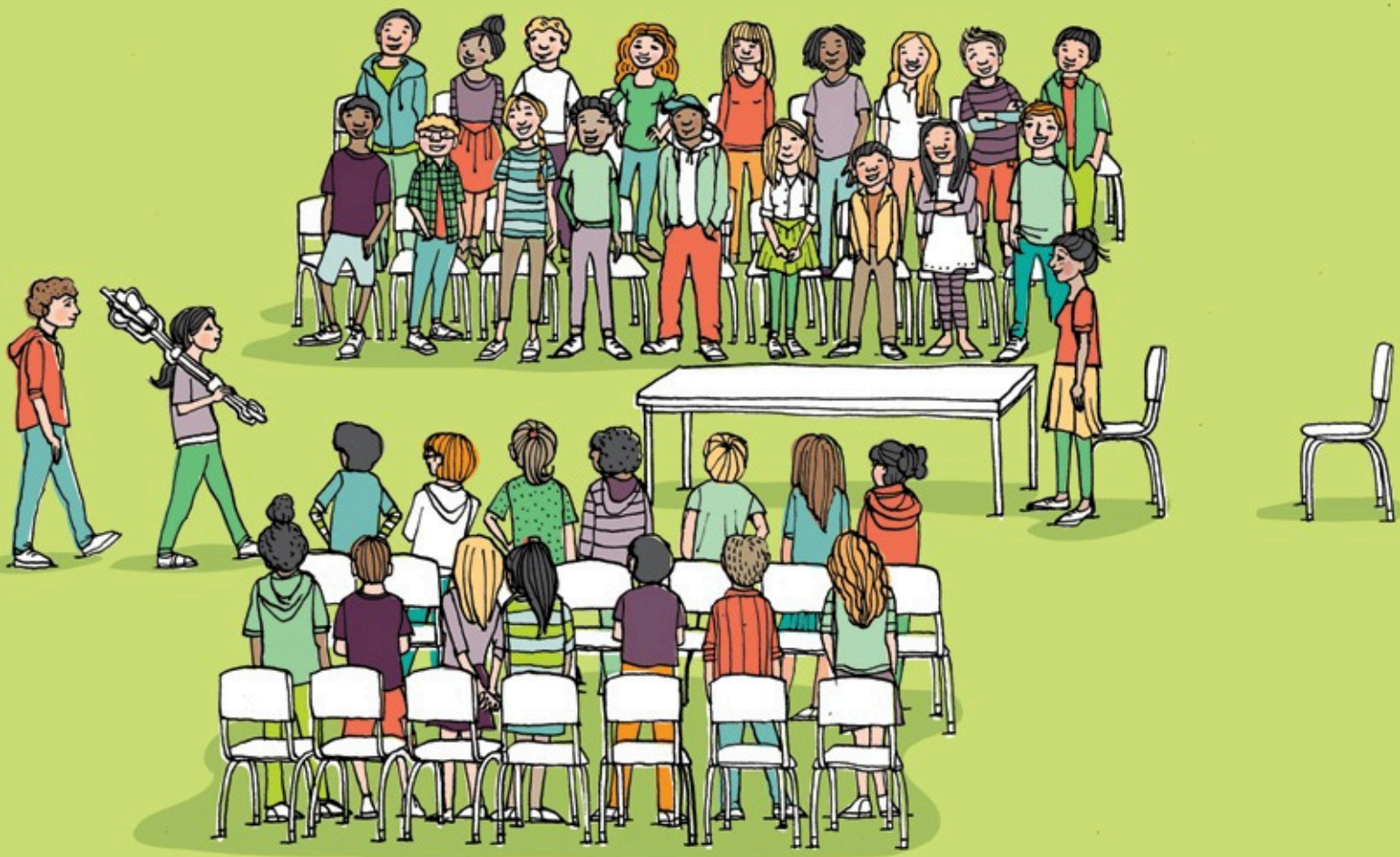




Roleplaying a Parliamentary Debate

A guide for teachers



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Time required: 2-3 hours

Note: The roleplay could be part of a longer, integrated unit that includes Achievement Objectives at levels 3, 4, and 5 of the English and Arts curriculum areas. Some suggestions for extending and enhancing the role play can be found on page 8.



Introduction

Role play can be a powerful tool for learning. By identifying with other people's roles, students are able to explore issues and experiences from other perspectives, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the issues or experiences.

This booklet is part of Parliament's suite of educational resources, which also includes *Karaehe Kaewa*, a collection of online learning modules to build understanding of how Parliament works.

It will help you to plan a role play of a parliamentary debate that will enhance your students' understanding of the parliamentary process and the workings of our democracy. Depending on the time available and the requirements of your teaching programme, you can use it as a stand-alone resource or in conjunction with the other learning.

