

Parliamentary Procedure

Basic Procedures:

Having the Floor:

Having a member can speak at a meeting, s/he must be recognized by the chairperson. Once recognized, the speaker can not be interrupted except by the chairperson

Making Motions:

One makes a motion to propose a course of action that one thinks the groups should take. If another member agrees that the motion should be open for discussion, s/he will second the motion. Discussion pertaining only to the motion can be discussed at this time. Only one motion can be on the floor at a time. A motion to close discussion and a second are needed before a vote can be taken.

Amending Motions:

Amendments to a motion can be made as long as the person who has moved the original motion is agreeable to the amendment. If the originator of the motion is not agreeable, then the group must vote on the original motion.

Tabling Motions:

If it appears that more information is needed to consider a motion fairly, then a motion to table the discussion can be made. The length of, and reason for, tabling the motion must be included in the table to motion. A majority of members must support the tabling in for it to pass.

Calling the Question:

When it appears that the discussion of a particular motion is no longer productive, the question can be called with a two-thirds vote of the call to a question is an immediate vote on the motion.

Types of Motions:

1. Privileged:

Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn: This is used to set the time for another meeting.

Adjourn: A motion to end the meeting.

Recess: A motion to take a break, but not to end the meeting.

2. Subsidiary:

Lay on the Table: This motion sets aside the main motion temporarily, without debate. Used especially when more urgent business needs attention.

Previous Question: This motion is used to halt debate/discussion and to have the assembly vote immediately on one or more pending questions. Requires a two-thirds vote.

Limit or Extend Discussion: This is a motion to either set the desired amount of time for a discussion, or to extend the previously set amount of discussion time. Requires a two-thirds vote.

Postpone to a certain time: This is a motion to postpone a main motion to a later meeting, or a later time in the same meeting.

Commit or Refer: Usually called the motion to refer to committee, passage of this motion sends a main motion (and any proposed amendments) to a committee.

Amend: This motion provides an orderly way for an assembly to change the nature of a proposal in a main motion. A main motion may be amended by either (1) adding or inserting words, (2) striking out words, (3) striking out or inserting simultaneously, or (4) substituting another proposal for the original main motion.

Postpone Indefinitely: A motion which allows an assembly to kill a main motion without officially taking a position to it, one way or another.

3. Main:

General Main: Main motions or resolutions consist of either action proposal on the business of an organization or its expressions of opinion.

Motions that Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly:

1. Take from the Table: When a motion has been set aside by tabling it, this motion brings it back. It means to resume consideration of the motion set aside.
2. Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted: These motions allow a group either to reverse or to modify previous decisions on main motions.
3. Discharge a committee: This motion allows an assembly to reclaim a motion that has been referred to a committee.
4. Reconsider: This motion enables a majority to set aside a vote that either passed or defeats a motion and to permit the assembly to change its decisions if it desires to do so.

4. Incidental:

Suspend the Rules: With a 2/3 vote, a groups can temporarily overcome a parliamentary rule that interfere with an action it wants to take. It helps untie knots.

Unanimous Contest: Votes need not to be taken on non-controversial amendments or other matters if no member objects. This fosters efficiency and cooperation.

Division of Question: Used when a main motion has two or more separable proposals.

Point of Order: This is used by members to call the chair s attention to an error in the preceding.

Appeal: When a member disagrees with the chair s ruling, the assembly decides.

Division of Assembly: When the outcome of a vote is uncertain, this requires the chair to take the vote again by having members rise to indicate a yes vote.

Voting:

Voting Methods:

- Acclamation
- Show of hands
- Standing vote
- Secret roll call ballot - members sign ballot
- Roll Call - members verbally respond

Voting Types:

- Majority more than half of the people in attendance.
- Two-thirds
- Tie Vote - chair casts the deciding vote.
- Plurality Vote - largest number of votes cast
- Unanimous - no dissenting vote
- General Consent - chair assumes has consent of members
- Vote by Secretary - unanimous vote used only when one name is presented for nomination.

Roberts Rules of Order

WHAT IS THE STANDARD ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR A MEETING?

A meeting should not be called to order until a "quorum" is established. A quorum is the number or proportion of the members of an organization that must be present in order to transact any business. The quorum should be defined in the bylaws. In the absence of a provision regarding quorum, common law provides that a majority of members constitutes a quorum.

Once a quorum is present, the meeting and business may proceed. Quorum refers to the number of members present, not to the number of members voting. If a quorum is present, a vote is valid even though less than the quorum vote.

Parliamentary Procedure:

Parliamentary procedure, or parliamentary law, is the code of rules and ethics for working together in groups. According to Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure, parliamentary law refers to the rules, laws, or regulations of organizations, governing the orderly, expeditious and efficient transaction of business and meetings and conventions. Without rules, there would be injustice and confusion. Hence, it is as necessary to follow the rules of parliamentary law as it is to follow the rules of a ball game or a card game.

Demeter's, p. 4. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (1990 Edition) (referred to as RONR 1990), another parliamentary manual, defines parliamentary law as follows:

Parliamentary law is the best method yet devised to enable assemblies of an size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.
RONR 1990, p. xlv.

Parliamentary procedure is not synonymous with the book Robert's Rules of Order (1990 Edition). Instead, RONR 1990 is the most widely used of several major parliamentary manuals. Various versions of Roberts Rules of Order are used by approximately 80% of organizations in the United States.

WHAT GROUPS MUST FOLLOW PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice Sturgis states:

All organizations, such as business, cultural, religious, social, fraternal, professional, educational, labor, civil, scientific, medical, and governmental, are subject to the principles and rules of common parliamentary law. All profit and non-profit corporations and associations and the boards, counsels, commissions, and committees of government, must observe its rules.