

Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order

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Reference: Zimmerman, D.P., Robert's Rules in Plain English, First Edition, 1997, Harper Perennial, NY, NY

Parliamentary Rules

- Set of procedures developed by the English Parliament that were brought to the US in colonial times and distilled into writing by General Henry Robert in 1876, based on their use in Congress
- Used for the fair and orderly conduct of meetings
- Protect the rights of
 - the majority to decide
 - the minority to be heard
 - individual members
 - absentees

Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

- The rights of the organization supercede the rights of individual members
- All members are equal and their rights are equal:
 - attend meetings
 - make motions and speak in debate
 - nominate
 - vote
 - hold office

Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure (con't)

- A quorum must be present to do business
 - Quorum = the number of members who need to be present to legally conduct business
- The majority rules
- Those members that do not vote, agree to go along with the majority that do vote; i.e. “abstention” votes do not count positively or negatively
 - Example/Board of 5 members-if a vote on a motion results in 2 “yes” votes, 1 “No” vote and 2 “abstentions”, the motion is approved

Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure (con't)

- Two-thirds vote rule: a $2/3$ majority vote is necessary whenever you are limiting or taking away the rights of members or whenever you are changing something that has already been decided.
 - Example/Ending the debate on a motion: when one person is prolonging the discussion the group can end the discussion and move to a vote with a $2/3$ majority
- One motion at a time, one speaker at a time, personal remarks are out of order

Parliamentary Techniques to Expedite Business

- General Consent: can be used for routine business or when the Group is in agreement - no need for motions and votes
 - President can say: "If there are no objections we will adjourn.....[pause]....."there being no objections we stand adjourned."
- Withdrawal of motions: A person may withdraw a motion they made...consent of seconding person is not necessary....this motion does not appear in the meeting minutes
- Consent Agenda: Non-controversial agenda items may be placed on a consent agenda and approved with a single vote

Motions and Their Uses

- Motions are used to introduce business in a meeting-no business may be introduced without a motion:
 - Main motions:allows a group to do its work
 - Ex/ I move that we construct a playground on our lot across the street.
 - Secondary motions:are made while a main motion is on the floor and before it is decided
 - There can be multiple motions on the floor at the same time but only one question.

Motions That Should Be Ruled Out of Order by the Chair

- Motions that:
 - conflict with the law or the by-laws
 - repeat the same question on the same day
 - conflict with an already adopted motion
 - operate outside the scope of the organization
 - conflict with or repeat motions that are in committee
 - appear dilatory, incorrect, frivolous or rude

How a Motion is Made and Acted Upon

- A member requests the floor
- The floor is assigned by the chair
- The motion is made
- To be considered by the group the motion must be seconded
- Chair restates the motion
- Debate (discussion) is held, if any as long as necessary unless a motion to limit it is passed
- Chair puts the motion to a vote
- Chair announces the result of the vote

Rules that Govern Main Motions

- Cannot interrupt a member who has been assigned the floor
- Require a second unless the motion is from a Committee
- Can be debated
- Can be amended
- Require a majority vote

