

Roberts Rules of Order For Meetings



A practical Guide for everyday Volunteers, Board Members, and Community Groups to run Smooth, fair and efficient meetings

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Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

The modern form of parliamentary procedure used in nearly all government, civic, church, and social organizations today can be traced directly to ***Robert's Rules of Order***. First published in 1876, this landmark book was written by U.S. Army General Henry Martyn Robert, who was also a respected engineer. His goal was to create a clear, consistent guide that any group could use to run meetings fairly and efficiently.

Over time, ***Robert's Rules*** has undergone multiple revisions to address new challenges and adapt to modern organizations. Now in its 11th edition, it remains the most widely used authority on parliamentary procedure in North America. At more than 1135 pages, the full manual is detailed and comprehensive, but most groups rely on simplified guides to apply their most important principles in everyday practice.

The central purpose of ***Robert's Rules of Order*** is to ensure that meetings are conducted in a fair, orderly, and democratic way. The rules give every member an equal opportunity to participate, protect the rights of both the majority and minority, and provide a structure that helps groups stay focused and make decisions efficiently.

In essence, just as games require rules to be played successfully, committees and assemblies need parliamentary rules to function effectively. Learning the basics of ***Robert's Rules of Order*** empowers members to participate with confidence and helps groups achieve their goals without being derailed by confusion or conflict.



Preface

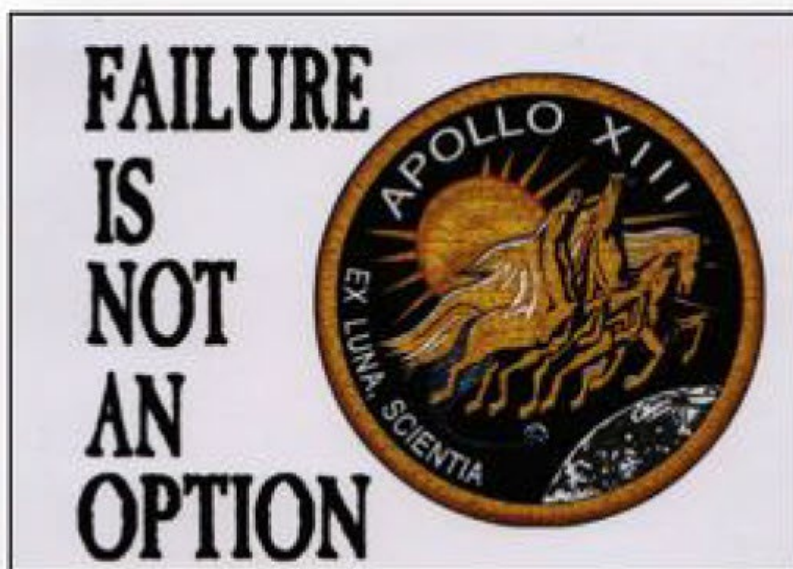
Group decision-making can sometimes feel confusing or frustrating. Strong personalities, side conversations, or unclear processes can derail progress. Rules of order exist to make meetings **fair, inclusive, and efficient**.

Robert's Rules of Order is the most widely used system in North America, but at 1135+ pages it can feel overwhelming. This guide is a simplified version—easy to read, easy to use, and focused only on the rules most groups actually need.

Think of this guide as the **playbook** that helps your team run effective meetings, where everyone has a voice and the group can move forward with confidence.

Why Simplified Rules Matter: - Many volunteers and community members are not trained in parliamentary procedure. - Complicated rules can intimidate new participants. - Simplified rules keep meetings accessible and prevent frustration. - A fair process builds trust and ensures that decisions reflect the group's collective wisdom.

This guide provides both structure and flexibility so that meetings run smoothly without feeling overly formal.



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1. Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is built on a few guiding principles that protect fairness and order.

1. **Help don't hinder.**

Rules should make it easier to get business done, not harder.

2. **One thing at a time.**

Only one topic or motion can be on the floor at once.

3. **Equal rights.**

Every member has the same rights to speak, vote, and participate.

4. **Majority rules.**

A decision is made when more than half of members vote approved.

5. **Protect the minority.**

Even if outvoted, every member has the right to speak and be heard.

6. **Discuss before deciding.**

Every motion should be open to fair discussion before a vote.

7. **Clarity matters.**

Members have the right to understand what they are voting on and what the result means.

8. **Why These Principles Work: -**

They ensure fairness by balancing majority decision-making with minority rights. - They keep the meeting focused, so time isn't wasted on distractions.
- They promote respectful communication, even when disagreements arise.

Tip: The chairperson is responsible for enforcing these principles fairly and respectfully.

2.Preparing for a Meeting

A good meeting starts before it begins. Preparation helps prevent confusion and waste time.

Steps to Prepare: -

- **Choose the right space.**
Comfortable seating, good lighting, and clear acoustics all matter. –
- **Check room setup.**
Arrange seating so everyone can see and hear. Provide microphones if needed. –
- **Do your homework.**
The chairperson should know what reports, motions, or new business may come up. –
- **Confirm attendance.**
Make sure essential people (treasurer, committee chairs, etc.) will be present. –
- **Have materials ready.**
Copies of agenda, reports, and background information should be distributed before the meeting. –
- **Time management.**
Estimate time for each agenda item and use a timer to stay on track.

Chairperson's Checklist Before a Meeting:

1. Agenda drafted and shared in advance.
2. Reports and documents prepared.
3. Quorum requirements reviewed.
4. Key participants confirmed.
5. Room and equipment checked.

3. Quorum

A **quorum** is the minimum number of members who must be present for a group to conduct official business. Without a quorum, any votes taken are invalid. This rule protects the rights of the whole membership by preventing a small number of people from making decisions on behalf of the entire group.

Determining a Quorum

1. **Check your bylaws –**
they may set a specific number or percentage required.
2. **Default rule –**
if the bylaws are silent, a quorum is a majority of all members.
3. **Example –**
if a board has 12 members and the bylaws say quorum is a majority, at least 7 must be present for decisions to be valid.
4. **In meetings of delegates,**
the quorum is a majority of the delegates registered as attending, even if some leave after registration.



What Happens Without a Quorum

When there is no quorum:

The only actions allowed are:

1. **To adjourn,**
2. **To recess, or**
3. **To take steps to obtain a quorum** (for example, contacting members and asking them to attend).
4. **Business conducted without a quorum is null and void.**

However, the meeting itself is not “illegal.” If the rules require that the meeting be held, it is valid to open and adjourn immediately for lack of quorum.

Loss of Quorum During a Meeting

If a quorum is lost during the meeting (for example, members leave and numbers drop below the requirement), no new votes should be taken until quorum is restored.

Exception for Emergencies

The prohibition against conducting business without a quorum cannot be waived, even by unanimous consent. However, if an urgent matter arises and delays cause serious harm or missed opportunity, the members present may act at their own risk. Any such emergency actions should later be ratified at a properly called meeting where a quorum is present.

4. Agenda

The agenda is the roadmap of the meeting. It keeps everyone focused and ensures that important business is addressed.

- **Before the meeting:**
The chair or secretary prepares a draft agenda.
- **At the meeting:**
Members can add, remove, or reorder items before adoption with a *simple majority*.
- **After adoption:**
Changing the agenda requires a *two-third vote*.

Sample Agenda Order:

1. Call to Order
2. Member Participation (Open Forum)
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Minutes
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Correspondence
7. Unfinished Business
8. Committee Reports
9. New Business
10. Announcements
11. Adjournment

Why an Agenda Matters

- Prevents surprise topics from derailing the meeting.
 - Help members prepare their thoughts and materials.
 - It makes it easier for the chair to keep the meeting on time.
-

Members' Comments (Open Forum)

A *Members' Comments* or *Open Forum* section provides a controlled way for members to participate without disrupting the flow of business. By reserving a specific time members can share input on topics of concern.

