

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order – General Guidelines

Robert's Rules of Order is the standard for facilitating discussions and group decision-making. Copies of the rules are available at most bookstores. Although they may seem long and involved, having an agreed upon set of rules makes meetings run easier. Robert's Rules will help your group have better meetings, not make them more difficult. Your group is free to modify them or find another suitable process that encourages fairness and participation, unless your bylaws state otherwise. Here are the basic elements of Robert's Rules, used by most organizations:

1. **Motion:** To introduce a new piece of business or propose a decision or action, a motion must be made by a group member ("I move that.....") A second motion must then also be made (raise your hand and say, "I second it.") After limited discussion the group then votes on the motion. A majority vote is required for the motion to pass (or quorum as specified in your bylaws.)
2. **Postpone Indefinitely:** This tactic is used to kill a motion. When passed, the motion cannot be reintroduced at that meeting. It may be brought up again at a later date. This is made as a motion ("I move to postpone indefinitely..."). A second is required. A majority vote is required to postpone the motion under consideration.
3. **Amend:** This is the process used to change a motion under consideration. Perhaps you like the idea proposed but not exactly as offered. Raise your hand and make the following motion: "I move to amend the motion on the floor." This also requires a second. After the motion to amend is seconded, a majority vote is needed to decide whether the amendment is accepted. Then a vote is taken on the amended motion. In some organizations, a "friendly amendment" is made. If the person who made the original motion agrees with the suggested changes, the amended motion may be voted on without a separate vote to approve the amendment.
4. **Commit:** This is used to place a motion in committee. It requires a second. A majority vote must rule to carry it. At the next meeting the committee is required to prepare a report on the motion committed. If an appropriate committee exists, the motion goes to that committee. If not, a new committee is established.
5. **Question:** To end a debate immediately, the question is called (say "I call the question") and needs a second. A vote is held immediately (no further discussion is allowed). A two-thirds vote is required for passage. If it is passed, the motion on the floor is voted on immediately.
6. **Table:** To table a discussion is to lay aside the business at hand in such a manner that it will be considered later in the meeting or at another time ("I make a motion to table this discussion until the next meeting. In the meantime, we will get more information so we can better discuss the issue.") A second is needed and a majority vote required to table the item being discussed.
7. **Adjourn:** A motion is made to end the meeting. A second motion is required. A majority vote is then required for the meeting to be adjourned (ended). Note: If more than one motion is proposed, the most recent takes precedence over the ones preceding it. For example, if #6, a

motion to table the discussion, is proposed, it must be voted on before #3, a motion to amend, can be decided.

In a smaller meeting, like a committee or board meeting, often only four motions are used:

- To introduce (motion.)
- To change a motion (amend.)
- To adopt (accept a report without discussion.)
- To adjourn (end the meeting.)

Remember, these processes are designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and to share ideas in an orderly manner. Parliamentary procedure should not be used to prevent discussion of important issues.

The following summary will help you determine when to use the actions described in Robert's Rules.

- A main motion must be moved, seconded, and stated by the chair before it can be discussed.
- If you want to move, second, or speak to a motion, stand, and address the chair.
- If you approve the motion as is, vote for it.
- If you disapprove the motion, vote against it.
- If you approve the idea of the motion but want to change it, amend it or submit a substitute for it.
- If you want advice or information to help you make your decision, move to refer the motion to an appropriate quorum or committee with instructions to report back.
- If you feel they can handle it better than the assembly, move to refer the motion to a quorum or committee with power to act.
- If you feel that there the pending question(s) should be delayed so more urgent business can be considered, move to lay the motion on the table.
- If you want time to think the motion over, move that consideration be deferred to a certain time.
- If you think that further discussion is unnecessary, move the previous question.
- If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a motion referred to a quorum or committee, move the motion be recalled.
- If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a matter already voted upon, move that it be reconsidered.
- If you do not agree with a decision rendered by the chair, appeal the decision to the assembly.
- If you think that a matter introduced is not germane to the matter at hand, a point of order may be raised.
- If you think that too much time is being consumed by speakers, you can move a time limit on such speeches.
- If a motion has several parts, and you wish to vote differently on these parts, move to divide the motion

IN THE MEETING TO INTRODUCE A MOTION

Stand when no one else has the floor.

Address the Chair by the proper title.

Wait until the chair recognizes you.

- Now that you have the floor and can proceed with your motion say, "I move that...", state your motion clearly and sit down.
- Another member may second your motion. A second merely implies that the seconder agrees that the motion should come before the assembly and not that he/she is in favor of the motion.
- If there is not a second, the Chair says, "The motion is not before you at this time." The motion is not lost, as there has been no vote taken.
- If there is a second, the Chair states the question by saying "It has been moved and seconded that ... (state the motion) . . ., is there any discussion?"

