



ROBERT'S
RULES OF ORDER

Why have Rules of Order?

“Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.”

Henry Martyn Robert

Use of Rules of Order

“While it is important to every person in a free country to know something of parliamentary law, this knowledge should be used only to help, not to hinder business.

One who is constantly raising points of order and insisting upon a strict observance of every rule in a peaceable assembly in which most of the members are unfamiliar with these rules and customs makes himself a nuisance, hinders business, and prejudices people against parliamentary law.

Such a person either does not understand its real purpose or else willfully misuses his knowledge.”

Henry Martyn Robert III

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. Officer's 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.

Deliberative Body

A Deliberative Body is a group of people who meet together and conduct business by voting on individual items. §1

All Deliberative Bodies need rules to conduct business in an orderly and positive manner.

Normally, all votes are a simple majority. However, there may be certain cases that require a higher majority.

i.e. US Congress is required to have a two-thirds majority in both Houses to pass a proposed Constitutional Amendment and present it to the States for Consideration.

It requires three-quarters of the States to approve the proposed Constitutional Amendment for it to be ratified and go into force.

These rules are contained in the Constitution of the United States.

For other Deliberative Bodies, the available rules are found in:
§2

Corporate Charter

Constitution

By-Laws

Rules of Order

Meeting (Special) Rules

Policy Statements

Quorum

A quorum—the minimum number of members who must be present at the meeting before business can be legally transacted.

- In a mass meeting, the quorum is simply the number of individuals present, since they constitute the Membership at that moment.
- In organizations such as many religious groups and some societies there is a clearly established list of bona-fide Members. In this case, a quorum consists of those members present at any regular or properly called meeting.
- In a body of delegates, such as a convention, a quorum is a majority of the number of delegates registered as attending. This may not be the same as the number of elected or appointed delegates.
- In any other Deliberative Assembly with an enrolled membership, and whose bylaws do not establish the number for a quorum, it is simply a majority of all members.

To accomplish their work, volunteer organizations that have an enrolled membership generally need a provision in their bylaws that will establish a relatively small number of members to establish a quorum.

In the absence of a quorum, any business transacted is null and void. In such a case, however, it is that business that is illegal, not the meeting. If the association's rules require that the meeting be held, the absence of a quorum in no way detracts from the fact that the rules were complied with and the meeting held, even though it had to adjourn immediately.

Classes of Motions §6

A Motion is a proposal that the entire membership can take action on. Individual members can take action or a stand on an issue, they can express themselves in the form of moving motions.

There are four Basic Types of Motions:

1. Main Motions:

- a. Introduces items to the membership for their consideration.
- b. Must contain all pertinent information: who, what, why, where, when and how.
- c. Should be in the positive not negative.
- d. Must be Made, Seconded, Stated, Discussed and Voted upon. (in this order)
- e. Cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.

2. Subsidiary Motions:

- a. Changes or affect how a main motion is handled and is voted on before a main motion.
- b. Lay on Table §17
- c. Previous Question §16
- d. Limit or Extend Debate §15
- e. Postpone to a certain Time or Event §14
- f. Refer to a Committee §13
- g. Amend (Modify the Main Motion) §12
- h. Postpone Indefinitely (Kill Main Motion) §11

3. Privileged Motions:

- a. Unrelated to pending business but of importance during the meeting
- b. May not be debated; Takes precedence over Subsidiary Motions
- c. Fix a Time to Adjourn §22
- d. Adjourn §21
- e. Recess §20
- f. Raise a Question of Privilege (welfare of Individual or group) §19
- g. Call for Orders of the Day (Stick to Agenda) §18

4. Incidental Motions:

- a. Are a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions
- b. Doesn't affect Main Motion; Not normally debatable; addressed immediately
- c. Point of Order §23
- d. Appeal §24
- e. Suspend the Rules 2/3 Majority §25
- f. Objections to the Consideration of Question 2/3 majority §26
- g. Division of the Question §27
- h. Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim §28
- i. Division of Assembly §29
- j. Motions Relating to Methods of Voting and the Polls §30
- k. Motions Relating to Nominations §31
- l. Request to be Excused form a Duty §32
- n. Request to Withdraw a Motion after it is stated by a Chair §33

Motions

How are Motions Presented?

1. Obtaining the floor
 - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
 - b. Rise and address the Chairman by saying, "Chairman, 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.

Note: All motions made before the body should be recorded in the minutes, with the final disposition. If it dies for lack of a second, it still should be recorded and noted.

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 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 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.

Previous Notice §10

Some motions require that Previous Notice be given to consider certain issues. Examples of these issues are:

- Amendments to By-Laws
- Resolutions
- Dues Changes

Unless specified otherwise, such Notice may be either written or oral.

These proposals must be included in the notice or call for a meeting but may be abbreviated in the notice or call.

i.e. Increase Annual Dues to \$35
or

Increase Annual Dues by \$2

Unless a provision is included in the available rules, the provision of Previous Notice may not be rescinded by the body.

Motions to Reconsider a Question §37

- Can only be made by a Member who voted in the Majority
- Must be Seconded (by any Member)
- Subject to time limits
- Can only be made when there is no other business on the table
- Subject to debate
- Can be made to Reconsider the vote (vote again)
- Can be made to amend or rescind an adopted motion
- Requires only a majority vote
- Cannot be reconsidered

For Fair and Orderly Meetings & Conventions

Provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide.

Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies requires all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action! The assembly rules - they have the final say on everything!
Silence means consent!

- Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state Mr/Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing and standing while another has the floor is out of order! Must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!
- Debate cannot begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked, "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote!
- Before the motion is stated by the Chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.

- The "immediately pending question" is the last question stated by the Chair! Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone
- The member moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to preference to the floor!
- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once!
- All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations! When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins, and changes occur

The Rules

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc.
- may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally, applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble cannot be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists includes size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).

- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" – must also state the motion
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "**Close Debate**" if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "**Committee of the Whole**" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified

Robert's Rules of Order Publication History

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