How It Works

- **Time-Limited:**
Comments are restricted to a set period.
- **Guided by Chair:**
The presiding officer ensures discussion stays respectful and on track.
- **Mission Focused:**
Limiting comments to this section allows the board to carry out its mission and required business efficiently.
- **Clear Boundaries:**
Keeps official decisions and actions separate from general discussion.

Benefits

- Encourages participation in an orderly way.
- Protects meeting time for essential board duties.
- Promotes fairness and open communication.

5.How Business is Done: Motions

Business in meetings is conducted primarily through **motions**. A motion is a **formal proposal** for the group to take specific action. This process ensures fairness, order, and clarity in decision-making.

Steps of a Motion

1. **Making the Motion** –
A member obtains the floor and says: ***“I move that...”***
2. **Seconding the Motion** –
Another member seconds the motion, showing that at least two people want the proposal considered.
3. **Stating the Motion** –
The chair repeats the motion, so everyone understands exactly what is being proposed.
4. **Debate (Discussion)** –
Members discuss the motion, following rules of order.
5. **Voting** –
The chair calls for a vote (voice, hand, ballot, or other approved method).
6. **Announcing the Result** –
The chair declares whether the motion passed or failed.

Rules for Debate

- **Recognition by the Chair –**
Members may speak only after being acknowledged by the chair.
- **Fair Turn-Taking –**
Each member may speak once before anyone may speak a second time.
- **Time Limits –**
Speeches are usually limited to 3–5 minutes, depending on the group's rules.
- **Stay on Topic –**
Debate must be confined to the subject of the motion.
- **Order of Speaking –**
If two or more people rise to speak, the chair decides who speaks first, giving preference to those who have not yet spoken.
- **Closing the Debate –**
The member who made the motion has the right to speak last before the vote.

Discussion Before a Motion

Technically, no matter should be considered unless it has been placed before the group as a motion. However, in practice, limited **preliminary discussion** may sometimes help clarify the best form of motion to make. This can prevent poorly worded motions or proposals that don't reflect the group's intent. Such discussion must be handled with caution—the chair should not allow it to wander off track or lose control of the meeting.

Speaking More Than Once

Exceptions include:

- **The mover of the motion** – has the privilege of speaking again to close the debate.
- **Clarification** – if a member's earlier remarks were misinterpreted, they may speak again briefly to set the record straight but may not introduce new arguments.

Robert's Rules of Order Basics



1
Reading and Approval
of Minutes



2
Reports of Officers,
Boards, and Standing
Committees



3
Reports of Special
Committees



4
Special Orders



5
Unfinished Business
and General Orders



6
New Business

6.Types of Motions

Motions fall into five main categories. Each type serves a different purpose in keeping the meeting orderly and productive.

1. Main Motions

1. **Purpose:**

Introduce new business or propose an action.

2. **Example:**

I move that the cooperative host a fundraiser in June.”

3. **Rules:**

- Must be seconded.
 - Debatable and amendable.
 - Requires a majority vote.
 - Cannot interrupt another speaker.
-

2. Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions

are tools used to manage, refine, or dispose of a main motion. They always take precedence over the main motion, meaning they must be resolved before returning to the main question.

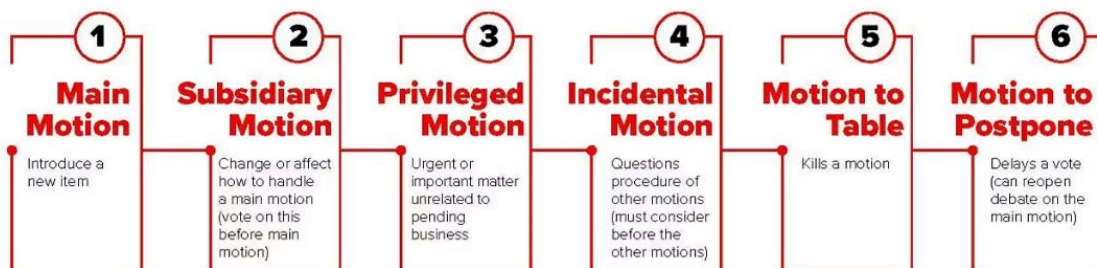
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Common Subsidiary Motions

- **Amend** –
Change the wording of the main motion.
Example: Insert, strike out, or substitute words to improve clarity or adjust the proposal.
- **Refer to Committee** –
Send the matter to a smaller group for closer study and recommendations.
- **Postpone to a Certain Time** –
Delay discussion until a specific time or meeting.
- **Postpone Indefinitely** –
Kill the motion without voting directly on it, often used to avoid a direct “yes” or “no.”
- **Limit or Extend Debate** –
Set stricter time limits, number of speeches, or allow more discussion than usual.
- **Previous Question** –
End debate immediately and move to an immediate vote (requires a two-thirds vote).
- **Lay on the Table** (Table) –
Set aside temporarily, usually to deal with urgent business.

The 6 Types of Motions

A motion is a proposal that the entire membership takes action or a stand on an issue.



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Order and Precedence

The rules of precedence have evolved through long experience. They work as follows:

- If two motions are related (A and B), and B can be made while A is pending, then motion B takes precedence over A. **Motion A is paused until B is resolved.**
- Thus, subsidiary motions take precedence over the main motion. The main motion ranks lowest and yields to all subsidiary motions.
- Some subsidiary motions also take precedence over others. This means it is possible for more than one motion to be pending at the same time (alongside the main motion).
- In that case, the **immediately pending question** is always the motion most recently accepted by the chair. That motion must be resolved before going back to the earlier one.

Rank of Motions

The main motion, subsidiary motions, and privileged motions all fall into a definite order of precedence.

- **Main motion** – lowest rank; yields to all others.
- **Subsidiary motions** – rank above the main motion, with their own hierarchy.
- **Privileged motions** – rank even higher, because they deal with urgent matters of immediate importance.
- This ranking ensures order in meetings by providing a clear structure: higher-ranking motions are always settled before lower-ranking ones.

3. Privileged Motions

Privileged motions deal with urgent matters unrelated to the business currently on the floor. They outrank both main motions and subsidiary motions, ensuring that pressing needs of the assembly or its members are handled immediately.

Common Privileged Motions

1. Orders of the Day

- Ensures the meeting follows the approved agenda (order of business).
- Any member may call for the Orders of the Day if the agenda is being ignored.
- Requires a **two-thirds vote** to set aside the agenda.
- No second is needed, not debatable, and cannot be amended.
- Protects fairness by keeping the group on schedule.

2. Question (or Point) of Privilege

- Concerning the comfort, safety, rights, or integrity of members (e.g., noise, ventilation, guests present during confidential business).
- May interrupt pending business.
- The chair rules on whether it qualifies; if so, the issue is addressed immediately.
- Keeps the environment respectful and workable.

3. Recess

- Call for a short break in the meeting.
- Must be seconded, is not debatable, but is amendable (length of recess).
- Requires a majority vote.
- Used when members need a pause without ending the meeting.

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4. Adjourn

- Ends the meeting entirely.
- Must be seconded, not debatable, not amendable, and require a majority vote.
- Any unfinished business is carried over to the next scheduled meeting.
- Differs from “Recess,” which pauses the meeting, not ends it.

5. Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn

- Highest-ranking motion.
- Sets the time (and sometimes place) for another meeting, before the next regular meeting.
- Can be made while business is pending.
- Ensures important business can be continued later if today’s meeting must end.



7. Incidental Motions

Incidental motions arise directly out of the business at hand and must be settled immediately before the assembly can move forward. They deal with procedure rather than the substance of a motion, ensuring that the rules are followed fairly and consistently.

Unlike privileged and subsidiary motions, **incidental motions have no fixed order of precedence**. Instead, they take precedence only when they are legitimately related to the matter being considered. Most incidental motions are **not debatable** and must be decided right away.