DEBATE OR DISCUSSING THE MOTION

- The member who made the motion is entitled to speak first.
- Every member has the right to speak in debate.
- The Chair should alternate between those "for" the motion and those "against" the motion.
- The discussion should be related to the pending motion.
- Avoid using a person's name in debate.
- All questions should be directed to the Chair.
- Unless there is a special rule providing otherwise, a member is limited to speak once to a motion.
- Asking a question or a brief suggestion is not counted in debate.
- A person may speak a second time in debate with the assembly's permission.

VOTING ON A MOTION

- Before a vote is taken, the Chair puts the question by saying "Those in favor of the motion that ... (repeat the motion) ... say "Aye." Those opposed say "No." Wait, then say, "The motion is carried," or "The motion is lost."
- Some motions require a 2/3 vote. A 2/3 vote is obtained by standing
- If a member is in doubt about the vote, he may call out "division." A division is a demand for a standing vote.
- A majority vote is more than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote.
- A 2/3 vote means at least 2/3 of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote.
- A tie vote is a lost vote since it is not a majority.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER – GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Purpose is to make sure all voices are heard, and no one is excluded
- Could appoint a parliamentarian to keep the meetings running smoothly (check w/ Bylaws also)
- The majority rules – ONLY after the minority has spoken and been heard.

The Chair

- Presides over the meeting amicably
- Remains neutral during discussions (at end of discussion, could state their opinion if really needed, for minutes)
- Don't use Chairman's power to sway the vote
- Makes sure no one talks over others
- Follows Roberts Rules and Agenda
- Asks people questions if expertise needed, or they are not speaking up
- Look around room and make sure all heard
- Calls the Votes and states the results
- Never give up the Chair – Keep control of the meeting – Has the power to stop discussion/ reframe; adjourn; move to next item, etc.

Motions

- Main Motions – are Agenized items:
 - When a motion is made, that is all that is talked about then.
 - (See Friendly Amendment & “Call the Question” below)
 - No ‘motions within a motion’
 - Presenter makes an Introductory Statement (2 mins)
 - Someone else makes a Motion, a third person Seconds
 - The Second is to make sure more than one person wants to discuss the item, and vote.
 - If no one else believes in the motion, don't second it. Therefore, motion dies.
 - President re-states the motion and calls for discussion
 - Discussion ensues: Run by President; Amicable; take turns around the table; or Pres. can vote for Pro/Con presenters to speak in order.
 - President says when time to vote – Keep meeting moving
 - The majority rules – ONLY after the minority has spoken and been heard.

Secondary Motions

- **Friendly Amendment**
 - A friendly amendment can be made during discussion
 - Amends a previous motion to clarify, not to change the nature of the motion

- **Privileged Motion**
 - Can be done during another motion
 - Purpose is to take a break, change room temp, change location of discussion (if need to go see something, etc.)
 - Does need someone to ask Chair to make a “Privileged Motion”, and a Second

- **Point of Information**
 - Anyone can ask for a Point of Information, ask the Chair
 - “Please explain the chart on pg. __”, etc.

- **Point of Order**
 - Address the Chair to state “Point of Order”, be recognized
 - And state how we are not following Roberts Rules of Order or our Bylaws
 - This can re-frame the discussion track, but not change the original Motion.

- **Debate/Discussion Conduct**
 - Take time to listen to the other point of view
 - Focus on the issue, not the personalities
 - Avoid questioning anyone’s motives
 - Address remarks to the position of the Chairman, keep things less personal
 - For example, “Madam Chairperson”, or “Mr. Treasurer”
 - Be courteous and polite
 - If discussion become un-civil, Chair should call for a break
 - If Chair does not notice need for a break, anyone can call for a “Privileged Motion” to take a 5-minute break

Voting

- When discussion concluded (or when statements are being re-said a second time) – President Calls the Motion
- Chair/President re-states the motion and voting can be done:
 - Voice Vote: All in Favor say Aye, etc.
 - Rising Vote: All in Favor raise their hand, etc. – and Chair glances around to see what looks like the majority
 - Counted Vote: All in Favor raise hand, etc. – and Chair counts the hands pro and con
 - Consent:
 - Try for unanimous consent when possible – means the argument was thorough and well thought out.

- For our purposes, it may be a good idea and is a common practice, during the Discussion portion, after a motion is made, utilize a consensus model to determine the level of interest in the motion, and whether/ when the vote should be called.

- An abstention is neither positive nor negative
 - People who may benefit some way should not vote