

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!

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.

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.

There are Four Basic Types of Motions:

1. Main Motions: The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration (Bring new business before the committee). They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.

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2. **Subsidiary Motions:** Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion. Subsidiary Motions include: (lowest to highest)
 - a. **Postpone Indefinitely** (Kill a motion)
 - b. **Amend** (Change a motion)
 - c. **Refer to a Committee** (Let a committee investigate)
 - d. **Consider Informally** (Have the assembly act as a committee)
 - e. **Postpone to a Certain Time** (Put off to another time)
 - f. **Postpone to a Certain Time Made Into a Special Order** (To ensure that a motion will be taken up at a specified time)
 - g. **To Limit or Extend The Limits of Debate** (Shorten or lengthen debate)
 - h. **Previous Question** (Stop debate)
 - i. **To Lay on the Table** (Set aside temporarily)
3. **Privileged Motions:** Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business. Privileged Motions include: (lowest to highest)
 - a. **Call for the Orders of the Day** (Stick to the Agenda)
 - b. **Raise a Question of Privilege** (Welfare of Individual/assembly)
 - c. **Recess** (Take a Break)
 - d. **Adjourn** (End Meeting Now)
 - e. **Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn** (Set Another Time to Continue the Meeting)
 - f. **Fix the Time at Which to Adjourn** (To Set the Time to Adjourn the Meeting)
4. **Incidental Motions:** Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion. Incidental Motions include: (lowest to highest)
 - a. **Point of Order** (To correct a breach in the rules)
 - b. **Appeal From The Decision of The Chair or Appeal** (To disagree w/ Chair's ruling)
 - c. **Request For Permission to Withdraw or Modify a Motion** (Withdraw or modify a motion without taking a vote)
 - d. **Object to Consideration of a Question** (To prevent the main motion from being considered)
 - e. **Division of The Assembly** (To doubt the result of the vote)
 - f. **Suspend the Rules** (To set aside a rule of the assembly)

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How are Motions 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 in time, 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.
 - e. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.
8. 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.

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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 a 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.

MOTIONS THAT TAKE A MAJORITY VOTE

- Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn
- Adjourn
- Recess
- Lay on the Table
- Postpone to a Certain Time
- Refer to a Committee
- Amend
- Postpone Indefinitely
- Main Motion
- To Create a Blank
- To Request Permission to Withdraw a Question
- To Take from the Table
- To Reconsider
- To Rescind (With Previous Notice)
- To Amend Something Adopted (With Previous Notice)
- To Reopen Nominations or the Polls
- Discharge a Committee (Under Certain Circumstances)

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MOTIONS THAT TAKE A TWO-THIRDS VOTE

- Previous Question (Close Debate)
- Limit or Extend Debate
- Close Nominations or Close the Polls
- Object to the Consideration of a Question
- Suspend the Rules
- To Rescind (Without Previous Notice)
- To Amend Something Adopted (Without Previous Notice)
- Discharge a Committee (Under Certain Circumstances)

PROCEDURES

Procedure to Amend a Motion

During discussion, it may become apparent that an amendment (modification) to the original motion is necessary. Anyone may request to amend the original motion, but the proposed amendment must be related to the subject of the main motion.

1. Member raises hand and stands after recognition from the presiding officer.
2. Member states the amendment (e.g. striking and/or adding words/phrases).
3. Amendment must be seconded.
4. Presiding officer calls for discussion on the amendment.
5. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the amendment, and announces result.

If the amendment passes, the motion on the floor is now the amended motion. If the amendment fails, the original motion remains on the floor.

Referral to Committee

During discussion, it may become apparent that further information is needed prior to voting on a motion and/or further work is necessary to reword a motion, in which case, the motion may be referred to a committee. If the motion passes, the committee, if not existing, should be appointed immediately or as soon as possible. The committee should report findings at the next meeting, unless specified otherwise.

1. A member makes a motion to refer the motion to committee.
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

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Tabling a Motion

Tabling a motion lays aside an item of business temporarily in order to attend other business. A tabled motion cannot be taken from the table until another item of business has been transacted since the tabling. If the tabled motion is not removed from the table by the end of the next meeting, the motion ceases to exist.

1. A member makes a motion to table the motion.
2. Motion must be seconded (No discussion).
3. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

Removing a Motion from the Table

A member may move to remove a motion from the table during the Unfinished Business part of the meeting once all agenda Unfinished Business items are addressed.

1. A member makes a motion to remove a motion from the table.
2. Motion must be seconded.

At this point, the motion has been removed from the table and discussion of the motion proceeds as if the motion had never been tabled in the first place.

3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

Motion to Postpone

A member may move to delay action (voting) on a motion to a certain time, usually the next meeting. A postponed motion is considered unfinished business and automatically comes up for further consideration at the next meeting (or designated date).

1. A member makes a motion to postpone the motion to another date (usually the next meeting).
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

Speech/Time limits using Robert's Rules of Order for Debate

After being recognized by the committee Chair, members may speak twice on any debatable motion for a maximum of ten minutes. Time cannot be "saved" or transferred to another committee member. Members who violate this rule will be called out of order. It is possible to change these debate limits, but only by a two-thirds vote. A motion to limit or extend time limits or increase the number of times members are allowed to speak is permissible, but is, by rule, undebatable. The secretary of the committee shall serve as the official time keeper.

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Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings, but, it will only work if you use it properly.

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. Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.