

What are Parliamentary Procedures and Robert's Order?

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting meetings. It allows for everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

Robert's Rules of Order is a tool used by representative bodies of all kinds to bring order to meetings and allow the group to take care of business in an efficient and predictable manner.

Robert's rules protect:

- The right of the majority to decide
- The rights of the minority to be heard
- The rights of individual members
- The rights of absentees

Typical Order of Business under Robert's Rules.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Opening Exercises (If applicable)
- III. Roll Call
- IV. Adoption of Agenda
- V. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- VI. Reports of Officers
- VII. Reports of Standing Committees
- VIII. Reports of Special Committees
- IX. Special Orders
- X. Unfinished Business and General Orders
- XI. New Business
- XII. Announcements
- XIII. "Good of the Order"
- XIV. Adjournment

Motion

A motion can be made when you want the group to take some type of action. To introduce a motion, you start by saying "I move that," followed by the statement of the proposal. A motion can only be discussed if someone has seconded it. This reduces the number of discussions on a topic that no one else in the group is interested in.

Amendments

Amendments are offered in the same way as a motion. It is offered when you agree with a motion that has been made but want to make some changes before it is adopted. No more than two amendments may be made on any motion.

Speaking on Motions and Amendments

When you want to speak in a meeting, raise your hand and ask the chair for the floor. You may speak either for or against the motion/amendment being considered only after the chair has recognized your request to speak.

When multiple people want to speak at the same time, there are two things to consider when choosing who to talk:

- The chairperson should show a preference to the person who made the motion
- A member who has not spoken has first choice over one who has already spoken
- If at all possible, alternate between favoring and opposing views if the chairperson knows the stances of individuals
- Only one person may speak at a time

Motion to Table

When someone wants to postpone or end a debate, they may make a motion to table. This is nonnegotiable and only needs a second member to put the motion to an immediate vote by the chair. If needed, the chair may discuss the reason for a motion to table with the individual who called for it.

Voting

Voting can be both formal or informal depending on what the chair decides. Thus, it can range from paper ballots to asking if anyone objects. The most common procedure seen is asking for a show of hands in favor. A simple majority is enough to pass a motion. Unless the organization states otherwise, only those present can vote. It is important to note that not voting is a sign of agreeing with the majority when present to vote.

Can the Chairperson vote?

If the chairperson is a member of the organization, they may be allowed to vote in a written or secret ballot. Otherwise, they should only vote if it will change the outcome of the vote (i.e. a tie).