



**RESOURCE INFORMATION ON  
PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE  
AND ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER**



## **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?***

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.

***Motions and voting 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. A main motion cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and a main motion yields to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. Subsidiary motions: Its purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled and is voted on before the main motion.
3. Privileged motions: The purpose of a privileged motion is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
4. Incidental motions: Its purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the motion on the floor.

(Please see [Appendix A: Motions](#) for a more comprehensive guide on motions)

How motions are presented during in person meetings:

1. Obtain the floor
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the chairperson by saying, "Chairperson [last name], or President [last name]."
  - c. Wait until the chairperson 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 subject.
3. Wait for someone to second your motion
  - a. Another member will second your motion or the chairperson will call for a second.
  - b. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.
4. The chairperson states your motion



- a. The chairperson 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.
5. Expanding on your motion
- a. Now that your motion has been presented to the membership, now is the time for you to speak in favor of your motion. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - b. All comments and debate must be directed to the chairperson.
  - c. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established (10 minutes).
  - d. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the chairperson.
6. Putting the question to the membership
- a. The chairperson asks, "Are we ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.

How motions are presented during electronic (virtual) meetings<sup>1</sup>:

1. Obtain the floor:
  - a. To seek recognition by the chair, a member must use the "Raised Hand" feature. The floor will be assigned to members in the order that they used the "Raised Hand" feature.
2. \*Submit your motion in writing:
  - a. A participant intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions, must, before or after being recognized, post the motion in writing to the "Chat" prefaced with the term "Motion:"
3. Follow steps 3 – 6 above.

Voting on a motion:

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<sup>1</sup> These rules apply to hybrid meetings.



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

1. By voice: The chairperson 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 chairperson 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.

Online voting can be conducted in the manners listed above or by using the Zoom poll function or an application supplied by the Office of Academic Governance.

- a) However, if any member calls for division, and it is not a ballot vote, a show of hands or roll call must be completed.
- b) For online ballot votes, the Zoom poll function can be used or an application supplied by the Office of Academic Governance office.

There are three other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting:

1. Motion to lay on the table: This motion is used to lay the "pending question aside **temporarily** when something else of immediate urgency has arisen or when something else needs to be addressed before consideration of the pending question is resumed" (Robert's Rules of Order 12<sup>th</sup>, §17:1). Members have the option to "take from the table" for reconsideration by the membership by majority vote.
2. Motion to postpone to a certain time or postpone: This motion is used to put off a pending question until a certain time or future meeting (Robert's Rules of Order 12<sup>th</sup>, §14).



3. Motion to postpone indefinitely: This motion prompts the assembly to set aside the pending question without taking a direct vote on the question, essentially “killing” the question (Robert’s Rules of Order 12<sup>th</sup>, §11).

(Please see [Appendix A: Classification of Motions](#) for a more comprehensive guide on motions)

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.
5. Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.

## **CLARIFICATION OF RULES FOR ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

Academic Governance has adopted Robert’s Rules of Order for all meeting as stated in the *Bylaws for Academic Governance*. However, so points can be confusing so we have tried to clarify them below.

### ***Motions:***

- Before a subject is open for debate:
  1. A motion is made.
  2. The motion is seconded.
  3. The motion is stated by the presiding chair.
- Suggestions of alterations are permissible before the motion is stated by the chair.
- Brief informal remarks may be made before the motion is stated by the chair, but these are never allowed to go into debate on the merits of the motion.
- The member offering the motion can modify or even withdraw it entirely before it has been stated by the chair; after stated, they can do neither without consent of the body by a majority vote.



- When a mover modifies their motion before it has been stated by chair, the member who seconded can withdraw their second.

**Debate:**

- The chair opens debate after stating the motion.
- After the chair has stated the motion, it is in the possession of the body for debate and consideration.

