

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 speak 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, the newly revised Robert's Rules of Order is the handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations and other groups. It is important that everyone know these basic rules.

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

Call to order.
Roll call of members present.
Reading of minutes of last meeting.
Officers reports.
Committee reports.
Special orders --- Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.
Unfinished business.
New business.
Announcements.
Adjournment.

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

Call to order.
Second motions.
Debate motions.
Vote on motions.

There are four Basic Types of Motions

- Main motions: The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for its consideration. Main motions cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and must yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
- Subsidiary motions: Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled. Subsidiary motions are voted on before a main motion.
- Privileged motions: Their purpose is to bring up urgent items about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
- Incidental motions: Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions. Incidental motions must be considered before the other motion.

How are Motions Presented?

Obtaining the floor

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the chair by saying, "Mr./Ms. Chair or Mr./Ms. President."
3. Wait until the chair recognizes you.

Make your motion

4. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
5. Always state a motion affirmatively: "I move that we ..." rather than "I move that we do not ...".
6. Stay on your subject.
7. Wait for someone to second your motion
8. Another member will second your motion or the chair will call for a second.
9. If there is no second to your motion it is lost.
10. The chair states your motion. The chair will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we ...," thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
11. The membership then debates your motion or moves directly to a vote.
12. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chair it becomes "assembly property," and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.

Expanding on Your Motion

13. 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.
14. The mover speaks first.
15. All comments and debate must be directed to the chair.
16. Keep to the established time limit for speaking.
17. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the chair.

Putting the Question to the Membership

18. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
19. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
20. On a motion to move the previous question may be adapted.

Voting on a Motion:

21. The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and by-laws of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations:
 - a. Voice -- The chair asks those in favor to say, "aye," those opposed to say "no." Any member may move for an exact count.
 - b. Roll call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his/her name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
 - c. General consent -- When a motion is unlikely to be opposed, the chair says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by its silence. However, if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
 - d. Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chair so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.

- e. Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This method is used when secrecy is desired.
22. There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.
- a. Motion to table -- This motion often is used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option always is present to "take from the table," for reconsideration by the membership.
 - b. Motion to postpone indefinitely -- This is used often 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

23. This the best way to get agenda items accomplished. But, it will work only if used properly.
- a. Motions are allowed in order.
 - b. Members obtain the floor properly.
 - c. Speak clearly and concisely.
 - d. Obey the rules of debate.
 - e. Most importantly, be courteous.

<http://www.robertsrules.org/rulesintro.htm>