

Robert's Rules of Order – the Basics

(This sheet should not be a substitute for the most recent version of *Robert's Rules of Order*, but is meant to supplement the full set of rules.)

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting orderly meetings that accomplish goals fairly. Benefits of parliamentary procedure include the following:

- Justice and courtesy for all
- Maintenance of order
- Consideration of one item at a time
- All sides get heard
- Ability for each member to provide input
- Majority rule
- Protection of the rights of all members including the minority

Basic Principles

- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations
- No person can speak until recognized by the chair
- Personal remarks during debate are out of order
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time
- Members have a right to know what the immediately pending question is and to have it restated before a vote is taken
- Full and free discussion of every main motion is a basic right
- A quorum must be present for business to be conducted
- A majority decides a question except when basic rights of members are involved or a rule provides otherwise.
- A 2/3 vote is required for any motion that deprives a member of right in any way (e.g., cutting off debate)
- Silence gives consent. Those who do not vote allow the decision to be made by those who do vote.
- The Chair should always remain impartial

Basic Definitions

Motion – A formal proposal made to bring a subject before an assembly for its consideration and action. Begins with “I move that...”

Second – A statement by a member who agrees that the motion made by another member be considered. Stated as “Second,” or “I second the motion.”

Amendment – Before the vote is taken on a motion, it may be amended by:

- Striking out words
- Inserting or adding words
- Striking out words and inserting others in their place
- Substituting one (1) paragraph or resolution for another

Quorum – the minimum number of members who must be present in order to conduct business. The quorum can be found in the party Plan of Organization. For boards and committees, unless stated in the PoO, the quorum is a majority of the members. The party cannot take votes on business matters unless a quorum is present.

Out of Order – A ruling by the presiding officer that your piece of business can't be brought up at this point in the meeting. You should try to bring it up again at a later point.

Role of the Presiding officer

- **To remain impartial during debate** – the presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to debate the merits of a motion and may not chair the meeting again until after a vote has been taken on the motion has been disposed of
- **To vote only to create or break a tie** (or 2/3 for matters requiring a 2/3 vote) – exception: the presiding officer may vote on any vote by ballot
- To introduce business in proper order per the agenda
- To recognize speakers
- To determine if a motion is in order
- To keep discussion relevant to the pending motion
- To maintain order
- To put motions to a vote and announce results

General procedure for Handling a Main Motion

- A member must obtain the floor by being recognized by the chair
- Member makes a motion
- A motion must be seconded by another member before it can be considered
- If the motion is in order, the chair will restate the motion and open debate
- The maker of a motion has the right to speak first in debate
- The main motion is debated along with any secondary motions that are debatable.
- Debate on Subsidiary, Privileged and Incidental motions (if debatable or amendable) take precedence over debate on the main motion and must be decided before debate on the main motion can continue.
- Debate is closed when:
 - Discussion has ended, or
 - A 2/3 vote closes debate (“call the previous question” or “call the question”)
- The chair restates the motion, and if necessary clarifies the consequences of affirmative and negative votes
- The chair calls for a vote by asking “All in favor?” Those in favor say “Aye.” Then asking “All opposed?” Those opposed will say “no”
- The chair announces the result

General rules of Debate

- **No member may speak until recognized by the chair**
- **All discussion must be relevant to the immediately pending question**
- No member can speak more than twice to each debatable motion. The second time takes place after everyone wishing to debate the motion has had an opportunity to speak once
- **All remarks must be addressed to the chair** – no cross debate is permitted
- It is not permissible to speak against one's own motion (but one can vote against one's own motion)
- Debate must address issues not personalities – no one is permitted to make personal attacks or question the motives of other speakers
- The presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to participate in debate and cannot reassume the chair until the pending main question is disposed of
- When possible, the chair should let the floor alternate between those speaking in support and those speaking in opposition to the motion
- Members may not disrupt the assembly
- Rules of debate can be changed by a 2/3 vote or general consent without objection

Example of Handling a Main Motion:

Actions	What is said
Member rises to address the chair.	"Madam/Mister Chair."
Chair recognizes member.	"The member may speak."
Member makes motion.	"I move that..."
Another member (not recognized)	"I second the motion."
Chair states the motion and opens debate.	"The motion on the table is..., is there any debate?"
Chair recognizes members wishing to speak.	
After debate concludes, Chair restates the motion and calls for a vote.	"The motion on the table is..., those in favor say "aye", those opposed say "no"."
The membership votes	"aye" OR "no"
Chair announces the result of the vote and what action will be taken.	"the "ayes" have it, and the motion is adopted." OR "the "nos" have it, and the motion is lost."
Chair continues with the next business in order.	

Common methods of taking a vote:

General consent: *"If there is no objection, we will..." (Pause) "Since there is no objection, we will..."*

Voice vote: *"As many as are in favor, say "aye." As many opposed, say "no." The "ayes/noes" have it and the motion is adopted/lost."*

Rising vote (not counted): *"Those in favor will rise. Thank you, be seated. Those opposed will rise. Thank you, be seated. There is a majority (or 2/3) in the affirmative and the motion is adopted." Or "There is less than a majority (or 2/3) in the affirmative and the motion is lost."*

Methods of Amending

By striking out: “I move to amend the motion by striking out the word “Denver.”

By inserting: “I move to amend the motion by inserting the word ‘Las Vegas’ after the word ‘Portland’ and before the period.”

By striking out and inserting: “I move to amend the motion by striking out the word ‘\$35’ and inserting the word ‘\$50.’”

Helpful terminology

- Recommendations, bylaws, rules, resolutions, budgets, and audits are **adopted**.
- Reports are **filed**.
- Resignations are **accepted**.
- Minutes are **approved**.
- If corrections were made to the minutes, the minutes are then **approved as corrected**.
- Motions are recorded as **“adopted” or “lost.”**
- It is highly recommended that main motions be put in writing (dated and signed). If so, number motion slips, and note on the slips whether the motion was **“adopted” or “lost.”**

Robert’s Rules Help Get Things Done!

- *Make Motions – that are in order*
- *Obtain the floor – properly*
- *Speak – clearly and concisely*
- *Obey – the rules of debate*

And most of all, be courteous! That’s always in order!