**Pertinent discussion guidelines:**

- Voting members are eligible to speak, make motions and vote. On each debatable motion, each member will be entitled to speak up to two times, each time for no longer than ten minutes.
  - To speak a second time on the same issue, a member must wait until those who wish to speak on it for the first time have done so.
  - In order to speak a third time, the member goes to the microphone and requests to speak from the chair. This requires permission from the assembly. If granted permission to speak a third time on the issue, the time allotted is three minutes.
- A member of the body may ask permission of the chair to grant voice to a non-council member for a one ten-minute period. The chair requests consent from the body and if there is an objection a majority vote is needed.
- Only the person who has the floor may speak. Any interjections, except by the chair, or a member directing a point of order or a point of information<sup>2</sup> to the chair, are out of order.
- A member who wishes to speak will wait to be acknowledged by the chair and open by stating their name.
- Debate must be germane to the motion that is on the floor, as determined by the chair. Members may raise a point of order regarding pertinence.
- In the interests of maintaining clarity and efficiency, the chair may require that a motion or an amendment be submitted in writing before it is considered<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> A point of order raises a question as to whether the rules are being followed correctly, and is used to correct an error in procedure, clarify rules, or object to actions. A point of information is made for clarification or additional information about the business at hand, used to obtain information that is relevant to the current discussion or motion.

<sup>3</sup> Motions should be submitted in writing for electronic or hybrid meetings.



A member may rise to ask a question, by raising a point of information directed to the chair. The amount of time spent by the chair answering the question or referring it to someone else to answer, is part of the questioner's ten-minute time allotment.

- If someone asks a question about a report, it can be answered by the reporting member or any other members of the committee making the report.
- If someone is speaking and another member wants to ask a question about something they are saying and they consent to answer the question, the time comes out of the speaker's ten minutes. The speaker can decline to answer.

Keep in mind that keeping time and strict rules about the speaker having the floor does need to be adhered to with our larger bodies like the Faculty Senate, and University Council. But our smaller bodies like standing committees can allow more latitude and rely on a neutral chair for keeping order and moving along the agenda and motions. See [Appendix B: Robert's Rules of Order At-a-Glance for Standing Committee Meetings](#) at the end of this document for an example.

***Attendance and voting:***

- Except as limited or prohibited in the *Bylaws*, a designee may serve in the stead of a member of a governance body who is absent from a meeting. Such designees must have the same eligibility and constituency as the replaced member, and shall have the same rights and privileges as the member replaced. The attendance record of a member who provides a designee shall be unaffected (*Bylaws for Academic Governance*, section 1.4.2.)





## Appendix A: Classification of Motions

### CLASSIFICATION OF MOTIONS

- **Main (or principal) motions** are motions brought before the body for consideration on any subject independent of any other pending motion. It requires a second, is debatable and is amendable.
- **Subsidiary motions** are motions applied to other motions for the purpose of disposing of them. There are seven such motions and take precedence of main motions and must be decided before a final decision on the main motion.

The following are the subsidiary motions as they appear in the order of precedence:

- Lay on the table
- Order the previous question
- Limit or extend limits of debate
- Postpone definitely
- Commit or refer
- Amend
- **Incidental Motions** are motions that arise out of other motions and consequently must be decided before the motions that gave rise to them. Usually, they cannot be debated or amended and they have no fixed order of precedence. The most common incidental motions are the following:
  - Point of Order
  - Appeal
  - Object to the consideration of a question
  - Divide the question

### ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER MOTIONS CHART

Based on *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (12<sup>th</sup> Edition)*

<b>Part 1, Main Motions.</b> 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?
			?	?	?	?	



§2 1	Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§2 0	Take break	I move to recess for ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§1 9	Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§1 8	Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§1 7	Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§1 6	Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§1 5	Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§1 4	Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§1 3	Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§1 2	Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§1 1	Kill main motion	I move that the motion be	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority



		postponed indefinitely					
§10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

<b>Part 2, Incidental Motions.</b> 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	No	No	No	None
§33	Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None



<b>Part 3, Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly.</b> No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.							
§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUP T?	2ND ?	DEBATE ?	AMEND ?	VOTE?
§3 4	Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§3 5	Cancel previous action	I move to rescind ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or Majority with notice
§3 7	Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider ...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority

**Appendix B: Robert's Rules of Order At-a-Glance for Standing Committee Meetings**

While approving all motions may seem tedious, and it is, RRO are meant to make sure motions are correctly made, approved, and accurately recorded, and all members get a chance to speak. Thus, for larger bodies, adhering strictly to parliamentary procedure is important, but for smaller meetings of standing committees and such, the chair, as a neutral figure, can have more latitude to keep order and facilitate discussions and debates.