Rules that Govern Main Motions

- Other Points

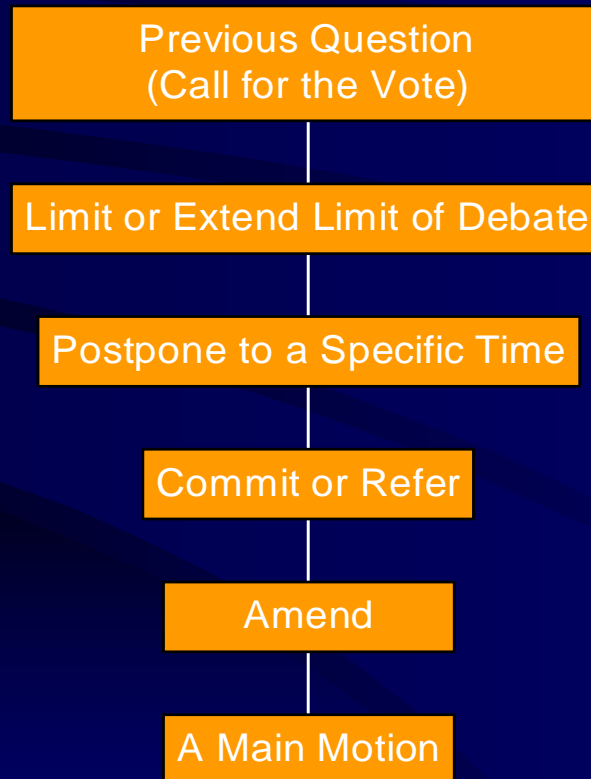
- Chair can require a long motion to be submitted in writing
- Maker of a motion has first right to speak to it
- A person can vote against his own motion but cannot speak against it
- A person can modify his own motion before the Chair states it and can propose an amendment after the Chair states it
- Maker of a motion can withdraw it before the Chair states it and after the Chair states it with the permission of the group

Secondary Motions

- Subsidiary motions: relate to the main motion on the floor- expedites business by disposing of the pending motion other than by approving it or rejecting it
 - Ex/ I move that we take the playground proposal and refer it to a committee for consideration
 - Subsidiary motions have a rank order to them
 - higher rank motions can be made when lower rank motions are on the floor and take precedence over lower rank motions

Ranks of Subsidiary Motions

“higher” motions take precedence over lower ones and can be made when lower ones are on the floor”



Subsidiary Motions

“AMEND”

- When amendments involve adding or striking words or phrases:
 - the amendment must be germane to the motion
 - only one amendment to the amendment is permissible
 - adopting an amendment does not approve the motion - it approves the amendment
 - requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, can be debated and a majority to approve

Subsidiary Motions

“AMEND”

- When amendments involve *substituting* words, paragraphs or entire motions:
 - the amendment must be germane to the motion
 - only one amendment to the substitution is permissible - must occur at the end of the substitution
 - adopting the amendment does not approve the motion - it approves the amendment
 - requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, can be debated and a majority to approve

Subsidiary Motions

“COMMIT” or “REFER”

- Useful motion when not all of the facts related to an issue is known
 - refers or commits the item to a committee, task force etc. for further consideration before it is acted upon
- Requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, can be debated and a majority to approve

Subsidiary Motions

“POSTPONE”

- Delays action on a question to later in the same meeting or the next meeting but not later than that
- Is later scheduled on the agenda as “Unfinished Business”
- Requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, can be debated and requires a majority to approve

Subsidiary Motions

“LIMIT TIME PERIOD FOR DEBATE”

- Reduces the number and/or length of speeches
- Requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, can be debated and requires a 2/3 majority to approve, since you are curtailing a member's rights

Subsidiary Motions

“PREVIOUS QUESTION”

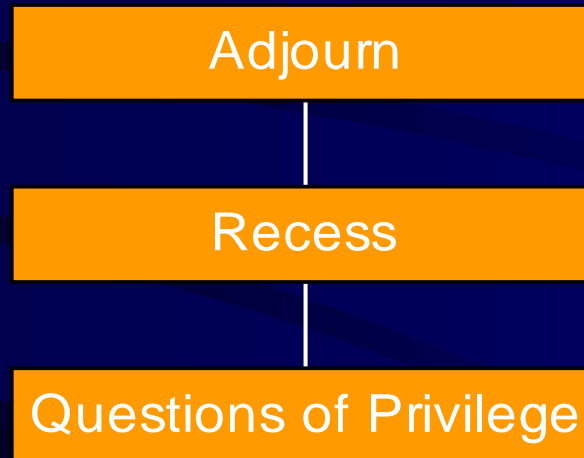
- Used to cut off debate and bring the group to an immediate vote on the pending motion
- Requires a motion, a second, cannot interrupt a speaker, CANNOT be debated and requires a 2/3 majority to approve, since you are curtailing a member's rights

