

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Parliamentary Procedure:

Parliamentary procedure-based in the time honored and currently respected [Robert's Rules of Order](#) is essential and valuable, and for the following reasons:

- Business must be handled and group decisions made efficiently and logically.
- Majority rule, properly sought, governs our society.
- The rights of the minority, in the processes of making and implementing decisions, must be protected, and the minority must be allowed to "have its say."

This brief report will make no attempt to completely define and set forth in great detail the extensive provisions and procedures of parliamentary procedure. Rather, here included are certain key points, definitions and explanations which will enable the body leaders to develop a basic appreciation of the necessity for operating within this framework. A further aim of this section is to provide him with the major details and understanding which will permit him to stride purposefully into the field of group leadership through experience and further study, if necessary.

Procedures at a Glance:

Here are some motions you might make, how to make them, and what to expect of the **rules**.

TO DO THIS	YOU SAY THIS	May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is needed?	Can it be reconsidered?
Adjourn	"I move that we adjourn."	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
Call an intermission	"I move that we recess for"	NO	YES	NO	YES	MAJORITY	NO
Complain about heat or noise	"I rise to a question of privilege	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
Temporarily Suspend Consideration of an issue	"I move to table the motion"	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
End debate and amendments	"I move the previous question"	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO(1)
Postpone discussion for a certain time	"I move to postpone the discussion until"	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Give closer study of something	"I move to refer the matter to committee"	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES(2)
Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by"	NO	YES	YES(3)	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Introduce Business	"I move that"	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES

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The motions listed above are in order of precedence...Below there is no order...

TO DO THIS	YOU SAY THIS	May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is needed?	Can it be reconsidered?
Adopt a Motion	"I move that the report be adopted..."	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Ballot Vote	"I move that a committee be appointed to..."	NO	YES	NO	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Protest breach of rules or conduct	"I rise to a point of order"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE (4)	NO
Vote on a ruling of the chair	"I appeal from the chair's decision"	YES	YES	YES	NO	MAJORITY (5)	YES
Suspend rules temporarily	"I move to suspend the rules so that"	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
Rescind, Repeal or Annul	"I move that the motion to ... be rescinded."	NO	YES	YES	YES	2/3 without malice	N/A
Avoid considering an improper matter	"I object to consideration of this motion"	YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3 (6)	(7)
Verify a voice vote by having members stand	"I call for a division" or "Division"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
Request information	"Point of information"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO

Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move to take from the table"	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
Reconsider a hasty action	"I move to reconsider the vote on"	YES	YES	(8)	NO	MAJORITY	NO
Notes:							
(1) Unless vote on question is not yet taken	(2) Unless the committee has already taken up subject	(3) Only if the motion to be amended is debatable	(4) Except in doubtful cases	(5) A majority vote in negative needed to reverse ruling of chair	(6) A 2/3 vote in negative needed to prevent consideration of main motion	(7) Only if the question or motion was not, in fact, considered	(8) Only if motion to be reconsidered is debatable

Definitions:

ACCEPTING A COMMITTEE REPORT – A motion is made as follows: "I move we accept the committee's report." By this motion, the body supports the action of the committee. Most committee **reports** need not be accepted because they require no action; they should be received, not accepted (See [RECEIVE A REPORT](#)). Sometimes "adopt" is used instead of "accept."

ACCLAMATION – A voice vote made by stating "Aye" or "No."

ADOPT – To pass or carry a motion: to approve a committee report.

APPEAL FROM THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR – An incidental motion (See [MOTIONS](#) below). Any member disagreeing with the chairman's decision may thus petition the matter to a vote of the body. It is in order even when another member has the floor, and often arises out of a point of order. The member arises, saying, "I appeal from the decision of the Chair." If it is seconded, the chairman states his decision and allows limited debate. He then says, "All those in favor of the chair's decision, say Aye," etc. A tie vote sustains the chair.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE QUESTION? – "Are you ready to vote on the motion?"

CARRY A MOTION – To pass, approve or adopt a motion.

CONVENE – To call the meeting to order.

DEBATE AND DISCUSSION – Debating or talking about a motion or question.

DIVISION – Count the vote again. It may be requested by any member, without recognition or rising, after the chairman has announced the outcome of a vote when the count is not definite, generally after a voice vote.

FILIBUSTERING – The act of speaking for the purpose of keeping the floor and preventing the opposition from getting a chance to speak, through consumption of the allotted time for a motion to be considered.

HAS THE FLOOR – When a member has been recognized by the chair, he has the floor. He should only in rare instances be interrupted; he may yield the floor (see below) to another if he so desires.

MAJORITY – More than half the votes cast.

METHOD OF VOTING – An INCIDENTAL MOTION (see MOTIONS below). It provides for the type of vote desired on a motion, such as a vote by rising, show of hands, acclamation, secret ballot, roll call vote, or secret roll call vote (members sign names).

MOTIONS – Proposals looking to action; a formal proposal made in a deliberative assembly; a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the group.

INCIDENTAL MOTION – Must be disposed of before action is taken on the motion out of which it arises. Example: MOTION TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS, POINT OF ORDER, METHOD OF VOTING.