Common Incidental Motions

1. Point of Order

- Used to correct a mistake in procedure or improper conduct.
- The member says: “**Point of order!**” and explains the error.
- Requires no second, is not debatable, not amendable, and cannot be reconsidered.
- The chair rules immediately; if members disagree, they may appeal the chair’s ruling.

2. Appeal the Chair’s Decision

- Allows members to challenge the chair’s ruling.
- Must be seconded; is debatable in most cases.
- A majority of votes decide whether the chair’s ruling is upheld.
- Protects the group from arbitrary or mistaken decisions by the chair.

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3. Suspend the Rules

- Temporarily set aside specific rules of procedure (but not bylaws or laws).
- Requires a second, is not debatable, not amendable, and requires a **two-third vote**.
- Rules automatically return after the action is completed.

4. Objection to the Consideration of a Question

- Prevents discussion of a motion that a member believes is inappropriate or harmful.
- No second required, not debatable, not amendable.
- Requires a **two-thirds vote** against consideration.
- It can only be made before debate begins.

5. Consideration by Paragraph (Seriatim)

- Allows a long motion or document with sections to be considered one part at a time for amendment.
- Requires a second, is amendable (to change the method), not debatable.
- Majority vote required.

6. Division of the Assembly

- Requests a more accurate vote count when a voice vote or show of hands is unclear.
- No second required, not debatable, not amendable, cannot be reconsidered.
- Automatically compels a standing vote.

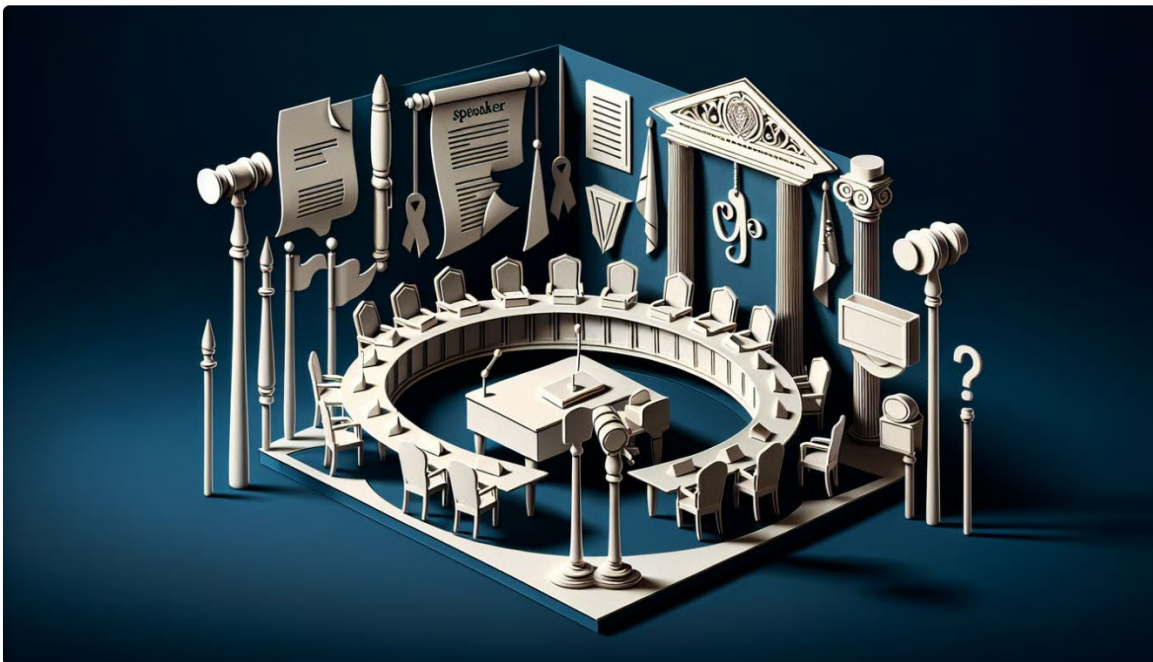
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7. Motions Related to Methods of Voting

- A member can propose a vote by ballot, roll call, or count standing vote.
- Requires a second, amendable, not debatable, and decided by majority vote.
- Useful when accuracy or confidentiality is important (e.g., elections).

8. Motions Related to Nominations

- Used to manage how candidates are nominated (e.g., open nominations, close nominations, or reopen nominations).
- Must be seconded, amendable, not debatable, majority vote.
- Ensures flexibility in handling elections fairly.



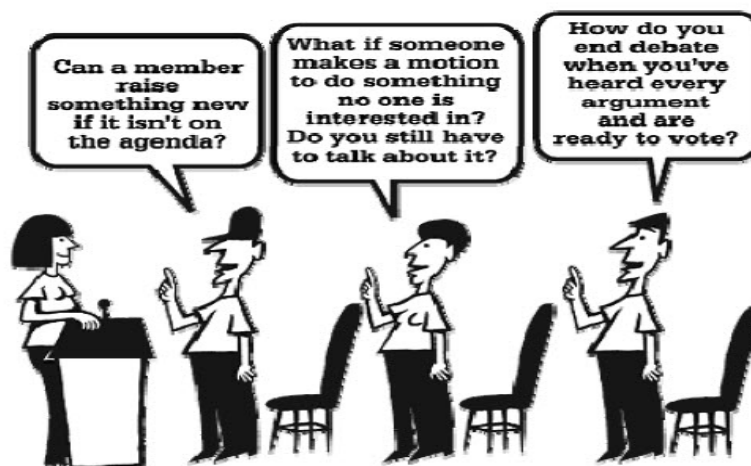
8. Motions that Revisit Business

Sometimes, an assembly needs to **reopen, revise, or cancel** actions it has already taken. These motions allow the group to correct mistakes, bring back business that was postponed, or reverse earlier decisions. They protect the right of the majority to change its mind, while also setting safeguards to prevent abuse.

Common Motions that Revisit Business

1. Take from the Table

- Brings back for consideration a motion that was previously “laid on the table.”
- Must be seconded, not debatable, not amendable, cannot be reconsidered.
- Requires a majority vote.
- Restores the exact business as it was when tabled.
- Helpful if urgent matters interrupted earlier debate.
- If much time has passed, it is good practice for the first speaker to summarize the earlier discussion before new debate continues.



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2. Reconsider

- Allows the assembly to **redo a recent vote**.
- Can only be made by a member who voted with the **prevailing side** (to prevent abuse by the losing side).
- Must be seconded; debatable if the original motion was debatable.
- Not amendable, cannot be reconsidered.
- Requires only a **majority vote** (unless bylaws specify otherwise).
- Must be made within time limits:
 - Same day in a one-day meeting.
 - Same day or the next in a multi-day session.
- Used to correct hasty, ill-advised, or mistaken decisions or to consider new information.

3. Rescind (Cancel)

- Cancels a motion previously adopted.
- Similar to an individual changing their mind, this allows the group to nullify past decisions.
- Must be **seconded**, **debatable**, and **amendable**.
- Because it changes established action, it requires:
 - A **two-thirds** vote, or
 - A **majority** vote with previous notice, or
 - A **majority** of the entire membership.
- Negative votes can be reconsidered, but affirmative ones cannot.

4. Amend Something Previously Adopted

- Modifies part of an earlier decision without canceling it entirely.
- Must be seconded, debatable, and amendable.
- Requires the same high voting threshold as rescind (two-thirds, majority with notice, or majority of entire membership).
- Commonly used to adjust wording, amounts, dates, or details of past actions.

5. Discharge of a Committee

- Removes a matter from a committee's hands before it has issued its final report.
- Must be seconded, debatable (including the merits of the matter in the committee), and amendable.
- Requires the same high threshold vote as rescind/amend something previously adopted.
- Used when:
 - The assembly wants to handle the matter directly.
 - The committee has stalled or failed to act.
 - The group decides to abandon the matter entirely.

9.Voting

Voting is the formal way that assemblies make decisions. After discussion, the chair (president) calls for a vote on the pending motion. A quorum must be present for any vote to be valid.

