



Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order Overview

Robert's Rules of Order, from the [National Association of Parliamentarians](#), provide procedures that form basis for many organizations' meeting formats. The term "rule of order" refers to written rules of parliamentary procedure formally adopted by an assembly or an organization. Such rules relate to the orderly transaction of business in meetings and to the duties of officers in that connection. The object of "rules of order" is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the assembly and to provide a firm basis for resolving questions of procedure that may arise. An adaptation of some of the "rules" may be useful to your Neighborhood Association. The following summary provides some background and basic procedures.

Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law: The rules of parliamentary law are constructed upon a careful balance of the rights of: the majority, the minority, (especially a strong minority-greater than one third), individual members, absentees, and of all these together.

Deliberative Assemblies: Fundamentally, under the rules of parliamentary law, a deliberative body is a free agent free to do what it wants to do with the greatest measure of protection to itself and of consideration for the rights of its members. A deliberative assembly, the kind of gathering to which parliamentary law is generally understood to apply, has the following distinguishing characteristics:

- It is an independent or autonomous group of people meeting to determine, in full and free discussion, courses of action to be taken in the name of the entire group.
- The group is of such size-usually any number of persons more than about a dozen that a degree of formality is necessary in its proceedings.
- Persons having the right to participate, that is, the members-are ordinarily free to act within the assembly according to their own judgment.
- In any decision made the opinion of each member present has equal weight as expressed by vote-through, which the voting member joins in assuming direct personal responsibility for the decision, should his or her vote be on the prevailing side.
- Failure to concur in a decision of a body does not constitute withdrawal from the body.
- If there are absentee members-as there usually are in any formally organized assembly such as a legislative body or the assembly of an ordinary society-the members present at a regular or properly called meeting act for the entire membership, subject only to such limitations as may be established by the body's governing rules.

Types of Deliberative Assembly: The deliberative assembly may exist in many forms. Among the principal types are: the Mass Meeting, the Local Assembly of an Organized Society, the Convention, the Legislative Body, and the Board.

Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Opening Ceremonies
3. Roll call (if customary)
4. Reading and Approval of Minutes
5. Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees
6. Reports of Special Committees (announced only if such committees are prepared or instructed to report)
7. Special Orders (announced only if there are special orders)
8. Unfinished Business and General Orders
9. New Business
10. Announcements
11. Program (if a program or a speaker is planned for the meeting*)
12. Adjournment

Procedures for Handling a Main Motion

Obtaining and Assigning the Floor

1. A member rises when no one else has the floor and addresses the chair: "Mr./Madam President, Mr./Madam Chairman" or by other proper title.
 - a. In a large assembly, the member gives name and identification.
 - b. The member remains standing and awaits recognition by the chair.
2. The chair recognizes the member by announcing his name or title, or in a small assembly, by nodding to him.

How the Motion Is Brought Before the Assembly

1. The member makes the motion: "I move that (or 'to')..." and resumes his seat.
2. Another member, without rising, seconds the motion: "I second the motion" or "I second it" or even "second."
3. The chair states the motion: "It is moved and seconded that . . . Are you ready for the question?"

Consideration of the Motion

1. Members debate the motion.
 - (a) Before speaking in debate, members obtain the floor as stated above.
 - (b) The maker of the motion has first right to the floor if he claims it properly.
 - (c) All remarks must be addressed to the chair.
 - (d) Debate must be confined to the merits of the motion.
 - (e) Debate can only be closed by order of the assembly (2/3 vote) or by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate.

2. The chair puts the motion to a vote.
 - (a) The chair asks: "Are you ready for the question?" If no one rises to claim the floor, the chair proceeds to take the vote.
 - (b) The chair says: "The question is on the adoption of the motion that... As many as are in favor, say 'Aye'. (Pause for response.) Those opposed, say 'No'. (Pause for response.)"
3. The chair announces the result of the vote.
 - (a) "The ayes have it, the motion is adopted, and ... (indicating the effect of the vote) or
 - (b) "The noes have it, and the motion is lost."

THIRTEEN RANKING MOTIONS

1. **Privileged Motions** are such that, while having no relation to the pending question, are of such urgency, or importance that they are entitled to immediate consideration; relate to members, and to the organization, rather than to particular items of business.
2. **Subsidiary Motions** are those that may be applied to another motion for the purpose of *modifying* it, *delaying* action on it, or *disposing* of it.
3. **Main Motion** is the basis of all parliamentary procedure-provides method of bringing business before the assembly for consideration and action. Can only be considered if no other business is pending

Name of Motion?	Is it in order when another has the floor?	Does it require a second?	Is it debatable?	Is it amendable?	What vote is required to adopt?	May it be considered?
Fix the time to adjourn	No	Yes	No	Yes	M	Yes
Adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	M	No
Recess	No	Yes	No	Yes	M	No
Raise question of privilege	Yes	No	No	no	(1)	No
Call for orders	Yes	No	No	No	(2)	No
Lay on the Table	No	Yes	No	No	M	No
Previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes
Limit or extend limits of debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Yes (3)
Postpone to a certain time (definitely)	no	yes	Yes	yes	M (4)	Yes
Commit (refer to a committee)	no	Yes	Yes	Yes	M	Yes (5)
Amend	no	Yes	Yes(6)	Yes	M	Yes
Postpone indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	M	Affect only
Main Motion	No	Yes	Yes	yes	M	Yes

Privileged

Subsidiary

Main

Key to Numbers: (1) Chair grants; (2) No vote; Demand; (3) Unexecuted part may be reconsidered; (4) 2/3 vote if made a special order; (5) Only if committee has not started work; and (6) If applied to a debatable motion.