

Parliamentary Procedure

A Simplified Guide to Robert's Rules of Order

The Four Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

- Justice and courtesy to all.
- One thing at a time.
- The rule of the majority.
- The right of the minority.

The Bylaws & Parliamentary Procedure

The *Bylaws* are the Constitution of an organization and so its highest authority. *Bylaws* typically name a parliamentary authority such as *Robert's Rules* as the organization's procedural reference. However, when the official parliamentary authority and the *Bylaws* contradict each other the *Bylaws* always take precedence.

Introduction

In order for an organization to conduct business in a professional and efficient manner, rules and procedures should be adopted so that all members know the correct process. *Roberts Rules of Order* is the most commonly used "rule-book" for the conduct of business in organizations. This publication is designed to provide some basic information about parliamentary procedure to assist student leaders as they work within their organizations. For additional information about parliamentary procedure, obtain a copy of Webster's New World edition of *Roberts Rules of Order, Simplified and Applied* from the Library or bookstore.

Securing the Floor

When a member wishes to bring a matter before the membership, they must first secure the floor. To do this, the following steps are necessary:

1. Member raises hand or rises.
2. Member addresses the Chair, by his title, never by their name. If the President is presiding, say, "Mister (Madam) President." If anyone else is in the chair, say, Mister (Madam) Chairman," and then wait.
3. You do not have the floor until the third step is taken, which is that the chair recognizes you by calling you by name or by inclining their head toward you with a distinct nod. A common mistake is for the member to assume that they have the floor as soon as they have spoken to the Chair.

To secure the floor, all three steps must be taken:

- Member raises hand or rises
- Member addresses the chair
- Chair recognizes the member.

Introducing Business

Having passed the first stage in the process of a motion, that of securing the floor, the member is now ready for the second stage, that of introducing the business. As in the first stage, there are three distinct steps to be taken:

1. One member makes a motion by saying, "I move that" or "I move to" or "I move the adoption of the following..." Do not say, "I move you" or "I make a motion" or "I want to move." These are common mistakes. Simply say, "I move," which is the equivalent to saying, "I propose that, etc."
2. Another member seconds the motion. The form is this: "I second the motion." The only reason that a motion needs to be seconded is to indicate that more than one person is in favor of hearing the matter under consideration. The person that seconds the motion is not necessarily in favor of the motion but only interested in hearing the issue debated. Sometimes there are several seconds to a motion. It is not necessary to secure the floor in order to second a motion.
3. The Chair states the motion. The form of stating the motion is this: "It is moved and seconded that ... are there any remarks"? or are you ready for the question?" Both forms are correct, but among beginners, the former form is advisable. Do not confuse the terms stating and putting the question. A motion is stated when the chair announces to the house that such and such a motion has been made and seconded. It is put when the vote is taken.

Debating the Motion

Some motions may be debated and others not. If the motion is debatable, remarks on the motion are not in order until after the Chair has stated the motion and called for remarks. In the interval between the second and third stages, after the motion is stated and before it is put to vote, the motion may be debated if debatable.

Voting *Viva Voice*

There are several way of taking the vote. The most common one is *viva voice*, by the voice, or by acclamation. This is the form generally used when taking the vote on an ordinary main motion. The form is "All who are in favor of the motion will say aye," (meaning yes). In response, the members who are in favor of the motion should say "aye," clearly and distinctly, and loud enough to be heard. The chair will then put the negative in this manner: "All who are opposed will say No," and those opposed will say "No". After the negative vote has been taken, the chair announces the result by saying either, "The ayes have it, the motion is carried," or the no's have it, the motion is lost," and lightly touches the gavel to the table, which completes the transaction so far as that particular motion is concerned.

The Standing Vote and the Ballot

Motions with important implications are often put to a vote by asking the membership to stand to signify yea or nay. Those that do not stand abstain from voting. When voting may be contentious or intimidating a secret ballot may be taken.

Principal Motions

General Statement. When a motion has been made, seconded and stated by the chair, the assembly is not at liberty to consider any other business until the motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the chairman asks the mover to hand it in writing to the secretary. The mover cannot

withdraw his motion after it has been stated by the chair. In general, all important motions should be seconded, which may be done without rising or addressing the chair.