Common Voting Methods

Voice Vote –

Members say “Aye” or “No.” The chair judges which side is louder and announces the result. If the outcome is unclear, any member may call for division.

Show of Hands –

Members raise their hands. The chair makes a visual count. Useful for smaller groups.

Standing (Rising) Vote –

Members stand to indicate their vote. Often used for *two-thirds votes* or when a division is called to check a voice vote.

Ballot Vote –

A secret written vote. Requires a motion, a second, and a majority vote to adopt. Tellers count the ballots and report results. Used for officer elections or sensitive issues.

Roll Call Vote –

Each member’s name is called, and their vote is recorded aloud. Creates a permanent record of how each member voted.

Unanimous Consent (General Consent) –

The chair asks if there are any objections. If none are raised, the action is adopted without a formal vote. Used for routine matters.

Other methods allowed by bylaws: mail, email, proxy, preferential, or absentee voting. These require clear authorization in the organization’s governing documents.

Types of Votes

Majority Vote –

More than half of votes cast, ignoring abstentions. Standard for most main motions.

Two-Thirds Vote –

Required when limiting or suspending members' rights (e.g., ending debate, suspending rules).

Tie Vote –

A tie means the motion fails. The chair may vote to *break* or *create* a tie but should otherwise remain neutral.

Voting Procedure (Robert's Rules)

Chair Puts the Question –

The chair first calls for affirmative votes: *"All those in favor, say Aye."*

Chair Calls for Negatives –

Even if it seems unanimous, the chair asks: *"All those opposed, say No."*

Abstentions –

The chair does not call for abstentions, but they may be recorded in the minutes if members declare them.

Announce Results –

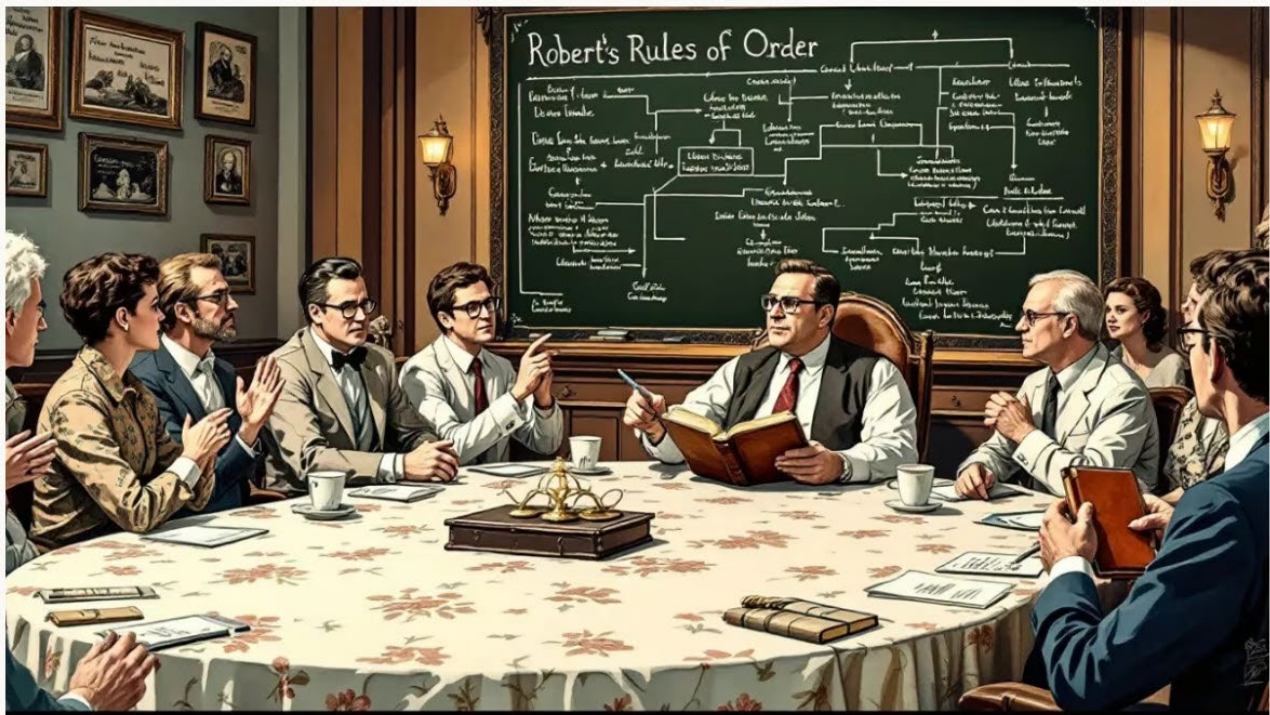
The chair states clearly whether the motion carried or failed, and (if needed) identifies who is responsible for carrying out the action.

If Unclear –

The chair may order a standing or counted vote. Any member may call out *"Division"* to demand a more accurate count.

Tips for Effective Voting

- Always state clearly what is being voted on.
- Repeat the results aloud so everyone understands the decision.
- Record the vote in the minutes, especially if it was by roll call or ballot.
- Remain impartial: the chair should not influence members while taking the vote.



10.Special Procedures

Some situations in meetings require **special procedures** beyond ordinary motions. These rules provide ways to resolve disputes, allow freer discussion, and protect the rights of all members, especially minorities.

Challenging the Ruling of the Chair

- Any ruling of the chair may be **appealed immediately** after it is made. If business has already moved on, it is too late to challenge.
- A member rises and says: ***“I appeal from the decision of the chair.”*** This motion takes precedence even if another member has the floor.
- The chair explains the ruling and states the question: ***“Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?”***
- Requires a **second**, not amendable, may be debatable in some cases, and ***can be reconsidered***.
- A **majority or tie vote sustains the chair’s decision**. If the presiding officer is a member, he or she may vote to create a tie, thus upholding the ruling.
- Members may not openly criticize the chair’s ruling unless they appeal it properly.



Committee of the Whole

Sometimes an assembly wants **freer and less formal discussion** than regular debate allows. In this case, the group may vote to resolve it into a ***Committee of the Whole***.

Forms of Committee of the Whole:

1. **Formal Committee of the Whole –**

Used in large meetings. The presiding officer steps aside, and another chair is appointed. Debate is more open, but decisions are only ***recommendations*** to be voted on later in the regular meeting.

2. **Quasi Committee of the Whole –**

Used in medium-sized meetings (50–100 members). The presiding officer stays in the chair, but debate is still freer, and results are reported back for a final vote.

3. **Informal Consideration –**

Used in small meetings. Removes limits on how often members can speak. Votes taken during informal consideration are final and do not need to be voted on again.

Procedure:

- A member moves: “That this meeting go into committee of the whole to consider [subject].” Requires a second and majority vote.
- Guests may be asked to leave if confidentiality is needed.
- Members may speak multiple times, and motions made in committee do not require a seconder.
- No official minutes are kept, but notes are taken for the final report.
- To return to regular session, a member moves: “***That the committee rise and report.***” The committee then reports on its recommendations, which are handled by regular motions.

Minority Rights

- Even when the majority prevails, minority members retain the right to speak, ask questions, and have their views recorded.
- Protecting minority rights ensures fairness, prevents “groupthink,” and often strengthens decisions by considering alternative perspectives.
- Parliamentary law balances majority rule with minority protection: the majority decides, but the minority must always be heard.



11. Running Smooth Meetings

Sample Chairperson's Script

Opening:

"The meeting will come to order."

Motion Handling:

Member:

"I move that..."

Chair:

"The motion has been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion?"

After discussion:

"Are you ready for the question? All in favor, say aye. Opposed, say no."

"The motion carries" or "The motion is defeated."

Closing:

"If there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned."