For motions not likely to be opposed (i.e., approval of minutes & agenda & and simple motions) the chair can use "general consent" for approval. The chairperson states, "If there is no objection..." Members show agreement by their silence. If any member says, "I object," the motion must be put to a vote. So, for example, the following steps are a good structure for facilitating a meeting:

1. **Calling the Meeting to Order** - chair calls meeting to order, stating "The meeting will come to order," or a similar phrase.
2. **Roll Call** - chair & secretary can determine if a quorum is present. Voice roll call is not mandatory; secretary can make note of present and/or use Zoom records to determine who is/was present. Chair: "Quorum is present."



- a. If no quorum is present, then the meeting can go on, but **no official business or formal actions can be conducted.**
3. **Approval of Minutes** – while minutes can be read aloud, often the chair simply gives members time to scan the minutes (they should have been distributed in advance with the agenda). The chair asks if there are any corrections to the minutes. Members can suggest corrections, which are noted and made by the secretary. The chair can then say, "Are there any objections to approving the minutes?" (or if corrections were made -- "Are there any objections to approving the minutes as corrected?" Hearing none, the meeting can move forward. The chair can say, "hearing no objections, the minutes are approved.")
4. **Approval of Agenda** – this can move forward like the minutes. The chair can say something like: "The proposed agenda has been distributed. Are there any amendments or changes to the agenda?" Hearing none, the meeting can move forward. The chair can say, "hearing no objections, the agenda is approved."
  - a. However, if there are amendments to the agenda, then each amendment needs to be motioned to be approved and voted upon: standard procedure – **motion, second, discussion, vote.** The same is true of the amended agenda:
    - i. Chairperson: "Is there a motion to approve the agenda as amended?" (if there are amendments) or "Is there a motion to approve the agenda as presented?" (if no amendments).
    - ii. Member (**motion**): "I move to approve the agenda as amended/presented."
    - iii. Another member (**second**): "I second the motion."
    - iv. Chairperson: "It has been moved and seconded to approve the agenda as amended/presented. Is there any discussion?"
    - v. **Discussion**: Members discuss if needed.
    - vi. Chairperson: "Are we ready to vote? All those in favor of approving the agenda as amended/presented, say 'Aye'. Those opposed, say 'No'."
    - vii. **Vote**: Members vote, and the chairperson announces the result.
5. **Managing Motions on the Floor** - The key to any meeting is to be sure to accurately record the motions being made.
  - a. While the many types of motions can be confusing, the key to good order is to keep the focus on the motion that is on the floor. If the motion is amended or revised, the chair needs to be very



clear about the process of motioning to amend or revise. State the process and then clearly restate the new amended or revised motion for discussion and vote.

- b. Take care to review the order of motion precedence in RRO and always finish with one motion before considering the next.
6. **Concluding a Meeting** – The chair should make sure to officially end meetings by stating “The meeting is adjourned” or “This meeting stands adjourned”. If there are remaining agenda items:
- a. The chair should acknowledge that time has run out and the agenda is incomplete. It is important to respect everyone's time and end the meeting as scheduled.
  - b. The chair may ask attendees if they can extend the meeting time, but this should only be done if absolutely necessary and if all participants agree. It's crucial to be respectful of people's schedules and other commitments.
  - c. Any remaining agenda items that were not addressed will need to be handled in one of the following ways:
    - i. Postponed to the next scheduled meeting.
    - ii. Delegated to individuals or smaller groups to work on outside the meeting.
    - iii. Addressed via email follow-up if they don't require extensive discussion.
    - iv. For critical items that could not be addressed, a separate follow-up meeting might be scheduled.
  - d. The meeting leader should review the plan and time estimates for future meetings to avoid similar issues, possibly redesigning the agenda to focus on must-have items.