Curriculum links

This resource supports learning within the social sciences learning area. It has been developed for learners at Phase 3 of Te Mataiaho. However, with support can be used with learners at Phase 2 and extended for learners at Phase 4.

Key ideas

- Debating issues and laws is a vital part of democracy.
- When debating issues or laws, multiple viewpoints can be presented.
- When introducing or amending laws, there are set processes that must be followed.
- These processes allow opportunities for scrutiny and debate.

Prior learning

Before your students take part in the role play, they will need to have some understanding of how Parliament works and the procedures that Parliament follows.

Prior to the debate, provide students with some background about the work of Parliament.

You can do this in a number of ways:

- Check out our [online learning modules](#)
- Practice debating skills and persuasive writing

Preparing for the debate

Adapt the following activities to suit your students and your teaching programme. To keep the role play within the 2–3 hour timeframe, it is assumed that the bill is already in its final reading (although, in reality, each parliamentary bill has three separate debates).

Find out more about the legislative process on Parliament's website [here](#).

Choose an issue to debate

There are a number of ways to choose an issue to debate. Select the method that best suits your students and the time available.

1. Debate one of the following issues:

- 4 day school/work week
- Rain water harvesting on public buildings
- Banning contact sports for under 18s to reduce injuries
- Make voting compulsory
- Ban cars in city centres
- Free public transport for all
- Ban advertising aimed at children
- Allow dogs in all public places
- All classes must have a class pet
- Abolishing homework
- Ban zoos that house captive wild animals
- Implement a sugar tax
- Allow online voting

2. Have a class brainstorm to identify issues that interest your students and then pick one of these. It could be a local or national issue.

3. Visit the Parliament website and find a bill currently being debated.

4. Use the issue raised in the model bill on page 14.

Whichever issue you choose, it's important that it is an issue that can be realistically argued from both sides.

Discuss the issue and reasons for introducing a bill

Discuss the issue and the various arguments around it.

- Talk about the reasons for introducing a bill to Parliament to address the issue.
- What is the bill's purpose and what outcomes are intended? Ask the students to think about what the consequences should be for not complying with the bill if it became law.
- Decide which Minister would be responsible for introducing the bill (what area of Government, such as Education or Health, would be responsible?)
- Working as a class or in groups, ask the students to come up with some arguments for and against the introduction of this bill and to record these in a document or whiteboard divided into "For" and "Against" columns.

Draft the bill

Use the template supplied in Appendix A to draft your bill. All bills must include:

- Title – the name of your bill
- Commencement – when the bill will come into effect
- Purpose – the intended outcome of the bill

If time is limited, you can use the model bill supplied in Appendix B.

Assign roles for the debate

For the debate to mirror a parliamentary debate, students will need to take on particular roles. Some students will assume the roles of members of Parliament, while others will be officers of the House. One or two students can act as the press gallery and provide a record of the debate, using photography, written notes, or video.

The following roles should be assigned first:

- The **Speaker** controls the debate and is vital to the smooth running of the proceedings. The teacher can take this role if necessary. The Speaker doesn’t participate in the debate.
- The **Clerk of the House** is an official of the House. The Clerk assists the Speaker in running the debate by reading the rules, announcing the bills, and recording and tallying the votes
- The **Serjeant-at-arms** is also an official of the House. The Serjeant introduces the Speaker and, while carrying the Mace, escorts him or her in and out of the House. During proceedings, the Serjeant-at-Arms sits by the door. (In Parliament, the Serjeant-at-Arms is responsible to the Speaker for maintaining proper standards of behaviour in the House)
- **Reporters (optional)** are part of the press gallery. Their job is to record and report on the proceedings. They could do this by photographing, taking notes, and/or videoing what occurs. Reporters can move around the House but must not interfere with the running of the debate

Note: Students in the first three roles will have lines to read from the script (pages 9-12). Reporters can be students who are less confident speakers.

Divide the remaining students into the Government and the Opposition. The Government will need to have a few more members than the Opposition (a majority).

Optional: Have the students on either side organise themselves into political parties. This can be done by simply counting students off into parties and assigning a themed name (for example, bird names) or by allowing students to form parties with their own, more individual names. (See also “Creating political parties” on page 7)

The Government will need to have one party with more students than any other party. This will be the main party in Government. It can have up to three minor parties, depending on the number of students.

The Opposition will also need a main party, but this party must be slightly smaller than the main party in Government. It can also have up to three minor parties.

Assigning leadership roles

The following leadership roles need to be assigned:

The Government	The Opposition
Prime Minister / Leader of the main party in Government	Leader of the Opposition / Leader of the main party in Opposition
Deputy Prime Minister	Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Minister for the portfolio relating to the issue for debate (for example, Minister of Education, Minister for the Environment, or Minister of Health)	Spokesperson for the portfolio relating to the issue for debate (for example, Spokesperson on Education, Spokesperson on the Environment, or Spokesperson on Health)
Government Whip	Opposition Whip

Allow time to negotiate

Give each party time to decide where it stands on the bill. The main party in the Government must support the bill because its Minister put it forward.