Practical Tips for Running Smooth Meetings

- Start and end on time. Respect everyone's schedule.
- Stick to the agenda. Avoid drifting into unrelated topics.
- Encourage participation. Ask quieter members if they'd like to add anything.
- Handle conflict fairly. Use the rules to keep debate respectful.
- Summarize often. Restating what has been decided helps keep clarity.
- Record decisions. Ensure the secretary clearly notes all motions and votes in the minutes.

12. Sample Order of Business

Every meeting should follow a **logical order of business** to stay organized and ensure all matters are addressed fairly. While the outline below is commonly used, each association may adjust the order to meet its own needs.

The chairperson should prepare the agenda in advance and, if possible, circulate it before the meeting. Once adopted, the agenda becomes the official business plan for that session and can only be changed by a formal motion (two-thirds vote required).

Standard Order of Business

Call to Order

- The chairperson begins: “The meeting will now come to order.”
- If the president is absent, the vice president or another acceptable member acts as chair.

Adoption of the Agenda

- Members may suggest additions or changes.
- A member moves: “That the agenda be adopted” (or “adopted as amended”).
- Adoption requires a simple majority. Once adopted, business is limited to listed items unless amended later by two-thirds vote.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

Minutes

- The chair asks if there are errors or omissions.
- If none, the chair declares: “The minutes stand approved as circulated.”
- If corrections are made, they are approved “as amended.”
- Some groups use a formal motion: “That the minutes of [date] be approved.”

Executive Minutes (if applicable)

- The secretary may summarize actions of the executive committee for information.
- These minutes are not adopted by the general membership but may provide background for later discussion.

Treasurer’s Report

- A brief statement of income, expenses, balances, and outstanding bills.
- At regular meetings, no motion is needed.
- At annual meetings, a full audited report is presented and formally adopted.

Correspondence

- Non-action items are summarized and usually filed with one motion: ***“That the correspondence be received and filed.”***
- Action items are read one at a time, and each requires its own motion.

Unfinished Business

- Matters carried over from previous meetings.
- The chair reminds members of the history of the issue before resuming discussion.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

Committee Reports

- Standing committees usually report before ad hoc committees.
- Reports may be written or summarized; only recommendations need motions.
- Recommendations from committees do not require a seconder since they come from the committee itself.
- Reports are normally not adopted in full, except in special cases (e.g., the treasurer's audited annual report).

New Business

- The chair declares: "***New business is now in order.***"
- New items must be included in the agenda, unless the agenda is formally amended by a ***two-thirds vote***.

Announcements

- Committee chairs or members may share important information.

Program

- May include a guest speaker, presentation, or other scheduled activity.
- Some groups prefer to hold the program before business to avoid keeping guests waiting.

Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn is privileged, requires a second, is not debatable or amendable, and is decided by majority vote.
- The chair then formally declares: "***The meeting is adjourned.***"

 **Tip:** A well-prepared and consistently followed order of business keeps meetings efficient, fair, and respectful of everyone's time.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

After the Meeting

- Ensure that any action items, resolutions, or tasks assigned during the meeting are carried out.
- Minutes Approval Circulate the draft minutes to all board members for review and corrections.
- At the next meeting, the board should approve the minutes.

Fulfill Reporting Requirements Share important decisions, reports, and financial statements with relevant stakeholders, such as members, donors, or regulatory bodies.

Final Notes

- Meetings run best when members respect one another and follow both the letter and the spirit of the rules.
- This simplified version is not meant for legislatures or highly formal assemblies, but it will keep most community groups, boards, and associations running smoothly.
- With practice, members will become more confident in using these rules.
- Remember: The goal of parliamentary procedure is not complexity, fairness, clarity, and efficiency.



GLOSSARY

AGENDA

A list of items to be taken up at a meeting.

AMEND

To change a motion either by adding to it, taking from it, or by altering it in some other way.

BLANKS, FILLING

“Filling blanks” is a term used to indicate a method of decision regarding a matter where several different courses of actions are possible. The term “blank” is used because usually this method is applied in motions where an exact amount, a name, a date, or some other essential, specific information is left blank.

CHAIR The chairman.

“Addressing the chair” means speaking to the chairman or president. This is done by raising one’s hand or requesting recognition when no one else is speaking (with some exceptions) and saying, “Mr. or Madam Chairman.” Being “recognized by the chair” means being given permission to speak further.

CHAIR, POWER OF

The chairman should vote at all times unless there is a conflict of interest. The chair may comment on a motion under consideration as he or she desires.

The chair also has the following authority:

- May decide in what order speakers shall be recognized.
- May refuse to recognize members offering absurd or frivolous motions or motions intended, in the chair’s judgment, to delay or obstruct business.
- May restrain speakers within the limits of the rules.
- May enforce decorum.
- May appoint committees.
- May decide points of order.

Actions of the chair are subject to appeal.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

COMMIT

To refer to a committee.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Sometimes matters come up that can be best studied and digested in a committee setting, but that, because of their importance, should be considered by all members, and should not be referred to a small committee. Then the meeting, on motion duly made, may “resolve itself into a committee of the whole.” This means that the meeting officially is discontinued while everyone remains and becomes a member of a large special committee. The chairman of the regular meeting does not preside over a committee of the whole; a special chair is appointed.

CONSIDERATION, INFORMAL

When a member moves “informal consideration,” and the motion is adopted, the meeting lays aside formal rules, allowing each person present to speak on the subject under consideration.

DEBATE

Discussion on a motion.

DIVISION

“Division” in parliamentary law means simply a vote whereby all who are in favor and all who are opposed to a motion stand separately when the chair calls for “ayes” and “nays.”

FLOOR

The privilege of speaking before the board. Thus, when one “obtains the floor,” he or she is granted an opportunity to speak.

INQUIRY, PARLIAMENTARY

An investigation or checking to determine the proper course of procedure.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

MOTION

A formal proposal to a meeting that it take certain action. A motion is a “motion” when stated by its proponent and until repeated by the chairman when presented for acceptance or rejection, at which time it becomes a “question,” a “proposition” or a “measure.”

MOTIONS, INCIDENTAL

Incidental motions, as a class, deal with questions of procedure arising out of another pending motion or item of business and must be disposed of before the original motion may be proceeded with.

MOTION, MAIN

A main motion is one that independently presents an idea for consideration.

MOTION, PRIVILEGED

A privileged motion is one that is so vital in character that it takes precedence over all others.

MOTIONS, SUBSIDIARY

A subsidiary motion is one growing out of another motion already under consideration. The board must dispose of the subsidiary motion before it can act on the motion to which it applies. The purpose of a subsidiary motion is to assist the board in treating or disposing of the main motion (and sometimes other motions).

ORDER

When this term is applied to an act of an assembly, it means an expression of a will of the board in the form of a command. An “order” differs from a “resolution” in that the latter is not a command, but a declaration of fact or an expression of opinion or purpose.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

ORDER, GENERAL

“Making a general order” is setting a future time for the discussion of a special matter. Making a general order differs from making a special order in that the former does not allow the suspension of certain rules that would interfere with its consideration.

ORDER, SPECIAL

“Making a special order” suspends any rules that may interfere with consideration of a question at a future specified time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Regular order or program of business. A motion “calling for the orders of the day” is a motion demanding that the present discussion be dropped and that the chairman announce the next matter to be taken in accordance with the organization’s customary and established business routine. The term “orders of the day” has a more specific meaning when a certain time has been set aside for the consideration of a given matter. Then a demand for the “orders of the day” is a request that this specific thing be taken up at the time set for it.

POSTPONEMENT, INDEFINITE

This term is clear except that the object of indefinite postponement is not merely to postpone, but, in effect, to reject.

PREVIOUS QUESTION

To “move the previous question” is to demand that the chairman take a vote on a motion being discussed, thereby ending debate on that motion.

