

Robert's Rules of Order


- ◆ Adapted from English Parliamentary Rules
- ◆ Sometimes called "parliamentary procedure"
- ◆ First published in 1876 by General H.M. Robert
- ◆ Created to conduct business fairly at formal meetings
- ◆ Brings **order** out of chaos

By-Laws of an organization

- ◆ Dictate Quorum
- ◆ Unless there is a special rule in the By-Laws, a quorum is the majority of the *members* of the organization (n.b.)
- ◆ Quorum is very dependent upon the size and logistics of the organization
- ◆ If no quorum, the meeting can continue but the only vote that can be taken is to adjourn

By-Laws of an organization

- ◆ Dictate what decisions can be made at what meetings
- ◆ For Example, Annual General Meetings are usually the **ONLY** time By-Laws can be changed
- ◆ Changes require **NOTICE OF MOTION**, to provide for the members to prepare their positions




Use of Robert's Rules

- ◆ It is critical to decide whether a meeting will be conducted formally, or informally
- ◆ The "Rules" mostly pertain to FORMAL meetings
- ◆ Essential in large meetings of 10 or more
- ◆ OR for contentious issues (like?)


Robert's Rules of Order

- ◆ "to assist an assembly to accomplish the work for which it was designed"
- ◆ That "work" is outlined on the "agenda"
- ◆ It is necessary to restrain the individual somewhat, in the interests of the whole
- ◆ If you know the rules, you can decide how to best use them, as the Chair



A Principal (Main) Motion

- ◆ Brings before the Assembly (meeting, group) any particular subject (issue, agenda item)
- ◆ Cannot make a principal motion when any other question (motion) is before the assembly (immediately pending)
- ◆ It takes precedence of nothing, and yields to all questions – is LOWEST in "order".
- ◆ A Principal Motion must be dealt with by the assembly before another Principal Motion can be made



The Principal (Main) Motion

- ◆ The Principal Motion is a specific statement that will be the focus of debate.
- ◆ Should be no debate before a Main Motion is “put to the floor”.
- ◆ Frequently, there is too much debate or discussion before a Main Motion is made, causing great inefficiency.

- ◆ A Main Motion must be seconded; does not require that the seconder agrees with the motion.
- ◆ Main Motion should be in writing, and read by the Chair
- ◆ After seconding, debate can then proceed.

The Chair

- ◆ Role of the Chair is critical, and the Chair should be carefully chosen by the organization
- ◆ Before a member can make any motion, or speak, they must be “recognized” by the Chair – thus, the Chair is in control.
 - Often, we allow for a “free for all”

The Chair

- ◆ If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair chooses the speaker
- ◆ Choice of speaker is based upon certain principles
 - The member that moved the motion has first right to speak
 - Each member speaks once to that motion
 - Alternate pro and con
- ◆ Should keep an order of speakers, at the very least, so the speakers know they will get a chance when it is their turn

The Parliamentarian

- ◆ Assists the Chair in interpretations of Robert's Rules of Order
- ◆ Often given the role of mediating disputes in a meeting
- ◆ Often a lawyer by training
- ◆ Usually someone who has the respect of the assembly

The Parliamentarian

- ◆ Example of decisions:
- ◆ Is the motion in order
- ◆ Is the motion debatable
- ◆ Does the motion need to be seconded
- ◆ Can the motion be amended

The Motion

- ◆ During the process of developing the Main Motion, the mover can modify it or withdraw it.
- ◆ If Mover modifies the motion, seconder can withdraw the second.
- ◆ Time can be saved by informal remarks to alter or clarify the motion, but this should never develop into DEBATE
- ◆ Once the Chair reads the Main Motion, it is in the hands of the assembly and the mover cannot modify or withdraw it unless NOBODY objects
- ◆ If there is an objection, there must be a motion to Withdraw, and then a vote

The Discussion

- ◆ Each speaker can speak to a motion only once until everyone has had their chance;
 - Normally should limit it to twice in total
- ◆ The Chair should alternate between those in favor, and those opposed




Minutes of the meeting

- ◆ Need minutes of the meeting as an official record

The Secondary (Subsidiary) Motions

- ◆ These are motions that are made which apply specifically to the Principal Motion
- ◆ Secondary Motions have an impact on the Principal Motion
- ◆ Secondary Motions assist with decisions related to the Principal Motion
- ◆ Secondary Motions cause some change in the Principal Motion



“cause some change”

- ◆ These secondary motions would cause the Main Motion to be:
 - passed,
 - defeated,
 - amended and passed,
 - amended and defeated,
 - referred,
 - tabled or
 - postponed.

The Secondary Motions (LOWEST GROUP)

- ◆ In order below .. Higher to Lower
- ◆ Lay on the Table .. “Table” (Highest)
- ◆ Previous Question ... “Call the Question”
- ◆ Postpone to a Certain Day
- ◆ Commit or Refer
- ◆ Amend**
- ◆ Postpone Indefinitely (Lowest)
- ◆ Example: If a motion to “Table” has been made, a motion to “Postpone Indefinitely” is OUT OF ORDER

(see page 127 and 129)

The Incidental Questions – Undebatable

- ◆ These are questions of PROCESS and affect the business of the Assembly (meeting) but do not relate directly to the Main Motion

Privileged Questions (Undebatable) HIGHEST GROUP

- ◆ These questions do not directly impact the Main Motion, but do impact the Assembly
- ◆ Example: Adjourn, or set adjourn time (highest)

Adjourn

- ◆ Undebatable
- ◆ Cannot be made when another has the floor, or Assembly is engaged in voting
- ◆ Chair must NOT allow this high privilege to be abused
- ◆ Chair can refuse to entertain the motion to adjourn if it has been voted down recently