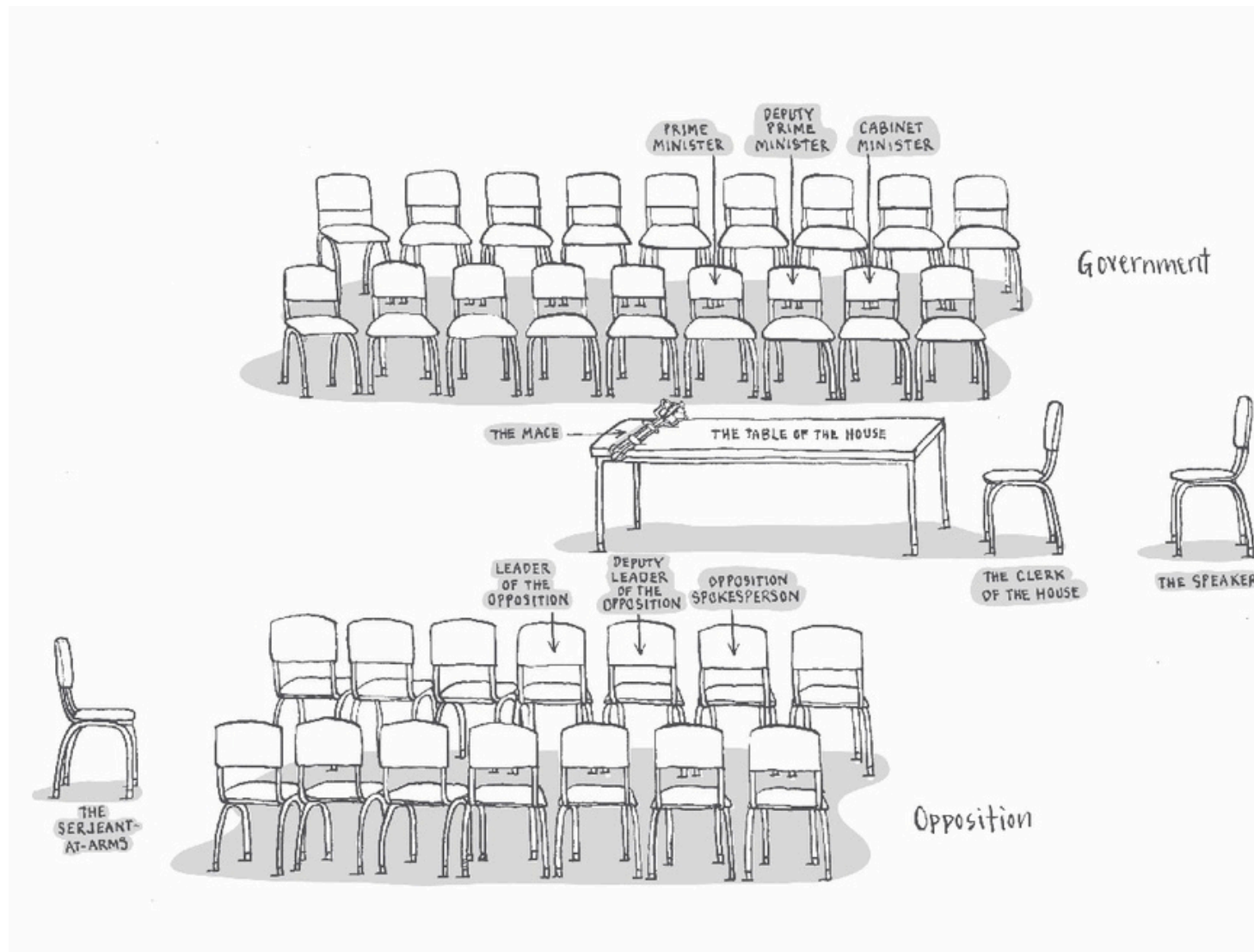
If multiple parties have been created, the other parties can decide whether or not to support the bill. The Government whip will need to check with all the smaller parties to make sure that the Government has enough support for its bill. If it doesn’t, the whip may need to convince one or more of the smaller parties to support the bill. He or she can do this by asking the smaller parties what adjustments to the bill might help them to decide to support it. The focus of negotiations should be on finding common ground and agreement.

Research, write, and practise speeches

Decide on an appropriate time limit for the speeches (for example, five minutes maximum). Give the students time to do further research on the issue and to write and practise their speeches. Appendix C provides a template to help students organise their arguments and prepare their speeches. Students who do not have speaking roles can support those who do by providing ideas, viewpoints, and information.

