



Parliamentary Procedure

BASICS, CHEAT SHEET AND FAQ

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Parliamentary Procedure Basics

This document provides an overview of parliamentary procedure basics. For the full details of parliamentary procedure, please reference *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*. If your chapter does not have a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, you should work with your vice president: communications to request the chapter purchase a copy.

Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure:

1. The rights of the organization supersede the rights of the individual members.
2. All members are equal and their rights are equal.
3. A quorum must be present to do business.
4. The majority rules (unless specified otherwise in governing documents).
5. Silence is consent.
6. One question at a time and one speaker at a time.
7. Debatable motions must receive full debate.
8. Once a question is decided, it is not in order to bring up the same motion or one essentially like it at the same meeting.
9. Personal remarks in debate are always out of order.

General Information about Motions:

“Motions are the tools used to introduce business in a meeting. No business can be introduced without a motion.” – *Robert's Rules in Plain English* by Doris P. Zimmerman

1. **Main:** A main motion is defined as a proposal that certain action be taken or an opinion be expressed by the group. Main motions allow a group to do its work. They are the motions that spend money or adopt projects.
2. **Secondary:** A secondary motion is one that can be made while the main motion is on the floor and before it has been decided.
 - **Subsidiary Motions:** Subsidiary motions relate directly to the motion on the floor. They may change the words, send it to a committee or delay it. They are designed to expedite business by disposing of the pending motion other than by adopting or rejecting it.
 - **Privileged Motions:** Privileged motions are motions of an emergency nature, such as to recess or adjourn. They do not relate to the motion on the floor but to the welfare of the group.
 - **Incidental Motions:** Incidental motions are procedural. They deal with process, such as enforcing proper procedure, correcting errors and verifying votes. When introduced, they must be decided before business can resume.

Motion Intricacies

- Some motions are debatable; others are not.
- Some motions may be amended; others may not.
- Some motions require a majority to adopt; others require two-thirds.

How a Motion is Made and Acted Upon:

1. Motion is made by a member. The president must recognize the member before having the floor.
 - *I move that...*
2. Motion is seconded by another member. The member does not have to be recognized. If there is no second, the motion automatically fails.
 - *I second the motion.*
3. The president states the motion.
 - *It has been moved and seconded that...*
4. Debate is held. Only those who are recognized by the president are able to speak. The parliamentarian should maintain a speakers' list to help the president determine speaking order. The person making the motion has the right to speak to it first.
 - *Is there any discussion?*
5. The president puts the question to a vote.
 - *The question is on the motion that... All in favor of the motion, please say "aye." All those opposed, please say "no."*
6. The president announces the vote.
 - *The "ayes" have it. or The "nos" have it.*

Helpful Hints During Debate:

- If, at any time, someone is unsure as to how to proceed correctly according to parliamentary procedure, he/she may say, "**Point of Parliamentary Inquiry.**" The president will recognize her and the question may be asked.
- If someone needs to make a point based upon his/her or the group's well-being to keep the meeting moving forward, he or she may say, "Madam President, **Point of Privilege.** We did not receive those handouts in the back of the room (or whatever the issue may be)." A speaker may be interrupted, if necessary.
- If someone has a question that another individual can answer while debate is taking place, he/she may say, "**Point of Information.**" The president will recognize her to ask what his/her question is.
- If someone questions the rules of debate or thinks something has been done wrong, she may say, "**Point of Order.**" The president will recognize her so that she may express the concern.
- If debate is getting long or the same comments are being made, someone may say, "**I move the previous question**" after being recognized by the president. To bring a vote to question without hearing everyone interested in speaking during a debate requires a two-thirds vote.
- If it is difficult to tell whether the "ayes" or "nos" have clearly won the vote, someone may call "**division**" without being recognized by the president, requiring the vote to be taken again by rising.

Parliamentary Procedure Cheat Sheet

A complete collection of parliamentary procedure rules can be found in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*. If your chapter does not have a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* you should work with your vice president: communications to request the chapter purchase a copy.

The chart below is designed to help you with some frequently used motions during chapter meetings.

The Chart of Motions

Motions arranged from lowest to highest rank.

	To do this	You say this	Vote required
Main	Introduce business	<i>I move that...</i>	Majority
Subsidiary	Change the wording of a motion	<i>I move to amend the motion by...</i>	Majority
	Send to a committee	<i>I move that the motion be referred to...</i>	Majority
	Postpone action	<i>I move that the motion be postponed to...</i>	Majority
	Limit debate	<i>I move that debate be limited to one speech of two minutes for each member, etc.</i>	Two-thirds
	End debate	<i>I move the previous question.</i>	Two-thirds
Privileged	Take care of noise or temperature	<i>Point of personal privilege. [We cannot hear in the back of the room.]</i>	Chair rules
	Take a recess	<i>I move that we recess for...</i>	Majority
	Close meeting	<i>I move that we adjourn.</i>	Majority
Incidental	To enforce rules	<i>Point of order. [State problem.]</i>	Chair rules
	Protest ruling of chair	<i>I appeal the decision of the chair...</i>	Majority
	Request information	<i>Point of information. [Ask question.]</i>	Given by Chair/ Authority
	Request parliamentary help	<i>Point of parliamentary question. [Ask question.]</i>	Given by Chair/ Authority
	Demand a verification of the vote	<i>Division.</i>	On demand of one member
	To separate parts of a motion	<i>I move that a motion be divided.</i>	Majority
	To remove an improper matter from the floor	<i>I object to the consideration of...</i>	Two-thirds
	To change a decision	<i>I move to rescind the motion to...</i>	Two-thirds
	To bring back a motion for re-vote*	<i>I move to reconsider the vote on...</i>	Majority

*Must be made by someone who voted on the winning side **and** must be made the same day.



Discussion Example:

- Motion made and seconded.
- Discussion takes place on main motion.
- Amendment is proposed.
- Discussion takes place on amendment.
- Vote takes place on amendment
- Discussion resumes on main motion.
- Member moves the previous question.
- Vote takes place on ending discussion.
- Vote fails.
- Discussion resumes on the main motion.
- Vote takes place on the main motion.



Parliamentary Procedure FAQ

What is parliamentary procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules that is used to run meetings. It allows for discussion and debate among members ensuring that all opinions are heard. Using this set of rules also allows chapter members to make decisions (vote) on chapter business while ensuring that meetings to be conducted efficiently.

What are *Robert's Rules of Order*?

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised is a handbook that outlines the principles of parliamentary procedure. All parliamentarians should have a copy of this book. If you do not have a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order*, work with your vice president: communications to purchase a copy. It is available online and at most local bookstores.

Why do we use parliamentary procedure?

The basic principles of parliamentary procedure assure the orderly transaction of business, with equality and fairness, where the majority rules and the rights of the minority are protected. Correct parliamentary procedure is essential to conduct business in an efficient and democratic manner.

The presiding officer should be familiar with and follow the principles of parliamentary procedure to assure that the rights of all members are respected and that the meeting proceeds in a timely and orderly fashion.

The main rights of a member are the right to debate and to vote. Debate on any issue is open only after a specific motion is made. The vote is taken upon the completion of debate. Other rights and responsibilities of membership include:

- Acceptance of responsibilities as stated in the bylaws
- Attendance at meetings
- Giving courteous attention to a speaker
- Weighing carefully the pros and cons of any issue before voting
- Upholding majority opinions while respecting the rights of the minority

For further information, refer to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.