PRIVILEGE

The term “privilege” in parliamentary law refers specifically to the privileges or rights of the meeting or those attending chiefly in connection with matters of physical comfort such as inability to hear a speaker; the heating, lighting and ventilation of the meeting room; noises and other disturbances; or the ineligibility or misconduct of a member in a meeting at the time. These “questions of privilege” should not be confused with “privileged motions.” Questions of privilege may be involved in motions, but privileged motions include other matters.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

QUESTION

The question in parliamentary law is the proposition or motion after it has been placed before the meeting for action by the chairman. A “question,” when adopted, becomes an “order,” “resolution” or “vote.” (See *Motions*, page 5.)

QUESTION, DIVISION OF

To separate a motion so that different parts of it may be considered individually.

REFER

To refer to a committee.

RESOLUTION

The act of a board, the purpose of which is to declare facts or express opinions or purposes, and not to command.

RULES, SUSPENSION OF

When the board wishes to do something that cannot be done without violating its own rules, but that is not in conflict with its constitution or bylaws or with the fundamental principles of parliamentary law, it suspends the rules that interfere with the proposed action.

SECOND

A motion, in order to be considered by the meeting, must have a “second,” i.e., a sponsor in the form of a second member who indicates a wish to discuss the motion by saying, “I second the motion.” (See *Motions*, page 5.)

TABLE

The “table” in parliamentary law is literally the speaker’s table, but to “lay on the table” or “to table” a motion means to delay action on it.

Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

Cheat Sheets



WHAT IS PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

Parliamentary procedure refers to business meeting rules that enable an organization to make decisions in an orderly, compliant, efficient, and fair manner.

WHAT IS ROBERT'S RULES?

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised is the world's most well-known set of parliamentary procedure rules.

HOW CAN THE CHAIR LEAD A MEETING SUCCESSFULLY?

- Draft an agenda that reflects strategic priorities.
- Follow the six-step motion-making process.
- Protect each member's right to be informed, discuss, and vote.
- Honor established debate limits.
- Convey impartiality and treat all members with respect.
- Keep the meeting on track—follow the published agenda.



HOW DOES A GROUP MAKE OFFICIAL DECISIONS?

A group takes action by proposing motions, discussing them, and then voting on them. Every motion follows the same six-step lifecycle.



1 | Be Recognized

SAY THIS Member A: "Mr./Madame President?"
Chair: "The Chair recognizes Member A."

2 | Make a Motion

SAY THIS Member A: "I move that we organize an event in March to raise awareness and funds for our capital campaign."

3 | Second the Motion

SAY THIS Member B: "Second."

The second is impromptu. The chair doesn't have to invite it by asking, "Is there a second?" Nor does the member making the second have to be recognized.

4 | Repeat the Motion

SAY THIS Chair: "It has been moved and seconded that we organize an event in March to raise awareness and funds for our capital campaign."

5 | Discuss the Motion

SAY THIS Chair: "Is there any discussion?"

6 | Vote on the Motion

SAY THIS Chair: "If there is no further discussion, we will take a vote."

"All those in favor of organizing an event in March to raise awareness and funds for our capital campaign, say, 'aye.' All those opposed, say, 'no.'"

"The 'ayes' have it, and the motion is adopted. We will organize an event in March to raise awareness and funds for our capital campaign."

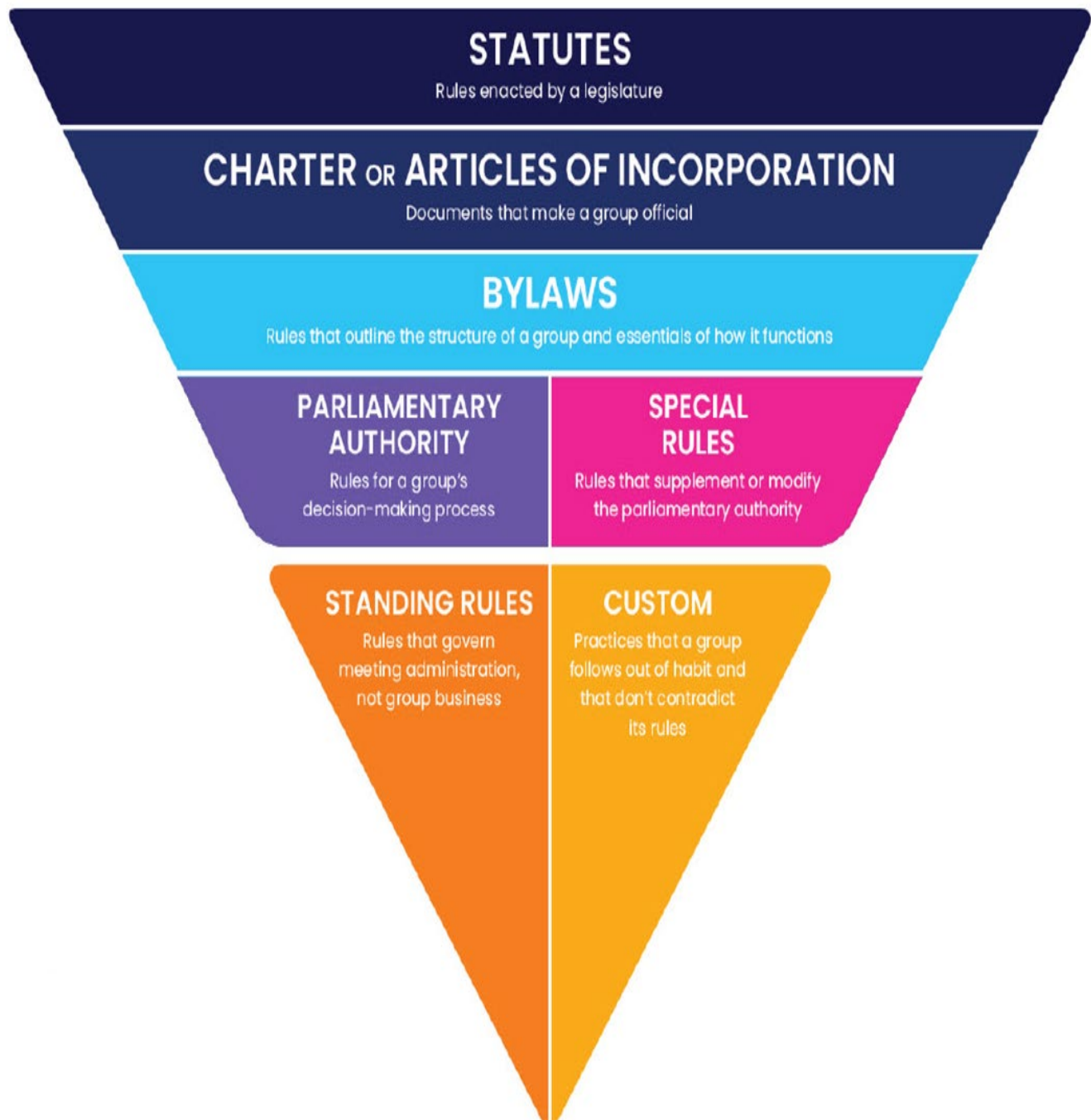
WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MOTIONS?

Main Motions – Main motions propose **substantive action**. They include nearly any proposal related to the objectives of a group.

Secondary Motions – Secondary motions propose **procedural action**. They relate to *how* a group considers a main motion.

Laws, Bylaws, and Parliamentary Procedure

Prioritizing Laws and Rules for Organizational Governance



Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

Motions Quick Guide

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th ed.