The debate

Arrange your classroom as shown below. The Government sits to the right of the Speaker and the Opposition sits to their left.



Background information

Before starting the role play:

- Remind the students about the importance of parliamentary procedure and the significance of the ceremonial side of Parliament
- Explain that in the role play, they will try to follow the parliamentary procedures they have seen or read about
- Outline what will happen at the beginning when the Speaker enters the House
- Go over the various roles, their functions, and how participants are expected to conduct themselves
- Discuss the rules that will apply for the debate (for the list of rules, see the role play script on pages 9-12).

Beginning the role play

Have the Government and Opposition parties take their seats on the right and left sides of the Speaker respectively. The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition take the fourth seat down from the Speaker in the front row on either side, the Deputy sits beside the Leader on the side nearest the Speaker. The Cabinet Minister and Opposition Spokesperson sit next to the Deputy, and the whip sits behind the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Remind press reporters and photographers that they may stand and move around but they may not interfere with the work of the House.

The role play script provides the Speaker, Clerk of the House, and Serjeant-at-Arms with the words and actions they will need for the Speaker's procession and the debate.

The Speaker's procession

- The Speaker is led into the House by the Serjeant-at-Arms, who announces, "Mr Speaker" or "Madam Speaker".
- All the MPs stand as they enter.
- The Speaker says the prayer and takes the chair.
- The Serjeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table of the House and takes his or her seat at the back of the room. (The head of the Mace should be pointing towards the Government side.)

The debate

- The Speaker calls on the Clerk to read the rules of the House.
- The Clerk reads out the rules.
- The Speaker then calls on the Clerk to read the title of the bill.
- The Clerk reads out the title of the bill to be debated.
- The Speaker uses the speaking order provided by the whips and calls, by name, on the first person from the Government to speak. This is always the Prime Minister or the Minister who is responsible for the bill. The next speaker is always the Opposition Spokesperson.
- The debate follows the order of speakers as provided by the whips. Opposition speakers alternate with Government speakers.
- At the end of the debate, the Speaker calls for a vote. The Speaker asks all those in favour of the bill to say "Aye" and all those against the bill to say "No". The Speaker then calls for a party vote.
- The Clerk conducts a more formal party vote using the template provided in Appendix D and hands the result to the Speaker. The Speaker reads out the result of the vote.
- Following this, the Clerk reads the name of the bill once more and the Speaker adjourns the House.
- The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker out of the House after removing the Mace.

Evaluation

Give each student a self-assessment sheet to complete (Appendix E). Then, as a class, discuss the role play and what the students have learnt from taking part.

For example:

- How did the various speakers support or question the bill?
- Why was it important to have rules for the debate?
- Why is the Speaker's role especially important?
- What are the advantages of debating a bill before it becomes law?
- What have you learnt about the work of members of Parliament and parties?
- What have you learnt about how a parliamentary democracy works?
- What skills do you think an MP might need to use in debate?

Additional activities

Costumes and props

The use of costumes and props can enhance student engagement by creating an atmosphere of formality.

A collection of second-hand shirts, jackets, and ties and other business-type clothing can be used or students could bring suitable dress from home.

The Speaker could wear something to reflect the importance of his or her position. A cloak or university gown would be suitable. Students acting as MPs can also wear party badges. A simple mace can be made using a metre rule with a cardboard cut-out attached to the top (for instructions on how to make a mace, see the inside back cover.)

The Serjeant-at-Arms can wear white gloves to carry the mace.

Creating political parties

Each party could decide on a name. It could also choose a distinguishing colour, design a party logo, invent a party slogan, and create badges, rosettes, posters, banners, and pamphlets to promote the party and its ideas.

Having more than one debate on a bill

Students could have more than one debate on a bill. After the first debate, the bill could be sent to a select committee (a small group of MPs from different parties who could suggest changes to make the bill more acceptable to more parties). A second debate could then take place in which MPs suggest changes to the bill. After the second debate, the House could vote on whether to accept any suggested changes. Then a third debate (final debate) could take place. Parties can change their minds on whether or not to support the bill based on the changes to it.

Research and writing

Those students who will be reporters could also research the issue, interview the politicians, and write and/or present stories for their papers, websites, or radio or television stations.

Prior to the debate, students who take the roles of Serjeant-at-Arms, Clerk, and the Speaker could help the political parties with research and writing speeches.

Students can also email or write to their local Member of Parliament or any Minister. Postage is free from within New Zealand.

Videoing

During the debate, reporters could video proceedings. The videos could be used as part of the evaluation process at the conclusion of the debate.

Extension

If your students have had some experience in debating, you could structure the role play so that it is more like a genuine debate. In addition to reading their prepared speeches, students could argue and rebut points made by the opposing side. When researching and writing their own speeches, they should also consider arguments the other side might make and prepare possible responses.

