

Parliamentary Procedure Notes

Meeting Basics

- Must have presiding officers and secretary
- Must have quorum
- Standard Order of Business: **MRS SUN**
 - M**inutes
 - R**eports of officers, boards and standing committees
 - S**pecial committee reports
 - S**pecial orders
 - U**nfinished business
 - N**ew business

How Business is Conducted

Obtaining and Assigning the Floor

- A. A member rises when no one else has the floor and addresses the chair:
Mr./Madam President/Chairman or by other proper title.
 1. In a large assembly, the member gives name and identification.
 2. The member remains standing and awaits recognition by the chair.
- B. The Chair recognizes the member by announcing the member's name or title, or in a small assembly, by nodding toward the member.

How the Motion is Brought Before the Assembly

- A. The member makes the motion: **I move that** (or "to")... and sits.
- B. Another member, without rising, seconds the motion: **I second the motion** or **I second it** or even just **Second!**
- C. The chair states the motion: **It is moved and seconded that...** restating the motion EXACTLY how it will be debated and voted on – this officially gives it to the assembly) **Are you ready for the question?** (or **Is there any debate?**)

Consideration of the Motion

- A. Members can debate the motion.
 1. Before speaking in debate, members obtain the floor as stated above.
 2. The maker of the motion has first right to the floor if that right is claimed promptly.
 3. All remarks must be addressed to the chair.
 4. Debate must be confined to the merits of the pending motion.
 5. Debate can be closed only by order of the assembly (2/3 vote) or by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate.
- B. The chair puts the motion to a vote.
 1. The chair asks: **Are you ready for the question?** or **Is there any debate?** (as the less formal alternative). If no one rises to claim the floor, the chair proceeds to take the vote.
 2. The chair says: **The question is on the adoption of the motion that ...** stating EXACTLY what is being voted on. **Those in favor, say 'Aye'.** (pause for response.) **Those opposed, say 'No'.** (Pause for response.)
- C. The chair announces the result of the vote.
 1. **The ayes have it, the motion carries; we will do...** (indicating the effect of the vote)
or
 2. **The noes have it, the motion is defeated; we will not do....**

Call up the Next Item of Business

The next item of business is ... or **Is there further new business?**

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What Can You Do with a Motion?

1. Vote for or against. it
2. Move to **Postpone Indefinitely** – “Kill” it – means it can’t come up again in that session.
3. Move to **Amend** – strike out words, add words, or strike out some words and insert other words.
 - An amendment to a main motion may itself be amended by a “secondary amendment”, which is sometimes called an “amendment of the second degree” or an “amendment to the amendment.” A secondary amendment cannot be amended.
4. Move to **Refer to Committee** – the motion should include the # of committee members, how selected (if bylaws allow), who to chair it and when to report back.
5. Move to **Postpone to a Certain Time** – but can’t postpone beyond the next regular meeting.

Rules of Debate (usually for groups larger than 12)

- **Speech Limits** – you can speak twice to a motion each day, but the second time can only be after everyone else who wants to speak on it has spoken. Limited to 10 minutes each time (unless assembly decides on other limits). Time starts over on another day or with a secondary motion.
- **Who Gets Preference in Recognition** – motion maker goes first. Everyone must be recognized by the chair to get the floor. Chair may alternate those speaking in favor of a motion and those speaking against the motion. If you’ve already spoken, the Chair will give preference to others who haven’t spoken. The Chair should not speak in debate (unless in small group rules).
 - Note: The member who makes the motion cannot speak against their own motion, though they can vote against it. The person who seconds the motion can speak against the motion because a second means “Let’s discuss it” and not “I agree”. Sometimes a member will second a motion just so they can speak against it.
- **Stick to the Subject** – one main motion at a time; debate must be germane to the motion being considered
- **Debate Issues, not Personalities** – no attacking motives, no put downs, no name calling
- **Formalities** – speak to and through the Chair, avoid using people’s names, don’t read without permission, no talking, texting, walking around, etc.

Important Motions Related to Debate

- **Limit or Extend the Limits of Debate** – You need 2/3 vote to change the rules of debate or discussion – e.g. 2 minutes per speech, instead of the 10 minute rule; , or “debate the motion until 7:00” or “for 20 minutes”, etc.
- **Close Debate** – called “**Previous Question**” – is a vote to end debate. Requires 2/3 vote. If the motion to end debate is adopted, then you vote on the pending motion(s), in backwards order. For example, you vote on the motion to send it to committee before you vote on an amendment.
 - Yelling ‘Question’ or ‘It’s time to take a vote’ will not accomplish it.

Special Motion

Lay on the Table – means to set aside the motion temporarily, in special circumstances, like if your guest speaker arrives in the middle of your discussion on a motion. This motion is often misused and abused because it is not debatable. A good chairperson will confirm your intention with it. Usually, the intention is to either postpone indefinitely (kill the motion) or postpone definitely (to consider it at another time), so those motions should be used instead. Both postpone motions are debatable.