ABBREVIATIONS	V VOTE NEEDED
I Can Interrupt	M Majority Vote Required
S Second Required	C Chair Rules
D Debatable	1 One Member Can Demand
A Amendable	2/3 Two-thirds Vote Required

Ranking Motions	I	S	D	A	V
Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn <i>Set a time to continue the meeting</i>		S		A	M
Adjourn <i>Close the meeting</i>		S			M
Recess <i>Take a short break</i>		S		A	M
Question of Privilege <i>Raise an urgent issue</i>	I			A	C
Call for the Orders of the Day <i>Insist that the agenda be followed</i>	I				1
Lay on the Table <i>Set aside business temporarily</i>		S			M
Previous Question <i>Close debate</i>		S		A	2/3
Limit/Extend Debate <i>Control the amount of debate</i>		S		A	2/3
Postpone to a Specific Time <i>Set a later time for consideration</i>		S	D	A	M
Refer to Committee <i>Delegate the motion to a group</i>		S	D	A	M
Amend <i>Modify the wording of a motion</i>		S	D	A	M
Postpone Indefinitely <i>Kill a motion</i>		S	D		M
Main Motion		S	D	A	M

Incidental Motions	I	S	D	A	V
Point of Order <i>Question the proceedings</i>	I				C
Appeal <i>Challenge a decision of the chair</i>	I	S	D		M
Request for Information <i>Clarify substantive information</i>	I				C
Parliamentary Inquiry <i>Clarify a procedural rule</i>	I				C
Division of the Assembly <i>Challenge the accuracy of a vote</i>	I				1
Suspend the Rules <i>Permission to violate a rule</i>		S			2/3

Robert's Rules of Order

A Brief Overview

How to Make and Vote on Motions

1. Member makes a **clearly worded motion to take action or a position.**
 - "I move..."
 - Motions recorded in minutes
2. **Motion must be seconded.**
 - "Second!"
 - A second allows discussion to occur; it does not signify approval
 - A motion without a second does not move forward
3. **Facilitator restates the motion.**
 - "It is moved and seconded that..."
 - Provides clarity
4. **Discussion/debate occurs.**
 - Maker of motion starts discussion
 - Amendments may be offered - return to step 1 to amend motion: "I move to amend the motion by..."
5. **Facilitator closes discussion and states the question/asks for a vote.**
 - "The question is on the adoption of the motion that..."
 - Motion repeated word-for-word
6. **Facilitator provides voting directions**
 - e.g. hand vote, secret ballot, straw poll, etc.
7. **Facilitator announces the result of the vote.**
 - "The ayes have it, and the motion is adopted" or
 - "The nays have it, the motion is lost"
 - Recorded in minutes

Why follow Robert's Rules of Order?

- Allows for democratic speech and action
- Preserves order
- Rights of the organization supersede the rights of individual members
- Facilitates group decisions

Meeting Agendas

- Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- Reports (from officers, committees, task forces)
- Unfinished Business
- New Business - items brought forward by motion procedure

Meeting Minutes (when using Robert's Rules of Order)

- Minutes are a legal record of meetings
- Minutes are a record of what is done at a meeting, not what is said

Minutes should include:

- Name, date and location of meeting
- List of attendees (note presence of a quorum)
- Time meeting was called to order
- Conflict of interest & Antitrust Avoidance Affirmation
- Approval of previous meeting minutes
- Motion text and name of maker
- Status/results of motions
- Time meeting was adjourned

Minutes do not include:

- Discussion
- Personal opinion
- Name of secondor of a motion is not necessary
- Motions withdrawn
- Entire reports (rather attach to minutes)

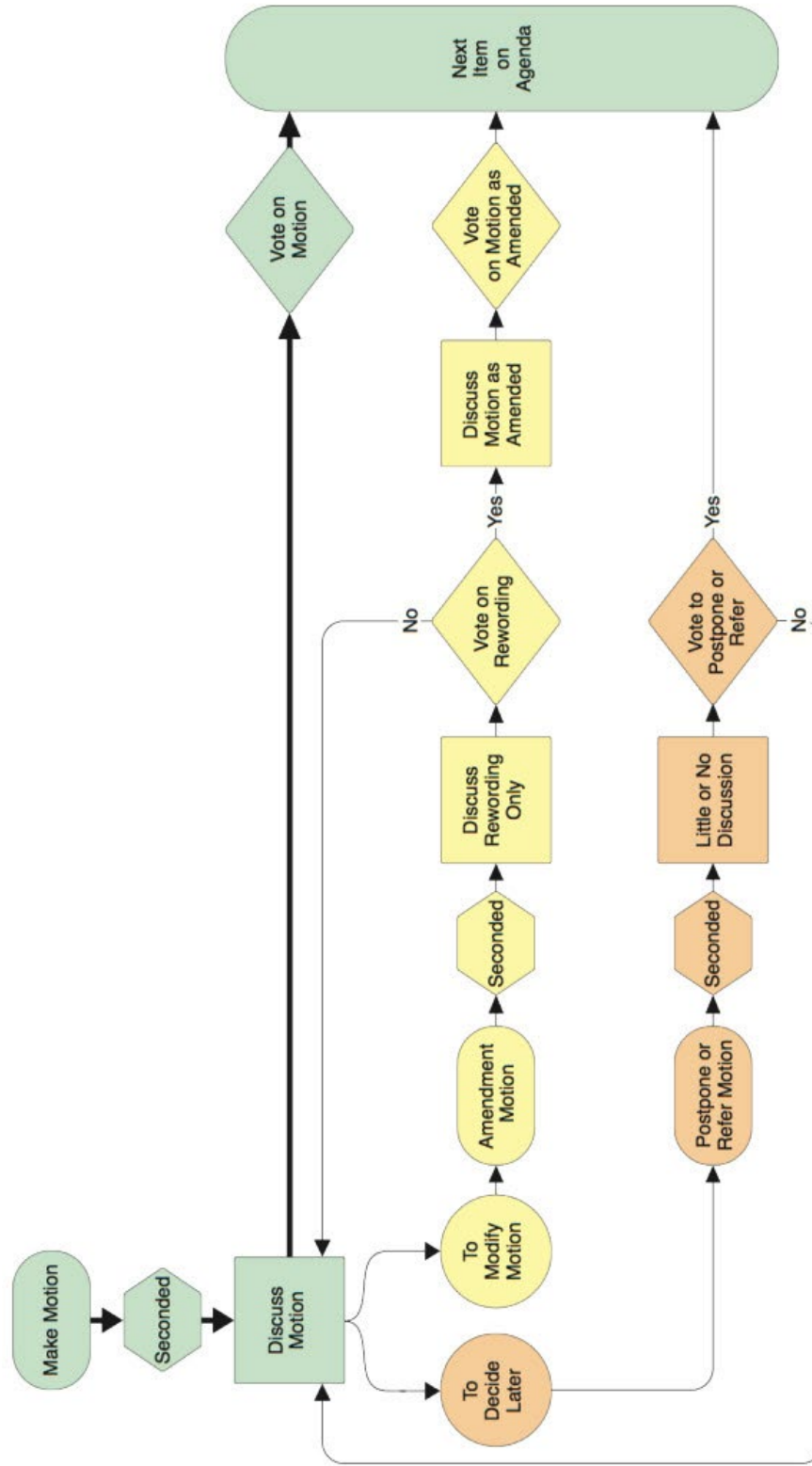
Motion

- A motion is a formal proposal by a member that the group take a certain action or position
- A main motion is required to begin the decision making process
- A motion occurs prior to discussion

To Do This	Motion	You say This	Debate Allowed?	Vote Required?
Introduce Business	Main	"I move that..."	Yes	Majority
Second a Motion	Second	"Second!"	No	No
Change the Wording or add Clarity of a Motion	Amend	"I move to amend the motion by..." (adding words, striking out words, substituting words)	Yes	Majority
Send to Committee	Commit /Refer	"I move the motion be referred to..."	Yes	Majority
Postpone Action until a Specific Time	Postpone	"I move the motion be postponed until..." (provide specific time on agenda /next meeting date)	Yes	Majority
Postpone Action until an Unspecified Time	Lay on the Table	"I move to lay the motion on the table"	No	Majority
Limit Debate	Limit Debate	"I move that the debate on this motion be limited to (one) speech of (two) minutes for each member."	No	Two-thirds
End Debate or Request a Vote	Previous Question	"I move the previous question."	No	Two-thirds
Take Intermission	Recess	"I move to recess for (time)"	No	Majority
Close Meeting	Adjourn	adjourn "I move to adjourn."	No	Majority