Students could also:

- Interview participants in role about the issue being debated
- View the video (if used to record the debate) and critique their debating skills
- Prepare a submission on the issue (or on another issue) to present to a select committee
- Find out how local government meetings are run (for example, when considering a new by-law) and compare this with the way Parliament operates
- Research the history of a parliamentary role or ceremony and present their findings.

Useful resources

Visit New Zealand Parliament's website at www.parliament.nz/learn for resources and online modules to support classroom learning about how Parliament works.

DEBATING ROLEPLAY SCRIPT

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



Acts like a referee to make sure MPs follow the rules and debates in Parliament run smoothly.

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS



Carries the mace and helps the Speaker maintain order in the House.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE



Provides advice on the rules of Parliament and records the decisions made by the House of Representatives.

The Serjeant-at-Arms escorts the Speaker into the House (classroom), walking in front of the Speaker and carrying the Mace on his or her right shoulder.



Mr / Madam Speaker!

All stand as they enter.

The Speaker enters the room led by the Serjeant-at-Arms and walks and stands in front of the Speaker's Chair. The Serjeant-at-Arms moves to the opposite end of the table from the Speaker and waits while the Speaker reads the prayer.

Almighty God, we give thanks for the blessings which have been bestowed on us. Laying aside all personal interests, we acknowledge the King and pray for guidance in our deliberations that we may conduct the affairs of this House with wisdom, justice, mercy, and humility for the welfare and peace of New Zealand. Amen.



or

E te Atua kaha rawa, ka tuku whakamoemiti atu mātou, mō ngā karakia kua waihotia mai ki runga i a mātou. Ka waiho i ō mātou pānga whaiaro katoa ki te taha. Ka mihi mātou ki te kīngi, me te inoi atu mō te ārahitanga i roto i ō mātou whakaaroarohanga, kia mōhio ai, kia whakaiti ai tā mātou whakahaere i ngā take o te Whare nei, mō te ora, te maungārongo, me te aroha o Aotearoa. Amene.

The Serjeant-at-Arms places the Mace in the cradle on the Table of the House with the head of the mace facing the government. Speaker sits, then all sit.



The rules of _____'s Parliament must be obeyed.

school name

Clerk, please read out the rules."

The Clerk always stands to speak.



1. Always stand up to speak.
2. Always address your remarks through the Speaker. Begin with the words "Mister/Madam Speaker".
3. Priority is given to members who have not yet spoken.
4. The Speaker keeps order.



I call on Government Order of the day Number 1.



bill title
third reading.



I call on the Responsible Minister to make the opening statement.

The Prime Minister stands to give their opening statement.



I call on the Spokesperson for the Opposition to make their opening statement.

The Leader of the Opposition stands to give their opening statement.



THE DEBATE

The Speaker moderates the debate. Students who want to speak should stand. The Speaker then chooses who will speak, taking turns between Government and Opposition sides.

We will now hear arguments from both sides. I remind the House of the rules of the debate:



1. Always stand up to speak.
2. Always address your remarks to the Speaker. Begin with the words "Mister/Madam Speaker".
3. The Speaker keeps order.

Allow for about 15 minutes of debate, keeping order with phrases like:

"I'm hearing too much disruption from the Government / Opposition."

"_____(name) _____ will please be seated."

"I'll remind _____ (name) _____ of the time. You have 10 more seconds."

Honorable members, we will now adjourn for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to form closing arguments summarising all of their key points of their side before we vote.



All members are now invited to huddle up with their leaders for 5 minutes and help them with their key talking points for the closing statement.

After five minutes...



Honorable members the House stands resumed. I now call on the Leader of the Opposition to deliver their closing statement.

Leader of the Opposition delivers closing statement.



I now call on the Prime Minister to deliver their closing statement.

Prime Minister delivers closing statement.



THE VOTE



Honorable members. The question is that the motion be agreed to. Those of that opinion will say "**aye**."

Students who agree with the bill say "**aye**" and raise their hands.



Those to the contrary say "no".

Students who disagree with the bill say "**no**" and raise their hands.

The Clerk records the votes and hands a note to the Speaker.



Honorable members, the ayes are ____ ; the noes are _____. The motion is agreed to/defeated."

Only read if the bill passes the vote:



bill title
third reading.



The House stands adjourned.

New bill template

Bill 202

Title

General Policy Statement

A general description of why the bill is important.

Purpose

This Bill has the following purposes:

What is the purpose of the bill? What will it do?

Compliance

What will be the consequences for people who don't follow the new law?

Sample bill

Reduction of Plastic Packaging Bill 2025

General Policy Statement

This bill will ban the manufacture and sale of certain products, which generally contain plastic. The products are the following:

- plastic drink stirrers and straws that are single-use:
- single-use plastic bags
- PVC food trays or containers
- polystyrene packaging for food or drink.

