

A Condensed Version of Parliamentary Procedure

Prepared for
ASPE Chapters



This condensed version of parliamentary procedures is designed to provide a basic introduction into Robert's Rules of Order. Every effort has been made to provide correct information. However, the publisher makes no guarantees or warranties, expressed or implied, regarding the data and information contained in this publication. For detailed explanations regarding parliamentary procedures, go to the authoritative source, Robert's Rules of Order.

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Table of Contents

- Parliamentary Procedure 1
- The Importance of Parliamentary Procedure 1
- Parliamentary Procedure — Basic Rules 2
- Sample Agenda 2
- How Members Get Their Say 3
- The Five Basic Motions 3
- Parliamentary Procedure At-A-Glance 4-5
- Motion Considerations 6
- How To Present A Motion 7
- Voting On A Motion 8
- Index 9



Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting business at meetings and public gatherings.

- > Parliamentary procedure has a long history.
- > It originated in the early English Parliaments.
- > It came to America with the first European settlers.
- > It became uniform in 1876, when Henry M. Robert published his manual on Parliamentary Law.

Today, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is the basic handbook of operation for clubs, associations and other organizations.



The Importance of Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure allows everyone to be heard and allows decisions to be made without confusion.

Parliamentary Procedure offers:

- > Democratic rule
- > Flexibility
- > Protection of rights a fair hearing for everyone.

Parliamentary procedure:

- > Adapts to fit the needs of any organization.
- > Everyone needs to know the basic rules!



Parliamentary Procedure — Basic Rules

- > Make motions that are in order.
- > Obtain the floor properly.
- > Speak clearly and concisely.
- > Obey the rules of debate.
- > Be courteous.

Sample Agenda

A fixed agenda or order of business is generally followed.

Example:

1. Call to Order

If a quorum* is present, the chair (the person conducting the meeting) starts the meeting: "The meeting will come to order."

2. Minutes

The secretary reads a record of the last meeting. (Motion to accept the minutes, with or without modifications, with a second is then in order.)

3. Officers' Reports

This is often limited to a report from the treasurer, but other officers may also report at this time.

4. Committee Reports

First come reports from standing (permanent) committees, then from special (temporary) committees.

5. Special Orders

This is important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.

6. Unfinished Business

This is business left over from previous meetings.

7. New Business

New topics are introduced.

8. Announcements

Information for the assembly (the people at the meeting) of other subjects and events.

9. Adjournment

The meeting ends by a vote or by general consent (or by the chair's decision if the time of adjournment was set by an earlier vote).

*Quorum: the number of members that must be present for business to be conducted legally. The actual number is usually stated in the organization's bylaws. Absent bylaws, a percentage of the membership or the number of members that can reasonably be depended on to be in attendance at a meeting.

How Members Get Their Say

Members make motions. A motion is a proposal that the assembly take a stand or take action on some issue. Members may:

Present motions

(Make a proposal) *"I move that . . ."*

Second Motions

(express support for discussion or another member's motion) *"Second."*

Debate Motions (Discussions)

(Give opinions on the motion) *"I think . . ."*

Vote on Motions

(make a decision) *"All those in favor . . ."*



The Five Basic Motions

1. Main Motions

These introduce subjects for consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions. For example: *I move that we purchase . . .*

2. Subsidiary Motions

These change or affect how the main motion is handled. (They are voted on before the main motion.) For example: *I move to amend the motion by striking out . . .*

3. Privileged Motions

These concern special or important matters not related to pending business. In general, they are considered before other types of motions. For example: *I move we adjourn.*

4. Incidental Motions

These are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. They must be considered before the other motion. For example: *I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of . . .*

5. Motions To Reconsider

These enable certain items to be reconsidered. In general, they are brought up when no business is pending. For example: *I move to reconsider . . .*

Parliamentary Procedure At-A-Glance

Actions/Motions

(In order of Precedence)

You Say

Adjourn meeting..... *I move that we adjourn.*
Call for a recess..... *I move that we recess for...*
Complain about heat, noise, etc. *I rise to a question of privilege.*
Temporarily suspend
consideration of an issue *I move to table the motion.*
End debate and amendments..... *I move the previous question.*
Postpone discussion for a certain time.... *I move to postpone discussion until ...*
Give closer study of something..... *I move to refer the matter to committee.*
Amend a Motion..... *I move to amend the motion by...*
Introduce business..... *I move that...*

Other Actions/Motions

(No Precedence)

You Say

Protest breach of rules or conduct..... *I rise to a point of order.*
Vote on a ruling of the chair *I appeal from the chair's decision.*
Suspend rules temporarily *I move to suspend the rules so that...*
Avoid considering an improper matter ... *I object to consideration of this motion.*
Verify a voice vote by
having members stand..... *I call for a division.*
Request information..... *Point of information...*
Take up a matter previously tabled..... *I move to take from the table...*
Reconsider a hasty action *move to reconsider the vote on...*

Parliamentary Procedure At-A-Glance

May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a Second?	Is It Debatable?	Can It Be Amended	What Vote Is Needed?	Can It Be Reconsidered
NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
NO	YES	NO	YES	Majority	NO
YES	NO	NO	NO	No Vote	NO
NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO ¹
NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	YES ²
NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES
NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES ³
NO	YES	YES ⁴	YES	Majority	YES
NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES

May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a Second?	Is It Debatable?	Can It Be Amended	What Vote Is Needed?	Can It Be Reconsidered
YES	NO	NO	NO	No vote ⁵	NO
YES	YES	YES	NO	Majority	YES
NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3 ⁶	YES ⁷
YES	NO	NO	NO	No vote	NO
YES	NO	NO	NO	No vote	NO
NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
YES	YES	YES ⁸	NO	Majority	NO

Notes:

1. Affirmative votes may not be reconsidered.
2. Unless vote on question has begun.
3. Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.
4. Unless the motion to be amended is not debatable.
5. Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision.
6. A q vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of main motion.
7. Only if the main question has not been debated yet.
8. Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.