Flow Chart Using *Democratic Rules of Order*



GOOD ORDER

- Stay on topic
- One speaker at a time, acknowledged by chair
- No interrupting

POINT OF ORDER

- Member explains how a law or good order is being breached
- Chair rules on point of order
- Vote if necessary

MEETING CHECKLIST



BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☐ Establish Agenda and budget
- ☐ Confirm Dates and Venues
- ☐ Block hotel rooms for guests
- ☐ Confirm hosts and speakers
- ☐ Determine Guest list
- ☐ Determine catering needs
- ☐ Book catering
- ☐ Determine transportation requirements for attendees
- ☐ Create Marketing to showcase event
- ☐ Send out invites.
- ☐ Prepare paperwork for attendees.
- ☐ Confirm the av equipment
- ☐ Develop a backup plan in case of unforeseen circumstances
- ☐ Arrange for any permits or licenses
- ☐ Review and finalize all logistics and arrangements with the venue

DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ Greet attendees and introduce yourself
- ☐ Keep track of the time to ensure the meeting stays on schedule.
- ☐ Address any issues or conflicts
- ☐ Take notes
- ☐ Check in with attendees throughout the meeting
- ☐ Avoid distractions
- ☐ Encourage creative thinking and innovation
- ☐ Keep the meeting focused
- ☐ Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak and be heard
- ☐ Encourage attendees to provide feedback
- ☐ End the meeting on time and recap the key takeaways

AFTER THE MEETING

- ☐ Share documents with attendees
- ☐ Send thank you email with key takeaways.
- ☐ Review feedback
- ☐ Calculate final cost and compare to budget

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Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

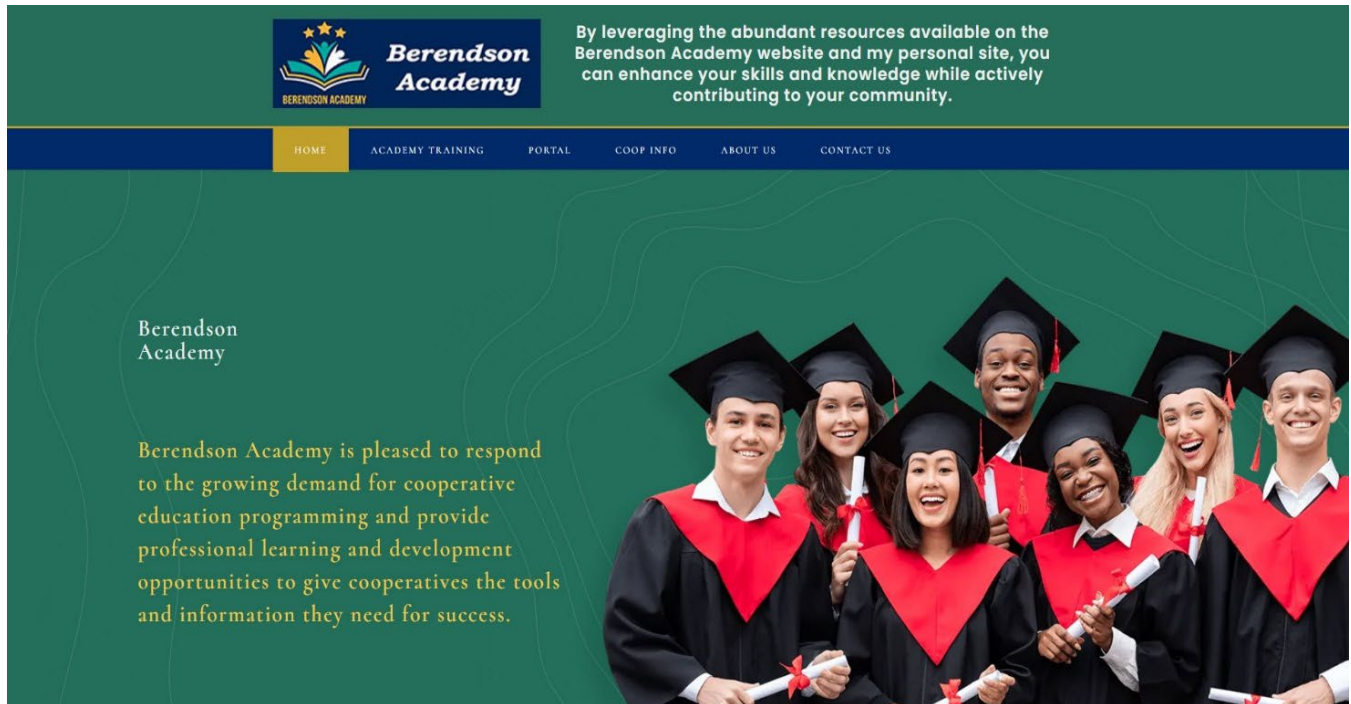
COMMONLY USED MOTIONS

KIND OF MOTION	OBJECT	EFFECT
To lay on the table	To clear the floor for more urgent business	Delays action
To call for the previous question	To secure immediate vote on pending question	Ends debate
To limit or exceed time for debate	To provide more or less time for discussion	Shortens or lengthens discussion period
To postpone definitely (to a certain time)	Often gives more time for informal discussion and for securing support	Delays action
To commit or refer	To enable more careful consideration to be given	Delays action
To amend	To improve the motion	To change the original motion
To postpone indefinitely	To prevent a vote on the question	To suppress the question
To raise a point of order	To call attention to violation of rules	Keeps group functioning according to parliamentary procedures
To appeal the decision of the chair	To determine the attitude of the group on the ruling by the chair	Secures ruling of the group rather than by the chair
To suspend the rules	To permit action not possible under the rules	Secures action which would otherwise be prevented by the rules
To object to the consideration of a question	To prevent wasting time on unimportant business	Suppress the motion
To divide the question	To secure more careful consideration of parts	Secures action by parts

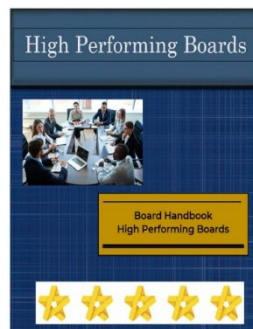
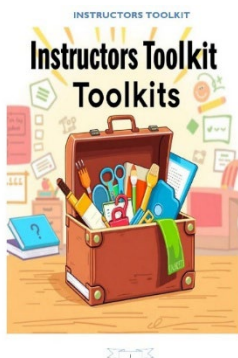
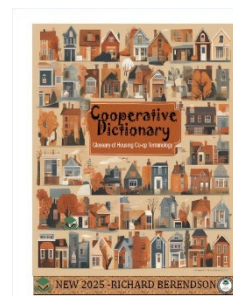
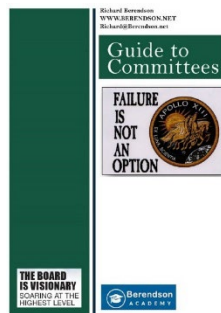
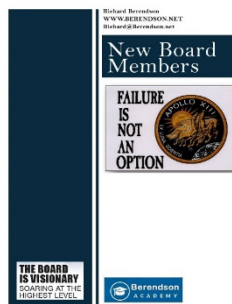
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Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings



New Training Manuals



Simplified Rules of Order for Meetings

"This manual is designed to help volunteers, board members, and community groups hold smooth, fair, and efficient meetings. Remember, Robert's Rules are meant to serve the group — not confuse it. Use these simplified guidelines to stay organized, respect everyone's voice, and accomplish the mission of your board or organization."



About the Author

Richard Berendson is the founder of Berendson Academy, a nonprofit dedicated to providing free cooperative housing and governance education. With years of experience serving as a cooperative leader, board member, and trainer, Richard created this manual to simplify parliamentary procedure for everyday people.

Learn More

Visit **Berendson Academy** for free training manuals, video courses, and resources:  www.berendsonacademy.com