Appeal or Question of Order

- ◆ “Mr. Chair, I Rise to a Point of Order”
- ◆ Members are responsible to monitor the rules of the assembly
- ◆ The Chair rules immediately
- ◆ Members then have the right to “appeal the decision of the Chair”
- ◆ Often referred to as “Challenging the Chair” because it challenges decisions a chair may make in conducting the business of the meeting
- ◆ Assembly then votes

Withdrawal of a Motion

- ◆ After motion has been made, the Chair can allow it to be withdrawn if nobody objects.
- ◆ If there is objection, it requires a Motion to Withdraw
- ◆ Cannot be debated or amended

To Lay on the Table

- ◆ Yields to ANY Privileged or Incidental Question
- ◆ Must be seconded, but cannot be debated or amended
- ◆ If motion to table receives a majority vote, delays the motion so it can be taken up at any time (at the same meeting)
- ◆ Majority vote can take the matter up again, at any time
- ◆ Tables everything that adheres to it

Note about TABLING

- ◆ In best interests to have the power to lay aside business, **temporarily** in order to deal with something more urgent
- ◆ If used habitually to avoid questions, should be subject to 2/3 vote.

The Previous Question – “Call the Question”

- ◆ Motion to close debate and proceed to voting.
- ◆ Not debatable, and cannot be amended
- ◆ Must be seconded
- ◆ If the motion receives **2/3 majority**, then the vote on the Principal Motion is called.
- ◆ If the motion fails, debate continues.

Postpone to a Certain Day


- ◆ Must be seconded
- ◆ Very limited debate, related only to the day.
- ◆ EXAMPLE: Cannot be used once a motion to table has been made because POSTPONE is a LOWER ORDER than tabling

To Commit or Refer

- ◆ Must be seconded
- ◆ Debatable and takes precedence over Amendment or Indefinitely Postpone
- ◆ Thus, if someone has moved an amendment, you can move to commit or refer and that motion must be dealt with first
- ◆ If a motion to table has been made, a motion to commit would be “out of order”

Amend

- ◆ Must be seconded
- ◆ Motion to amend can be amended, but only one time
- ◆ Is the lowest order motion, next to the Principal Motion
- ◆ May directly conflict with the spirit of the original motion
- ◆ Debatable – Chair should restate the motion



Amendments usually ..

- ◆ Insert words
- ◆ Delete words
- ◆ Change words
- ◆ For example: I move to amend the principal motion by adding the words "...".
- ◆ Chair: To clarify, this would change the main motion to "da da ... da da"

Postpone Indefinitely

Takes precedence of nothing (lowest in order)

- ◆ Must be seconded
- ◆ Cannot be amended
- ◆ Opens entire question to debate
- ◆ Is the lowest order motion, next to the Principal Motion (except Amend)
- ◆ Useful when opposition is doubtful of strength, because if defeated can still struggle with main question

Rescind


Motion has no privilege

- ◆ Any action of the assembly can be rescinded
- ◆ After the meeting is over, the option is to rescind


Reconsider


- ◆ Still think we should have “best of three” votes
- ◆ Is in order at any time – but only once
- ◆ If not reconsidered on the day taken, and no meeting the next day, then it CANNOT be reconsidered – RENEW or RESCIND
- ◆ Must be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side

Principal Motion:


- 
- ◆ “ “
 - ◆ Moved by:
 - ◆ Seconded by:
 - ◆ Vote:

Motion to Amend:


- 
- ◆ Moved by:
 - ◆ Seconded by:
 - ◆ Vote: (how do we vote?).



If the amendment passes, the Main Motion, as amended, will read:



If the amendment fails, the Main Motion will read:




Voting

- ◆ Chair can decide when to call for a vote
- ◆ Ask for “In Favor”, then “Opposed”
- ◆ Can be further debated between the call for “Yes”, and “No” votes
- ◆ For motion to pass, requires majority of the votes cast, ignoring blanks
- ◆ Some motions require 2/3 to pass
- ◆ Chair can vote to break a tie
- ◆ Can use ballots, or roll call

Ballot or Roll Call Voting

- ◆ May be required by Constitution or By-Laws
- ◆ Or, may be by majority order of the assembly or group
- ◆ The Assembly (group) can force a ballot or roll call vote
- ◆ Ballot provides secret vote
- ◆ Roll Call provides accountability and is recorded in the minutes



In a meeting, when there are more than two options you can deal with them in two ways:

- 1) The option gaining the most votes declared the top priority (plurality vote .. See page 66 of RRO textbook).
- 2) One option must get a clear majority of votes
- Take two votes if necessary with the lowest option dropped after the first vote.

Motions Requiring 2/3 Vote

- ◆ As required by Constitution or By-Laws OR
- ◆ To Amend or Suspend Rules
- ◆ To change Order
- ◆ To Object to the Consideration of a Question
- ◆ Extend or Limit Debate
- ◆ Previous Question – Call the Question

“Order of Precedence”

- ◆ Motions that have “precedence” to other motions have a higher PRIORITY
- ◆ A guide the Chair uses to decide if a motion is “in order” – hence, another use of the word “order”



Committees

- ◆ Allow for work to be done informally
- ◆ Preliminary work done in Committee
- ◆ Votes always taken and recorded when Committee decisions are made
- ◆ Vote to “Accept” is equivalent to having the decision adopted by the assembly, so this can be dangerous



Committee of the Whole

- ◆ Allow for work to be done informally by the Assembly
- ◆ Preliminary work done
- ◆ Only motions are to amend and adopt
- ◆ Members can speak more than once
- ◆ Can provide for informal consideration of a question
