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## **Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order**

### **What is parliamentary procedure?**

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

### **Why is parliamentary procedure important?**

Because it is 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. It is important that everyone is familiar with these basic rules!

### **Order of Business:**

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follows a fixed order of business. A typical example:

1. Call to order.
2. Roll call of members present.
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting.
4. Officer's 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 take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

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

### **Types of Motions:**

1. Main Motions: The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. Subsidiary Motions: Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
3. Privileged Motions: Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
4. Incidental Motions: Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

## How is a Motion Presented?

1. Obtaining the floor:
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the Chairman by saying, "Mr. Chairman, or Mr. President."
  - c. Wait until the Chairman 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.
4. Another member will second your motion or the Chairman will call for a second.
5. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.
6. The Chairman States Your Motion:
  - a. The Chairman 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 Chairman it becomes "assembly property" and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
7. Expanding on Your Motion:
  - a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point, rather than at the time you present it.
  - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - c. All comments and debate must be directed to the Chairman.
  - d. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.

The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.

1. Putting the Question to the Membership:
  - a. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. On a motion to move, the previous question may be adapted.

## 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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 chairman 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.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

1. Motion to Table -- This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table", for reconsideration by the membership.
2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely -- This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. It will only work if you use it properly. Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.

1. Allow motions that are in order.
2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
3. Speak clearly and concisely.
4. Obey the rules of debate.

Additional Resources:

[Simplified Handbook of Parliamentary Procedure](#)

[Robert's Rules of Order Archive](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Motions](#)

## Parliamentary Words and Terms

**Abstain** – not voting one way or the other

**Adjourn** – ending the meeting

**Adopt** – to okay or accept

**Agenda** – an outline of items to address at a meeting

**Amendment** – adding on to a motion, usually to improve it, enlarge its intent, or to make it more understandable

**Appeal the decision of the Chair** – to question the Chairperson’s decision and ask the group to change it

**Appoint** – to place someone in a job or position

**By-laws** – the rules a group has agreed to follow and the goals of the organization

**Caucus** – getting together outside the regular meeting to decide on plans, position, policy and/or people to nominate

**Chair** – the position held by the meeting’s leader

**Committee** – a group that reviews and reports on a special task given to them by the larger membership. A committee may recommend actions to be taken based upon its findings.

**General Consent** – approval by the group. If even one member objects, a vote must be taken.

**Majority** opinion – the decision of more than half the voting members

**Minority** opinion – the position held by less than half of the voting members

**Minutes** – official record of a meeting

**Motion** – a member’s proposal for action

**Nominate** – to recommend a person for election to office

**Pending** – still up in the air and undecided

**Personal privilege** – calling attention to something having to do with the well being of the people at the meeting, such as asking to have a window opened

Point of Information – asking for more information before making a decision

**Point of Order** – correcting a mistake that is against the rules of the organization

**Pro Tem** – temporary

**Proxy** – permission given, usually in writing, by one member for another member to vote in his or her name

**Orders of the Day** – calling for the group to get back to the agenda or the main business of the meeting  
Question – a motion that is under discussion with a vote to be taken on it

**Recess** – taking a short break

**Rescind** – to take back or withdraw

**Resolution** – usually a policy statement being suggested to the group for approval

**Second** – support for a motion. Before a group can handle a proposal, it must know that two people want to have it discussed

**Standing Committee** – a committee that goes year round such as a program planning committee  
Suspending of the

**Rules** – discussing something without sticking to the rules of the meeting  
Veto – to turn “thumbs down” on a motion or idea

## Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart

Based on Robert's Rule of Order Newly Revised (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)

<https://robertsrules.org/motionsprint.html>

**Part 1, Main Motions.** These motions are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

§ indicates the section from Robert's Rules.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§21	Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20	Take break	I move to recess for ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19	Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18	Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17	Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16	Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§15	Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§14	Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§13	Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§12	Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§11	Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
§10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

**Part 2, Incidental Motions.** No order of precedence. These motions arise incidentally and are decided immediately.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§23	Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None
§24	Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
§25	Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§26	Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
§27	Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§29	Demand a rising vote	I move for a rising vote	Yes	No	No	No	None
§33	Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes, if urgent	No	No	No	None
§33	Request for information	Point of information	Yes, if urgent	No	No	No	None

**Part 3, Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly.**

No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§34	Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§35	Cancel previous action	I move to rescind ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or Majority with notice
§37	Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider ...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority