

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 Parliamentary Procedure?

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 or operation for most clubs, organizations, and other groups. So it's important that everyone know these basic rules!

The method of conducting business used by members is in the form of motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership takes action or stand on an issue. Individual members can (which means):

1. Introduce motions ("We should do this...")
2. Second motions ("I agree, we should talk about this")
3. Debate motions ("I think we should/shouldn't support this because...")
4. Vote on motions ("I support/do not support this")

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. Raise your voting placard.
 - b. Wait for the Chairman to recognize 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 do not provide support to the motion at this time.
3. Wait for someone to second your motion
 - a. Another member will second your motion or the Chairman will call for a second.
 - b. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.
4. The Chairman states your motion

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- a. The chairman will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we..." Thus placing the motion before the membership for consideration.
 - b. The membership then either debates the 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. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than when 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. Whenever possible, discussion alternates Pro/Con.
 - f. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.
6. Putting the question to the membership
- a. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready for the question?" or a member calls the question.
 - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.

Voting on a motion:

The method of vote depends on the situation. There are five methods used to vote, they are:

1. **By Voice** – The Chairman ask those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no".
2. **By Roll Call** – Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This 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 objects, the item must go to a formal vote.
4. **By Division** – This slight variation on a voice vote calls for members to 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.

Parliamentary procedure is the best way to get things, but it will only work if it is used properly.

1. Only 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.

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Decorum during debate:

1. The maker of the motion has the first right to debate the motion. If another member rises instead of the maker of the motion, the chair should ask if the maker would like to speak before he assigns the floor to the member rising for recognition.
2. Remarks in debate must be confined to the merits of the motion. This means it must have bearing on the motion or be "germane" to the motion concerning its adoption.

Example: When members debating having a car wash to raise money for the dance fund, it would not be germane for a member to stand and talk about sending delegates to the state convention unless this had some bearing on the motion not being adopted.

3. In debate members can't attack or question another's motives. However the member can question the consequences of the motion. Members can not in debate state that another's statement is false or call another member a liar. He can say that there is strong evidence that a member is mistaken or that in his research he has found something else to be true.
4. Members must address all remarks through the chair. That means that they can't address each other or ask questions of each other but must ask the question through the chair by the procedure of a POINT OF INFORMATION.
5. Members must avoid using members' names. In debate, a member can say "the previous speaker" or the "delegate from" When addressing officers or referring to an officer, the member should state "the president", "the secretary", "the treasurer". For example, "Will the secretary please read us the motion in its final form?" "Will the treasurer please tell us how much money we have allotted for this event?" However, a member in debate can say "I....." It is only in referring to others that it is kept in the third person.
6. Members must refrain from speaking adversely on a prior action not pending unless the motions to rescind, reconsider, or amend something previously adopted are pending. Or unless he is concluding his remarks by giving notice that he will rescind, reconsider or amend it.
7. A member can't speak against his own motion, but can vote against it.
8. A member must sit down if debate is interrupted by a point of order or the chair rising to make a ruling.
9. A member must not disturb the assembly during debate -- that means no cross talk between members while another is speaking.
10. In debate a member can read from a paper as long as no one objects or he has the permission of the assembly.