MAIN MOTION – Introduces an action to the group for its consideration. Only one MAIN MOTION should be placed before the group at one time. It is always debatable and amendable, and it ranks below all other motions.

PENDING MOTION – On the floor, but not as yet disposed of. Several motions may be on the floor at one time, provided they were made in order of ascending rank. When several motions are pending, the one made last is always disposed of first.

PRIVILEGED MOTION – Refers to the action of the group as a whole (recess, adjourn, QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE, fix time of next meeting) outranks all other motions.

RENEWAL MOTION – Brings back to the floor a motion once considered, but which the group wishes to consider again (to reconsider, take from table, discharge a committee, etc.)

SUBSIDIARY MOTION – Applied to other motions, usually the MAIN MOTION, to alter, postpone, or temporarily dispose of them; ranks right below PRIVILEGED MOTIONS, and above the MAIN MOTION. (An AMENDMENT is a SUBSIDIARY MOTION.)

OBJECTION TO CONSIDERATION OF A MOTION – An INCIDENTAL MOTION, the purpose of which is to avoid consideration of a motion that is undesirable or impractical. It is usually applied to a MAIN MOTION and must be made immediately after the MAIN MOTION is opened for discussion, and before any amendments are made to it. It can be made when another has the floor, does not require a second; no debate, no amendments. The chairman says, "An objection has been made to the motion, shall we consider the motion?" The vote must be two-thirds in the negative to dismiss the MAIN MOTION and sustain the objection.

ON THE FLOOR – A motion is on the floor when it is being considered by the group.

OUT OF ORDER – Discussions, motions or interjections which are contrary to parliamentary procedure, fact, recognition, administrative procedure, or good taste.

PLURALITY – More votes than any other candidate.

POINT OF ORDER – A member may rise to a point of order without waiting to be recognized, to call the attention of the chair to a breach of parliamentary procedure. The chairman will then reply that the member's point is (or is not) well taken, and continue accordingly.

PREVIOUS QUESTION – A SUBSIDIARY MOTION which means "to close debate." If passed, it stops discussion and puts the pending motion to a vote. It is not debatable or amendable and requires a two-thirds vote.

PUTTING THE MOTION – To vote on the motion.

QUESTION – When a member calls "QUESTION," he means "I am ready to vote on the motion." It does not close discussion, but expedites it.

QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE – A PRIVILEGED MOTION is more accurately called a POINT OF PRIVILEGE and is concerned with the welfare of the group. A member states, "I rise to a QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE." The chair asks him to state his point which he does ("I should like to have the windows opened." "I should like to have the gentleman withdraw his remarks about member A." etc.) The chair then makes a decision on the point (subject to the appeal of the group). It requires no second, is in order when another has the floor, is not debatable or amendable, and requires no vote.

QUORUM – The number of members required to be present to transact business. The number is usually a majority of the membership unless otherwise specified in the By-laws

RECEIVE A REPORT – To hear or listen to a report. It does not mean that the group approves the report or takes any official action on it. Since most **reports** are **reports** of information, it is reasonable "to receive the report as read" instead of adopting or accepting it." Receiving the report also recognizes work done.

RECOGNITION – A member is recognized by the chairman when the latter announces the member's name. A member obtains recognition by raising his hand, rising, and, in some cases, calling "Chairman." No member should speak or make a motion until he is recognized by the presiding officer, except in the case of a POINT OF ORDER, PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY, or INFORMATION.

REPEAL – When the group desires to change a former action the motion to repeal is in order. It must be made when the floor is clear. is debatable, amendable and require a two-thirds vote. If sentiment is strong, the motion may include the words, "and strike from the records."

RISE FOR INFORMATION – A member without being recognized, may rise and say "Chairman, I rise for information" or "I should like to ask the member a question."

SUSPEND THE RULES – An INCIDENTAL MOTION used in urgent cases to save time. It is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote.

TABLE – To lay on the table: to set aside a motion temporarily for further consideration or committee action. Takes precedence of all other subsidiary motions: cannot be debated or amended. To bring a tabled motion back to the floor, a member moves to take such motion from the table.

UNANIMOUS BALLOT – A ballot cast by the secretary for a candidate who is the only person nominated for an office, and no objection is made. This method should not be used when the constitution requires an office to be filled by ballot, since it does not permit any negative votes to be cast.

WITHDRAW A MOTION – An INCIDENTAL MOTION permitting a previous motion to be withdrawn. If the maker of a motion refuses to withdraw his motion, that motion cannot be withdrawn. If the motion to withdraw is made before the chairman states the motion for the group, only the maker and seconder need agree upon the withdrawal. If after the chairman states the motion for the group, the maker and the entire group must be consulted for its withdrawal.

YIELD THE FLOOR – A member who has the floor may yield the floor to another member; in so doing the former surrenders his right to continue speaking at that time.

References and Detailed Publications:

- ["Robert's Rules of Order"](#)
- "Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance," O. Garfield Jones. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. (Spiralbound) A concise and readily-usable book outlining the salient points of "Robert's **Rules**," in a clear and logical manner.
- "The Meeting Will Come To Order," Harold Sponberg, Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service. (Booklet) A brief but clear display of the procedures for group meetings, based on but not as detailed as "Robert's **Rules**."