Purpose

This bill has the following purposes:

- To promote the use of more environmentally friendly packaging
- To require businesses to reduce the usage of plastic packaging.

Compliance

All manufacturers of plastic products and retail outlets must comply no later than six months after this Act comes into force. Failure to comply is an offence.

Any retail outlet or manufacturer still using or producing the listed plastic products outside the agreed limitations, and after the six-month grace period once this Act comes into force, will be fined up to ten thousand dollars.

After three prosecutions, the business will be closed down.



PLAN YOUR SPEECH

Start thinking about your speech.

Write down three reasons for or against the bill, depending on which side of Parliament you are on.

1

2

3

Mr / Madam Speaker, the Government / Opposition supports / does not support this bill because...

Opening statement

What is your position?

I support/do not support this bill because...

Why is it important?

This issue is important because it affects [certain groups of people/the environment/etc]

Supporting evidence

What facts or evidence support your position?

According to experts...

How does this evidence support your argument?

This clearly shows that this bill will improve...

Counter argument

What might the other side argue?

The other side might say that...

Why is their argument flawed?

However, this argument fails to consider...

Closing statement

Restate your position and main argument.

In conclusion, it is clear that...

Call to action

Therefore, I urge Parliament to support/oppose this motion and to...

Role play self-assessment

Name _____ Role _____

What I did well in my role:

What I found difficult about my role:

Things that went well in our role play:

How we could have improved our role play:

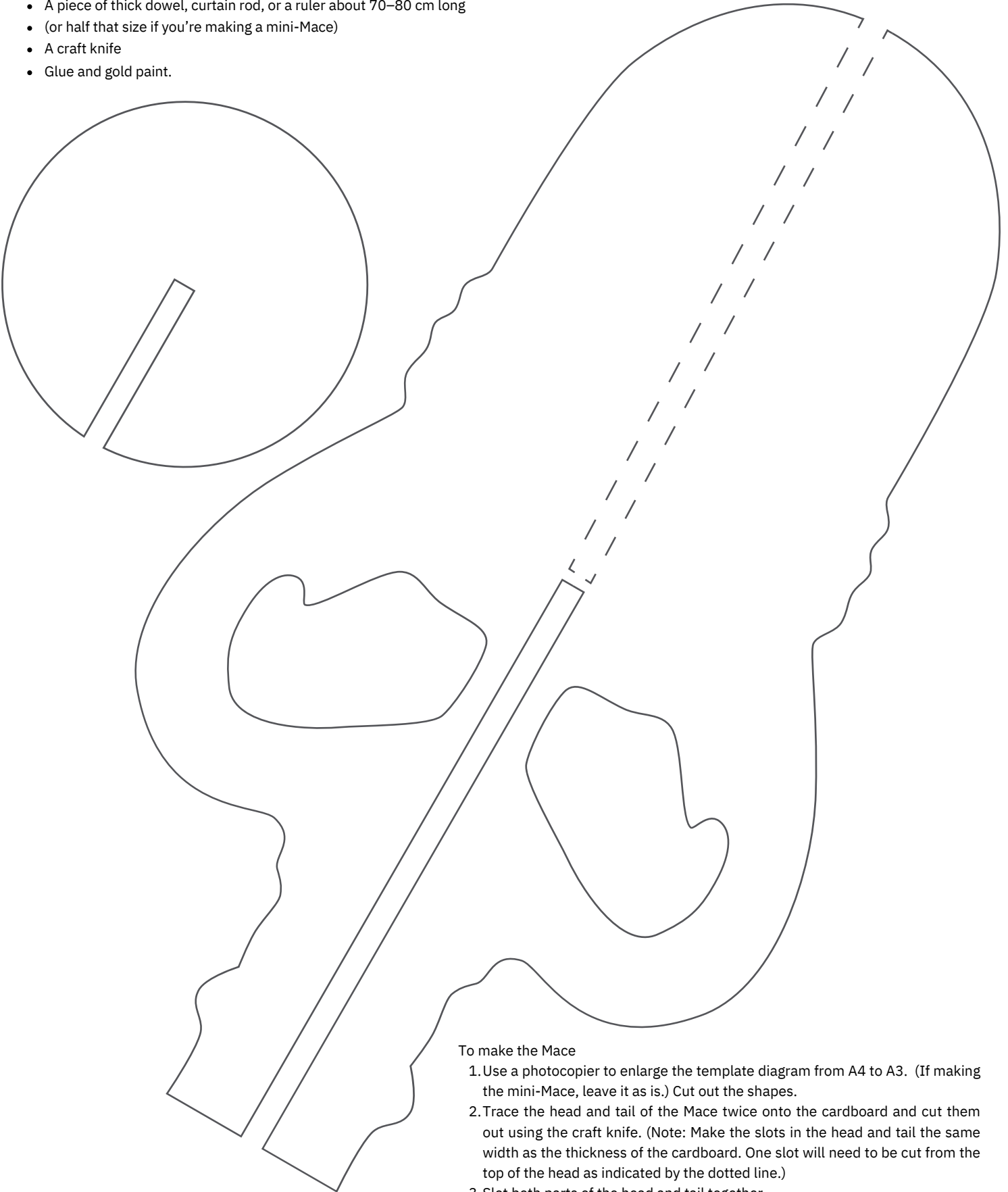
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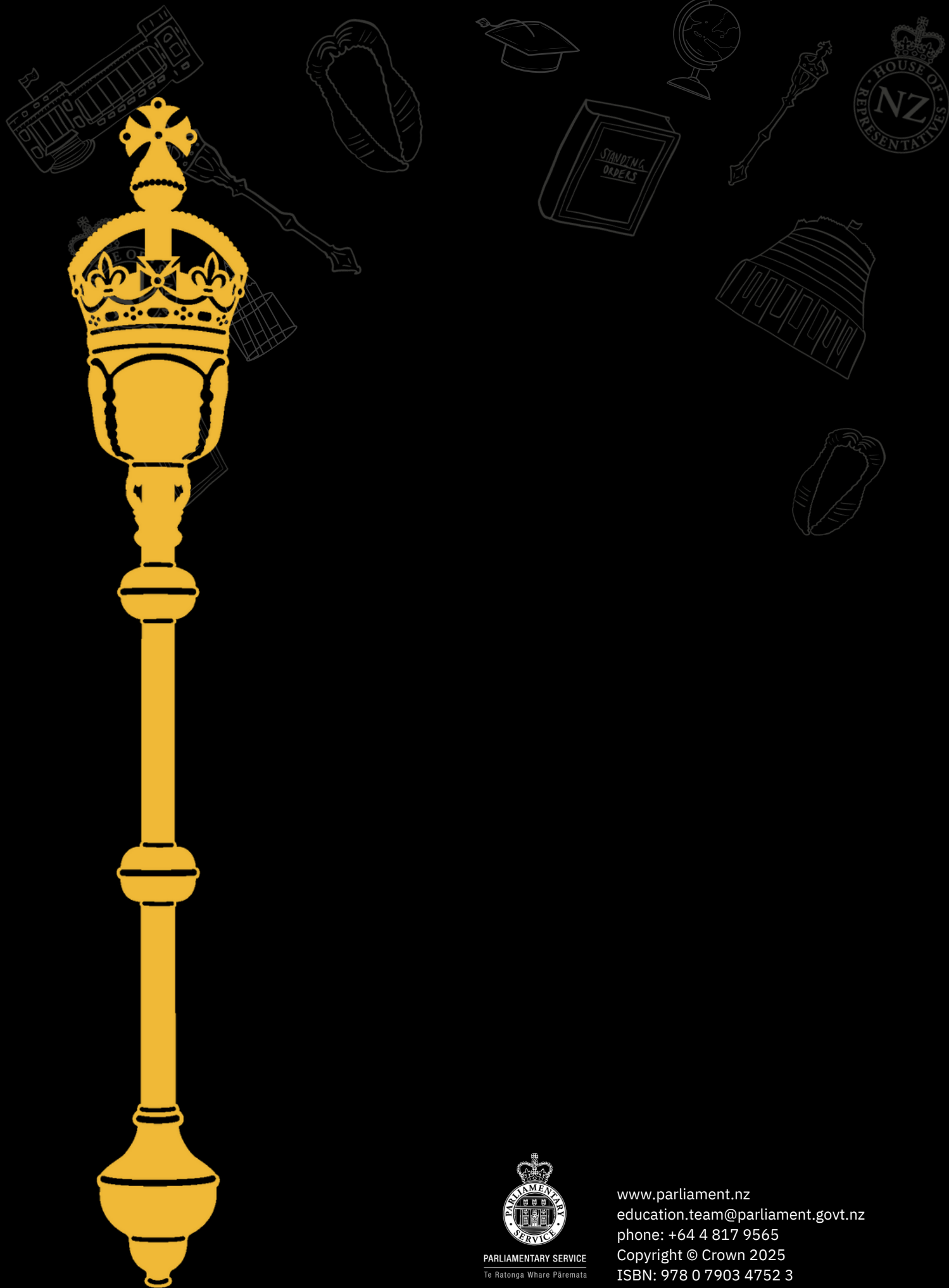
Make a Mace

You will need:

- A sheet of thick cardboard at least 60 cm x 45 cm, or two pieces of A3 size
- cardboard (or you could make a “mini-Mace” – using an A4-size card)
- A piece of thick dowel, curtain rod, or a ruler about 70–80 cm long
- (or half that size if you’re making a mini-Mace)
- A craft knife
- Glue and gold paint.



