

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

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY FOR ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

## 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. 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 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.

## 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.

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*.

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

Academic Governance has adopted Robert's Rules of Order for all meeting as stated in the University Bylaws. The following points, that have confused some members in the past, have been summarized for your review.

### **MOTIONS:**

- Before a subject is open for debate:
  - A motion is made
  - The motion is seconded
  - 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, he can do neither without consent of the body by a majority vote.
- When a mover modifies his motion before it has been stated by Chair, the member who seconded can withdraw his 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.
- A member of the body may ask permission of the Chair to grant voice to a non-Council member for a one ten minute time 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 to the Chair, are out of order.
- A member who wishes to speak will approach the microphone, wait to be acknowledged by the Chair and open by stating his or her name.
- 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.
- 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.

A member may rise to ask a question, by raising a Point of Information directed to the Chair. The amount of time consumed by the Chair answering the question or referring it to someone else to answer, is part of the questioner's 10 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 10 minutes. They can also decline to answer.

### **ATTENDANCE AND VOTING:**

- A Council member, who is unable to attend a particular meeting, may identify another person notifying the Governance Office of the person attending. This person may observe and speak, but cannot vote.
- Proxy voting is not permitted. A voting member may not pass his or her voting card to another person to vote on his or her behalf.

### **CLASSIFICATION OF MOTIONS:**

- **Main (or principal) motions** are motions brought before the body for consideration on any particular 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 (10<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?
§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	No	No	No	None
§33	Request for information	Point of information	Yes	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