Secondary Motions

- Privileged motions: motions of an emergency nature such as to recess or adjourn - do not relate to the motion on the floor but to the rights and welfare of the members and the group
 - ranked and handled before any other business pending
 - are not debatable
 - **take precedence over ALL other motions**

Ranks of Privileged Motions

“higher” motions take precedence over lower ones and can be made when lower ones are on the floor”



Secondary Motions

“QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE”

- Enables members to interrupt business on the floor to make an urgent request
 - General - “We cannot hear the speaker”
 - Personal - “The speaker is misstating my remarks”
 - Chair rules whether privilege is important enough to interrupt business
 - May be debated and amended when no business is pending
 - Speaker who had the floor before the interruption resumes speaking after the question of privilege is handled

Secondary Motions

“RECESS”

- Proposes a short intermission of a specified duration
 - “I move we recess for 30 minutes to eat!”
 - Requires a motion, a second, CANNOT be debated and a majority to approve
 - Motion can be amended as to the length of the recess only

Secondary Motions

“ADJOURN”

- Proposes to close the meeting
 - can be made while business is pending provided the rules of the group provide for another meeting...pending business is treated as “Unfinished Business”
 - Requires a motion, a second, is out of order if someone has the floor, CANNOT be debated, cannot be amended and requires a majority to approve

Secondary Motions

- Incidental motions: Procedural - deal with process, correcting mistakes etc. - must be dealt with before business resumes
 - not ranked, decided as they arise, usually not debatable and rarely amended

**A CHART OF INCIDENTAL OR
UNRANKED MOTIONS**
(In order of when they apply to business on the floor)

To Do This	Motion	You Say This	Vote
INCIDENTAL MOTIONS			
To Enforce Rules	Point of Order	"I RISE TO A POINT OF ORDER."	Chair
Protest Ruling of Chairman	Appeal	"I APPEAL THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR."	Majority
Request Information	Point of Information	"I RISE TO A POINT OF INFORMATION."	Given By Chair/ Authority
Request Parliamentary Help	Parliamentary Inquiry	"I RISE TO A PARLIAMMENTARY QUESTION."	Given By Chair/ Authority
Demand a Verification of the Vote	Division	Call out "DIVISION!"	On Demand of One Member
To Separate Parts of a Motion	Division of a Question	"I MOVE THAT THE MOTION BE DIVIDED."	Majority
To Remove an Improper Matter from the Floor	Object to Consideration	I OBJECT TO "THE CONSIDERATION OF . . ."	Two-thirds
To Withdraw a Motion I Made	Permission to Withdraw	"I REQUEST THAT MY MOTION BE WITHDRAWN"	Majority

Incidental Motion

“APPEAL”

- Motion that allows any 2 members to counter what they consider to be an incorrect or unfair ruling by the Chair
- Requires a second
- Is debatable...each member can speak once except for the Chair who can speak twice (at the beginning and the end of the debate)
- A majority vote is required to reverse the ruling of the Chair

Restoratory Motions -

Allow a group to change it's mind - can be done within limits

- RESCIND: quashes or nullifies a previously adopted motion
 - Not in order if an action has been taken as a result of the approval vote (Ex/Signing of contracts)
 - Must be seconded
 - Requires a 2/3 majority unless notice has been given at a previous meeting - then it requires a majority

Restoratory Motions -

- RECONSIDER: allows a group to reconsider the vote on a motion
 - Special Rules:
 - only a person who was on the prevailing side of the original motion can make a RECONSIDER motion
 - must be done on the same day the motion was approved (or next day if at a convention)
 - can be made and seconded while other business is pending on the floor, but cannot be debated or voted on until the business on the floor is cleared.
 - once seconded, any action that might come out of the original motion is stopped
 - both the RECONSIDER and original motion are opened for debate
 - requires a majority