To Amend.

This motion is "to change, add, or omit words" in the original main motion, is debatable, and requires a majority vote.

To Amend the Amendment.

This is a motion to change, add, or omit words in the first amendment is debatable and requires a majority vote.

Method. The first vote is on changing words of second amendment, the second (if first vote adopts change) on first amendment as changed; the third vote is on adopting main motion as changed.

To Refer to Committee or "to Commit."

When a motion becomes involved through amendments or when it is wise to investigate more carefully, it may be moved to commit the motion to a committee for further consideration. Debatable - Amendable

Committee must make report on such question.

To Lay on the Table.

The object of this motion is to postpone the subject under discussion in such a way that it can be taken up at some time in the near future when a motion "to take from the table" would be in order. These motions are not debatable or amendable; majority vote.

To Postpone.

A motion to postpone the question before the assembly to some future time in the meeting is in order, except when a speaker has the floor. Debatable: majority vote.

To Postpone Indefinitely

A motion to postpone indefinitely causes the motion to be postponed until some date after the current meeting is adjourned. Since all motions not voted upon die upon adjournment, this motion has the effect of killing a motion. This motion is debatable but not amenable and requires a majority vote.

To Adjourn.

This motion is always in order except:

- When a speaker has the floor
- When a vote is being taken
- After it has been voted down
- When the assembly is in the midst of some business which cannot be abruptly stopped.

Under all of the above circumstances, the motion is **not debatable**. When a motion is made to

adjourn to a definite place, and time, it is debatable.

To Reconsider.

The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or lost is in order if made on the same day or the next calendar day, but must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. Motion in question can be twice reconsidered. Debatable: majority rule.

The Previous Question: Closing Debate & Voting

Is to close debate on the pending question. This motion may be made when debate becomes long drawn out. It is not debatable. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I move the previous question." The Chairman then asks, "Shall debate be closed and the question now put?" If this is adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.

Point of Order.

This motion is always in order, but can be used only to present an objection to a ruling of the chair or some method of parliamentary procedure. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The Chairman: "Please state your point of order." After the member has stated his objection, the chair answers:

1. "Your point of order is sustained" or
2. "Your point of order is denied."

If the member is not satisfied, he/she may appeal from the decision of the chair. The Chairman then addresses the assembly. "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" This is debatable and the presiding officer may discuss it without leaving the chair. It is voted on like any other motion:

majority or tie vote sustains the decision or reverses the decision of the chair.

Personal Privilege.

Request by member to have an item of some concern to himself as a member of the organization considered by those attending the meeting.

Point of Information.

Request that is made when a member desires clarification of details. The member may interrupt a speaker and need not obtain the floor.

Point of Privilege.

Privileged motion concerned with the welfare of the total meeting, such as the comfort of those in attendance, or the reputation or integrity of members, either present or absent.

Question.

When called for, indicates that a member is ready to vote on the question being considered in the form of a motion. It does not necessarily close discussion but often expedites the voting.

Repeal.

Motion to revoke a former action by the group. It may completely remove the motion that originated the action. It may or may not include that the former motion be "struck from the records."

Special Orders.

A class of "orders of the day." They take precedence for consideration over all motions except another (previously made) special order, or motion for adjournment, or questions of privilege.

To Table a Motion.

Serves to delay the consideration of a motion. Although this motion is intended to return the motion being tabled before the members later, it can be used as a delaying tactic to prevent or discourage any further action on the issue.

To Take From The Table.

The removal from the table a motion that has been previously tabled. It may be at the same or a later meeting. This returns the motion for further consideration; not debatable or amendable, and can have no subsidiary motion applied. It takes precedence over any main motion.

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

Three Stages Through Which Every Motion Must Pass

- Securing the floor.
- Introducing the business.
- Putting the question.

Process to Secure the Floor

- Member raises hand or rises.
- Member addresses the chair.
- Chair recognizes member.

Process to Introduce Business

- Member makes a motion.
- Another member seconds the motion.
- Chair states the motion.

Process of Putting the Question

- Chair takes the affirmative vote.
- Chair takes the negative vote.
- Chair announces the result.