Motion Considerations

Is the Motion in Order (and Proper)?

The motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous or against the bylaws.

May I Interrupt the Speaker?

Some motions are so important that the speaker may be interrupted to make them. The original speaker regains the floor after the interruption has been attended to.

Do I need a Second?

Almost all motions require a second. A second indicates that another member would like to consider your motion. It prevents spending time on a question that interests only one person.

Is It Debatable?

Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full debate on most motions. However, some subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions are not debatable.

Can It Be Amended?

Motions can be changed by striking out or inserting wording, or both. Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion.

What Vote Is Needed?

Most motions require only a majority vote (more than half the members present and voting). But, motions concerning the rights of the assembly or its members need a 2/3 vote to be adopted.

Can It Be Reconsidered?

Motions can be debated again and revoted to give members a chance to change their minds. The motion to reconsider must come from the winning side.

How To Present A Motion

Obtain the Floor

- ✓ Wait until the last speaker is finished.
- ✓ Rise and address the chair. Example, *Mr. (or Madam Chairperson (or President)*
- ✓ Give your name. The chair will recognize you by repeating it.

Make Motion

- ✓ Speak clearly and concisely.
- ✓ State your motion affirmatively. Example: *I move that we do . . . (not do not)*
- ✓ Stay on the subject and avoid personal attacks.

Wait For a Second

- ✓ Another member will say, *I second the motion*. Or, the chair will call for a second.
- ✓ If there is no second, your motion will not be considered.
- ✓ Motions made at the direction of a board or committee (of more than one person) do not require a second.

The Chair States the Motion

- ✓ The chair must say, *It is moved and seconded that we . . .*
- ✓ After this happens, debate or voting can occur. The motion is now "assembly property," and you can't change it without consent of the members.

Expand Your Motion

- ✓ As the person who made the motion, you are allowed to speak first. Direct all comments to the chair.
- ✓ Keep to the time limit for speaking (the chair should announce a time limit prior to discussions.)
- ✓ You may speak again after all other speakers are finished.
- ✓ You may speak a third time by a motion to suspend the rules with a 2/3 vote.

The Chair Puts the Question

- ✓ The chair asks, *Are you ready for the question?* If there is no more discussion, or if a motion to stop debate is adopted, a vote is taken.
- ✓ The chair announces the results.

Voting On A Motion

The method of voting on a motion depends on the situation and the bylaws of the organization. Vote procedures include:

Voice

The chair asks those in favor to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no” (for majority votes only). A member may move for an exact count.

Show of Hands

Members raise their hands to verify a voice vote, or as an alternative to it. This does not require a count. A member may move for an exact count.

Roll Call

If a record of each person’s vote is needed, each member answers “yes,” “no” or, “present” or abstain (indicating the choice not to vote) as his or her name is called.

Ballot

Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This is done when secrecy is desired.

General Consent

When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the chair says, *If there is no objection.* . . . Members show agreement by their silence. If someone says *I object*, the matter must be put to a vote, otherwise the chair may indicate that the motion passes.

A question (motion) is pending when it has been stated by the chair but not yet voted on.

- ✓ The last motion stated by the chair is the first pending.
- ✓ The main motion is always the last voted on.

A Motion To Lay On the Table

This motion is used to lay something aside temporarily to take care of a more urgent matter. It should not be used to prevent discussion or to kill a question. Members can “take from the table” a motion for reconsideration. This must happen by the end of the current or next session (depending on how soon the next session is scheduled).

A Motion To Postpone Indefinitely

This is parliamentary strategy — it allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. This is useful in case of a badly chosen main motion for which either a “yes” or “no” vote would have undesirable consequences.

Index

Adjourn: To end the meeting	
Ways to adjourn	4-5
Move to adjourn.....	7
Agenda: Business to be considered during a meeting.....	2
Amend: To change a motion	
Ways to amend	4, 6
How to move to amend.....	4-5
Committee: A group of members chosen for a certain task.....	1
Debate: Discussion about a motion	
Members' rights	3
When to debate	4-5, 6
Rules on debate	7
General Consent: Accepting a motion without a vote	8
In Order: Relevant to the business at hand	7
Majority: More than half of the members present and voting	
In voting.....	7, 8
When required	4-5
Motion: A proposal that the assembly take a stand or take action on some issue	
Basic motions	3, 8
Procedures affecting motions.....	3, 6
Typical motions	4-5
How to present a motion	7
Quorum: Number of members that must be present to conduct business legally.....	2
Second: A verbal signal from a member that he or she wishes to consider a motion just made	
Members' right.....	3
When required	6
How to give a second.....	6-7
Voting: Means by which motions are accepted or rejected by the assembly	
Members' right.....	3
What vote is needed	4-5, 7
Method of voting	8



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