- To make the Mace
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 2. Trace the head and tail of the Mace twice onto the cardboard and cut them out using the craft knife. (Note: Make the slots in the head and tail the same width as the thickness of the cardboard. One slot will need to be cut from the top of the head as indicated by the dotted line.)
 3. Slot both parts of the head and tail together.
 4. Cut the dowel or rod to length to use as the stem of the Mace.
 5. Cut cross-shaped slots 25 cm long into each end of the stem.
 6. (The width of each slot should be the same thickness as the card.)
 7. To assemble the Mace, slide the head and tail into the slots on the stem.
 8. Glue them in place and paint the Mace gold.



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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wFQZoGd2LjIM0IFLS020Zlgbt3Kz3qqP?usp=sharing>

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Role

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What I found difficult about my role:

Things that went well in our role play:

How we could have improved our role play:

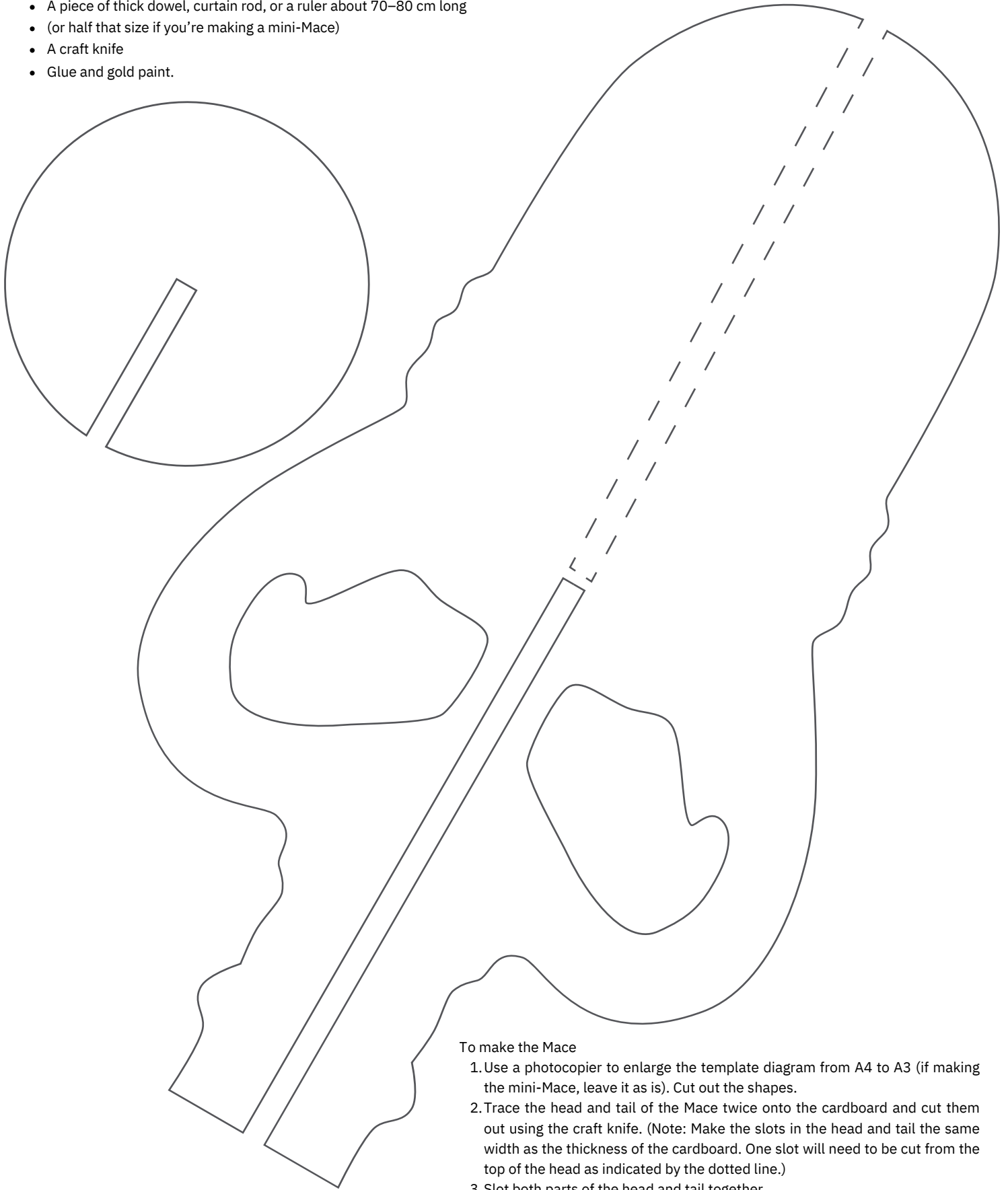
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