

Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

What Is Parliamentary Procedure?

It is a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

Why is Parliamentary Procedure Important?

Because it's a time tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Today, Robert's Rules of Order newly revised is the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations and other groups. So it's important that everyone know these basic rules!

Order of Business

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

1. Call to order.
2. Roll call of members present.
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting.
4. Officers' reports.
5. Committee reports.
6. Special orders --- Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.
7. Unfinished business.
8. New business.
9. Announcements.
10. Adjournment.

Motions

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership can vote on. Individual members can:

1. Call to order.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

How are Motions Presented?

1. Obtain the floor
 - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
 - b. Rise and address the Chair.
 - c. Wait until the Chair recognizes you.
2. Make your motion
 - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.

- b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we ..." rather than, "I move that we do not ..."
 - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
- 3. Wait for someone to second your motion
 - a. another member will second your motion **or**
 - b. the Chair will call for a second **or**
 - c. if there is no second to your motion it is lost
- 4. The Chair States Your Motion
 - a. The Chair will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we ..." thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
 - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
 - c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the Chair it becomes "assembly property", and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
- 5. Expanding on Your Motion
 - a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
 - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
 - c. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
 - d. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chair.
- 6. Putting the Question to the Membership
 - a. The Chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
 - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
- 7. Motion to Table
 - a. This motion is used to postpone discussion or voting on a motion.
 - b. The option is always present to "take from the table" for reconsideration by the membership.

Voting on a Motion:

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the by-laws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

1. By Voice -- The Chair asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
2. By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
3. By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chair says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
4. By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chair so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
5. By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper; this method is used when secrecy is desired.

Robert's Rules of Order - Summary Version

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists, include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "**Committee of the Whole**" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified