

Meeting Organization: Robert's Rules of Order Summary

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business.

The Chair sets the meeting agenda, including when members may speak and for how long. A member may only speak when recognized by the Chair to do so. (Note: any complaints or questions must be made after the Chair recognizes a member. Most issues should be held until the end of the meeting.)

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: call to order, second motions, debate motions, and 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 is a motion presented?

- Obtaining the floor:
 - Wait until the last speaker has finished.
 - Rise and address the Chair by saying, "Mr. Chairman or Mr. President."
 - Wait until the Chair recognizes you.
- Make your motion:
 - Speak in a clear and concise manner.
 - Always state a motion affirmatively. For example, "I move that we..." rather than, "I move that we do not..."
 - Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
- Wait for someone to second your motion.
- Another member will second your motion or the Chair will call for a second.
- If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.
- The Chair states your motion.
- The membership then either debates your motion or moves directly to a vote.
- Once your motion is presented to the membership by the Chair, it becomes "assembly properly," and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
- Expanding your motion:

- 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.
- The mover is always allowed to speak first.
- All comments and debate must be directed to the Chair.
- Abide by the established time limit for speaking.
- The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chair.
- Putting the question to the membership:
 - The Chair asks, “Are you ready to vote on the question?”
 - If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
 - A motion to move the previous question may be adapted.
- Voting on a motion:
 - Most motions are by hand vote, or voice vote.
 - If a ballot vote is taken, the ballots must show the name of the member and the organization represented on the ballot.
 - Each member organization and each charter member has only one vote on all matters.
 - If both the member and the alternate are present, only one may vote.
- Two other motions:
 - Motion to Table. This motion is often used to put a matter aside. If a vote is successful, the matter may only be brought up again by another motion to “take from the table.”
 - Motion to Postpone Indefinitely. This is often used as a means to allow an opponent of a motion to postpone a vote on the matter being discussed for a vote.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. However, it will only work if you use it properly.

- Allow motions that are in order.
- Have members obtain the floor properly.
- Speak clearly and concisely.
- Obey the rules of debate.
- Be courteous.