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Miscellaneous:

Approving minutes: A formal motion to approve the minutes is not necessary, though it is not out of order. After the minutes have been read, or if there is unanimous consent to dispense with the reading as they were distributed in advance, the chair asks “Are there any corrections to the minutes?” Corrections, when proposed, are usually handled by unanimous consent, unless there is an objection – then it goes through the normal amendment steps, as with any motion. The chair will ask again if there are any corrections or any further corrections... if all are quiet, the chair says “There being no corrections [or “no further corrections”] to the minutes, the minutes stand [or “are”] approved [or “approved as corrected”].” The minutes are thus approved without any formal vote, even if a motion for their approval has been made. The only proper way to object to the approval of the secretary’s draft of the minutes is to offer a correction to it.

Please note that if an error is identified after the minutes approved, it only takes a motion to “Amend Something Previously Adopted”, but it is simpler to get it right the first time!

Treasurer reports: The treasurer report is presented as information, and then is filed for audit. The report is never adopted or accepted.

Friendly Amendments: These are offered up by someone who is in agreement with the main motion but feels it will improve it and the chances of its adoption. Regardless of whether or not the maker of the main motion (and seconder) “accepts” the amendment, it must be opened to debate and voted on formally (unless adopted by unanimous consent) and is handled under the same rules as all other amendments.

Order of Precedence of Motions: The ordinary motions rank as follows, the lowest in rank being at the bottom and the highest being at the top of the list. Note: When any one of them is immediately pending the motions above it in the list are in order, and those below are out of order.

The **Role of the Chair** in:

- Large groups (12 or more members): the Chair has the duty of presiding, not deciding – cannot make motions or participate in debate, and may only vote by ballot or to make/break a tie where that is the last vote cast.
- Small groups (less than 12 members): the Chair may make motions, debate and vote on all questions.

Questions? Please contact the Pilot International Parliamentarian or their designee.

Resources:

Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition, by Henry M. Robert III, Daniel H. Honemann, and Thomas J. Balch
Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief, by Henry M. Robert III, Daniel H. Honemann, and Thomas J. Balch
www.robertsrules.com – Frequently Asked Questions; Interpretations; Q & A Forum

Parliamentary Procedure Notes

Thirteen Ranking Motions	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?	Class?	Reconsidered?
Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Privileged	Yes
Adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Privileged	No
Recess	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Privileged	No
Raise a Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None	Privileged	No
Call for the Orders of the Day	Yes	No	No	No	None	Privileged	No
Lay on the Table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Subsidiary	Negative vote only
Previous Question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Subsidiary	Yes with conditions
Limit or Extend Limits of Debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Subsidiary	Yes
Postpone to a Certain Time (or Postpone Definitely)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Subsidiary	Yes
Commit (or Refer)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Subsidiary	If committee has not begun.
Amend	No	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Majority	Subsidiary	Yes
Postpone Indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Subsidiary	Affirmative vote only
Main Motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority		Yes

Privileged Motions: relate to the rights or privileges of the organization or individual members rather than to particular items of business. They are of such urgency that they are entitled to immediate consideration.

Subsidiary Motions: may be applied to another motion for the purpose of modifying it, delaying action on it, handling its consideration, or disposing of it.

Main Motions: the basis of all parliamentary procedure, brings business before the assembly for consideration and action. They can be introduced only when no other business is pending.

Precedence: The privileged and subsidiary motions have precedence in the order listed, from highest to lowest, when a main motion is pending. Several of the privileged and subsidiary motions may also be made when no business is pending, in which case they are main motions. The unqualified motion to adjourn is generally privileged whether or not a main motion is pending.

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	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?	Class?	Reconsidered?
Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None	Incidental	No
Appeal from a Decision of the Chair	Yes	Yes	Yes**	No	Majority in the negative	Incidental	Yes
Suspend the Rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Incidental	No
Objection to Consideration of a Question	1	No	No	No	2/3 in the negative	Incidental	Negative only
Division of a Question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Incidental	No
Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Incidental	No
Division of the Assembly	Yes	No	No	No	None	Incidental	No
Parliamentary Inquiry - Requests Parliamentary Advice	Yes	No	No	No	None	Incidental	No
Request for Information - Requests Factual Information	Yes	No	No	No	None	Incidental	No
Take from the Table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Bring Back	No
Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 M	Bring Back	Negative only
Reconsider	Yes*	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Bring Back	No

Incidental Motions: made in response to a variety of situations that may arise during the consideration of a pending question and must be resolved before business can continue. These motions do not have rank.

Bring Back Motions: returns a question to the assembly for further consideration and action.

Key:

Yes*: Is in order if another has been assigned the floor but has not begun to speak.

Yes** Is usually debatable – refer to RONR.

Majority in the Negative: required to reverse the decision of the chair.

2/3 in the negative required to sustain the objection.

2/3 M is 2/3 of the membership without notice or majority with notice

None: The Chair handles the situation.