

Parliamentary Procedure

Four Simple Rules

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Q. What would happen if no one observed traffic regulations in a city?

A. A lot of “honking” and general traffic congestion with no one getting anywhere!

There is a similar situation that happens in the deliberating operations of an assembly if parliamentary procedures are not followed: a lot of talking with few accomplishments or decisions being agreed upon. That is why nearly all organizations use some form of parliamentary procedure, and primarily “*Robert’s Rules of Order*”.

These “rules of order” originated by Henry M. Robert in 1876, a military engineer with a religious background. Up until a few years ago the Daughters of Penelope used Demeter’s Protocol, but we voted to replace Demeter’s with Robert’s and now use the latest edition (currently the 10th edition) for all our proceedings. When correctly followed by the presiding officer, these guidelines serve as a “traffic cop” to help keep deliberations moving smoothly. Conducting business using these rules

1. provides an orderly procedure
2. protects the rights and freedoms of speech of the minority
3. expresses the will of the majority

While the book “Robert’s Rules of Order” may be intimidating because of its length and complexity, it can be made user-friendly by following the outline of A. Gregory Wonderwheel in his writing “*Four Simple Rules of Parliamentary Procedure*”.

1. One Speaker Speaks at a Time

If any member is to be heard when he gets the floor, everyone else should be quiet. When another person feels it important to interrupt, there are rules that allow for interruption of a speaker, and if they don’t know the rule, they may make a *parliamentary inquiry* of the chair to learn if there is a rule that allows for an interruption. In every case, the concern of the group has precedence over the convenience of a member.

2. One Question is Decided at a Time

The rules about considering motions and their priority help avoid confusion about what question (motion) is being discussed and decided. If, while one motion is being discussed, another motion arises that has an impact on the first motion, the auxiliary question is decided upon prior to the main question. There is an orderly progression.

3. The Speaker Must Be Respectful

Debate of a question allows each member an equal right to attempt to persuade the other members toward his point of view. Fair debate requires each member to show respect for the other members. The chair has a right to call to order any member who shows disrespect in following these rules of decorum and any member may raise a *point of order* if they feel the decorum is violated.

4. **Everyone's Rights are Protected by Balancing Them with Each Other**

Parliamentary procedure was created to balance the rights of the members.

- a. The rights of the majority and its rule of the organization is assured by the simple majority vote
- b. The rights of the minority, who represent greater than one-third of the membership, are protected during significant questions by the requirement of a two-thirds majority vote.
- c. The rights of an individual or the minority to consider, or prevent consideration, of a certain question is protected by the rules requiring, or not requiring, a second to the motion.
- d. Absentee members are protected by the rules of requiring a quorum and prior notice.

Applying these four simple principles when taking action in a meeting's decision, will help provide a basis for knowing whether parliamentary procedure is being adhered to. A good guide on the various types of motions follows and can also be found in the "ParliPro for Super Heroes" on the Daughters of Penelope website along with some helpful terminology.

When in doubt, request the assistance of the presiding officer or parliamentarian, **or** pull out your copy of "Robert's Rules of Order"!

Wishing you good deliberations.

More Questions and Answers:

1. How do members get their say?
 - They obtain the floor
 - They present a motion, "I move that..."
 - The motion is seconded by another member, "Second"
 - Discussion or debate is presented
 - The chair asks "Are you ready for the question?"
 - If there is no further debate, the chair proceeds to state the motion (question), "it has been moved..."
 - The chair asks for the affirmative vote first, "All in favor of..."
 - Followed by, "All those opposed..."
 - The results of the vote are then announced
2. When is a motion (question) in order?
 - It must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must be advantageous and in accordance with the bylaws.
3. Do I need a second?
 - Usually, yes. A "second" indicates that your motion is worthy of consideration, and prevents deliberation on a motion that only interests one person.
4. Can it be amended?
 - Amendments are to relate to the subject presented in the main motion. A "friendly amendment" is made when you only want to change a small part of the motion.
5. Can it be reconsidered?
 - The motion to reconsider must come from the winning side. This allows members to debate and vote again in the event they have changed their minds.
6. What vote is needed?
 - Most require only a majority vote but motions concerning the rights of the assembly or membership require a 2/3 vote to be adopted.
 - Various methods of voting are:
 - Voice (for majority votes only); a member may move for an exact count
 - Show of hands – to verify a voice vote or as an alternative to it; a member may move for an exact count
 - Roll call – when a record of each person's vote is needed; each member responds with "yes", "no", or "present" when their name is called
 - Ballot – Done when secrecy is desired; members cast their vote on a slip of paper for counting by a teller
 - General consent – When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the chair says, "if there is no objection..." ; members show consent by their silence or someone may say "I object" and the matter is put to a vote

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

YOU WANT TO	YOU SAY	INTER- RUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE ?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Incidental Motions - no order of precedence; arise incidentally and decided immediately						
Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take a break	I move to recess for...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register a complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Make request to follow the agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that (or "to") ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Incidental Motions - no order of precedence; arise incidentally and decided immediately						
Enforce rules	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules which ...	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Demand rising vote	I call for a division	Yes	No	No	No	None
Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	None
Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None
Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly - no order of precedence; introduce only when nothing else pending						
Take matter from table	I move to take from the table...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Cancel previous action	I move to rescind	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 Majority w/Notice
Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider the vote	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority