

Robert Rules of Order

Robert Rules of Order has been a long standing set of procedures that facilitates any type of meeting. Even though these standards and outlines may seem long, they provide a basis to make your meeting flow much easier. You may be free to modify and adjust these to bring fairness and simplicity to your meeting. Many churches may have their own set of bi-laws.

Here are the basic elements of *Robert's Rules*, used by most organizations:

1. **Motion:** This allows someone 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 be made after that motion by raising your hand and say ("I second it.") The reason to raise one's hand is that several may call for a second and the secretary can record who actually called for the second in the minutes. After a limited amount of 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.) Some bi-law business requires a 2/3 vote on purchasing or selling property, etc. with churches. You may want to check out your denominational guidelines.

2. **Postpone Indefinitely:** This tactic is used to kill a motion. When passed, this motion cannot be reintroduced at that meeting. It may be brought up again at a later date. One should say, ("I move to postpone this indefinitely..."). A second is required. A majority vote is required to postpone the motion under consideration.

3. **Amend:** This process is used to change a motion under consideration. Perhaps you like the idea proposed but not exactly as it is 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, discussions are made and a majority vote is needed to decide whether the amendment is accepted. Then a vote is taken on the amended motion.

Note: Some organizations will offer a "friendly amendment", which allows the person to withdraw their original motion and modify that motion to include suggested changes after discussions have been made. This eliminates to have an amended motion to be brought up and 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 word "question" is used (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. The reason for a two-thirds vote on this area is to help eliminate

someone trying to stop further discussions to gain an advantage. 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 is 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.) ("I make a motion to...")
- To change a motion (amend.) ("I make a motion to change or amend...")
- To adopt (accept a report without discussion.) ("I make a motion to adopt this")
- To adjourn (end the meeting.) ("I make a motion to adjourn")

Remember, this allows everyone to have a say in the discussions, share ideas, and to pass items in an orderly manner. Parliamentary procedure should not be used to prevent discussion of important issues. Board and committee chairpersons or other leaders may want to review these before conducting a meeting.

Tips on Parliamentary Procedures

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, *simply vote for it.***
- **If you disapprove the motion, *simply 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.**

To Do This	You Say This	May you interrupt the speaker?	Must You Be Seconded?	Is The Motion Debatable?	What Vote is Required?
Adjourn Meeting*	I move that we adjourn	No	Yes	No	Majority
Recess Meeting	I move that we recess until...	No	Yes	No	Majority
Point of room temperature or noise, etc.*	Point of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No Vote
Suspend further consideration of*	I move we table it	No	Yes	No	Majority
End Debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	2/3 Vote
Postpone consideration of	I move we postpone this motion until...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Have something studied further	I move we refer this to committee	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a Motion	I move this motion be amended by	No	Yes	Yes	Majority

To Do This	You Say This	May You interrupt the Speaker?	Must You Be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	What Vote is Required?
Introduce a Primary Motion	I move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Object to Procedure or Personal Affront*	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No Vote Chair Decides
Request Information	Point of Information	Yes	No	No	No Vote
Ask for Actual Count to Verify Voice Count	I Call for a Division of the House	No	No	No	No Vote
Object to Consideration of Undiplomatic Vote*	I Object to Consideration of this Question	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote
Take Up a Matter Previously Tabled*	I Move to Take from the Table	No	Yes	No	Majority
Reconsider Something Already Disposed Of*	I Move We Reconsider Action Relative To	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Consider Something Already Out of Its Schedule*	I Move We Suspend Rules and Consider	No	Yes	No	2/3 Vote
Vote On Ruling By Chair	I Appear the Chair's Decision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

*Not Amendable

IN THE MEETING

Note: Having a Robert's Rule of Order book, outline, or quick references such as the ones listed above, does not guarantee that you will have a successful meeting. It is merely provides a guide or outline on how to make motions, vote on those motions, how to maintain order on the voting and discussions.

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 someone agrees that the motion should come before the assembly and not that he/she is in favor of the motion.
- If there is no 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 or discussions.
- 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. Time-limits could be established by the chair on motions that are significant changes to one's organization or is controversial.
- 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 can be obtained verbally, standing, or the raising of hands for a count.
- 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.