

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order is a set of rules first published in 1876 by Henry M. Robert to run effective, orderly meetings with maximum fairness to all members. In addition to informational resources, RobertsRules.org provides software tools to help organize and run meetings and groups.

For Fair and Orderly Meetings

Robert's Rules is a time-tested manual of "parliamentary procedure" for conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. The basic handbook of operation for most groups, it provides common procedures for deliberation and decision-making with the full participation of the membership body. 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 accomplish the business of the assembly, with undue strictness never allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation. Meetings work best when all members are familiar with the rules, and this website is intended to help everyone use them to best effect.

Guidelines

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies require 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! You must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.
- Debate can not begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "Are you ready for the question?," meaning "Are you ready to vote?" 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 motion 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.

Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

Motions

A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

- Move a motion
- Second a motion
- Debate motions
- Vote on motions

Types of Motions

Main Motions 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.

Subsidiary Motions change or affect how a main motion is handled, and are voted on before a main motion.

Privileged Motions bring up urgent items about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.

Incidental Motions provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and have priority.

Presenting a Motion

1. Obtaining the floor
 1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
 2. Rise and address the Chair by saying, for example, "Mr. Chairman," or "Madam President."

3. Wait until the Chair 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.
2. Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion
 - o Another member will second your motion or the Chair will call for a second. If there is no second, your motion is lost.
2. The Chair States Your Motion
 - a. The Chair 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 debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
 - c. 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.
2. 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 Chair.
 - 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 Chair.
3. Putting the Question to the Membership
 1. The Chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
 2. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
 3. Alternatively, a motion to "move the previous question", if adopted, brings the question to a vote.

Voting on a Motion

The method of vote on a motion depends on the circumstances and the by-laws of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations:

- **Voice.** The Chair asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
- **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.

- **General Consent.** When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chair 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.
- **Division.** Members raise their hands or stand with the ayes or the noes. A count is not necessarily required.
- **Ballot.** Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This method is used to maintain secrecy in votes.

Use It Properly

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

Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.

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 can not 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 include 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" - state the motion to take from the table
- **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