

Roberts Rules of Order

Roberts Rules of Order provide common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies requires all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action!

The assembly rules - they have the final say on everything!

Silence means consent!

- Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state Mr. /Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order! Must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!
- Debate can not begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote!
- Before the motion is stated by the Chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.
- The "immediately pending question" is the last question stated by the Chair! Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone
- The member moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to preference to the floor!
- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once!
- All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations! When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes occur!

The Rules

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble can not be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "Close Debate" if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "Committee of the Whole" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.

- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified

Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart

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

Part 1, Main Motions. These motions are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion. § indicates the section from Robert's Rules.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§21	Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20	Take break	I move to recess for..	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19	Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18	Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17	Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16	Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§15	Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§14	Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§13	Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§12	Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§11	Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
§10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Part 2, Incidental Motions. No order of precedence. These motions arise incidentally and are decided immediately.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§23	Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None
§24	Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
§25	Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§26	Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
§27	Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§29	Demand a rising vote	I move for a rising vote	Yes	No	No	No	None
§33	Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	None
§33	Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None

Part 3, Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly.

No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
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 or Majority with notice
Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority

Six Steps to Every Motion!

Every motion requires 6 steps (with some exceptions). The should and shouldn't are as follows:

STEP 1 - A member stands up, is recognized, and makes a motion;

Common Mistake:

Members do not stand up, do not wait to be recognized, and typically start to discuss their motion before completing STEP 2, STEP 3, and STEP 4 below!

STEP 2 - Another member seconds the motion;

Common Mistake:

The person seconding the motion dives into the merits of the motion.

STEP 3 - The presiding officer restates the motion to the assembly;

Common Mistake:

Motion is restated differently from the wording of the maker! Beware because the motion that is adopted is the one stated by the presiding officer, not the one stated by the maker of the original motion.

STEP 4 - The members debate the motion;

Common Mistake:

Debate gets out of control in temper, in duration, in relevance! Members talk at each other across the room rather than through the presiding officer.

STEP 5 - Presiding officer asks for the affirmative votes & then the negative votes;

Common Mistake:

The presiding officer states 'All in favor' and fails to tell the members what to do as a matter of voting (for example, 'say aye', 'stand up', 'raise your hand', etc.); or the negative vote is never requested or counted!

STEP 6 - The presiding officer announces the result of the voting instructs the corresponding officer to take action; and introduces the next item of business;

Common Mistake:

Presiding officer fails to pronounce the result of the voting! No one is instructed to take action. Commonly, dead silence follows because the Presiding officer is lost and stares at the assembly 🗡️

Five Ways to Modify a Motion

Motions are rarely perfect for everyone. Modifications are inevitable.

1. **Between the time that a motion is made and *before the chair states the motion***, any member may informally offer modifying suggestions to the maker of the motion. The maker may accept or reject that member's recommendations.
2. **After the chair has stated the motion**, the maker of the motion may *request unanimous consent* from the members to modify the motion. Remember that at this time, the motion belongs to the assembly and not the original maker.
3. **By means of the subsidiary motion to *Amend***, any member may propose changes to the motion, before the motion is voted upon. These proposed changes must be seconded and may be amended and/or debated.
4. **If a motion requires further study**, the members may vote to *Refer the Main Motion to a Committee*. When the committee returns the motion to the assembly, the committee normally **proposes** amendments for the assembly to vote upon.
5. **Sometimes the motion is so complex** that the only way to do it justice is for a member to urge its rejection and offer to propose a simpler version as a *Substitute Motion*. Upon defeat of the complex motion, anyone may propose the *Substitute Motion*.

Once a member learns which motions are out of order, how to make a motion, and how to amend a motion, the member becomes a productive member of the organization. Until then, the member is just another victim of the organization! 🗡️

Three Ways to Amend a Motion

As a matter of survival, the most common motion a club member needs to know completely is the *Motion to Amend a Pending Motion*.

The difficult part is remembering that the more urgent motions can not be amended - *Adjourn, Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Lay on/Take from the Table, Previous Question, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Suspend the Rules, and Reconsider*.

During the Debate step of a Pending Motion, one may move to Amend the Pending Motion. All one needs to remember is that there are really **only 3 basic processes of amendments**:

Let's Amend this Sample Motion: "I move that we buy a new sign."

1. **You can Move to Amend by *Inserting* words or paragraphs.**
I move to Amend by Inserting the phrase "not to exceed \$50 dollars" at the end of the motion.
2. **You can Move to Amend by *Striking out* (not deleting) words or paragraphs.**
I move to Amend by striking out the word "new".
3. **You can Move to Amend by *Striking out and Inserting* words or paragraphs.** One can even Amend by *Substituting* (Striking out and Inserting) entire paragraphs or the complete motion.
I move to Amend by Striking out the word "sign" and Inserting the word "billboard".

You can also Amend the Amendment, before it is voted upon:

But you can only Amend the Inserted or Struck out **words**. You can not Amend a separate part of the Main Motion not covered by the Amendment that is currently being discussed!

After the current Amendment is voted upon, you can Amend the Motion again and Amend this new Amendment.

If you carefully review these 3 basic processes of amendments (*insert, strike out, and strike out/insert*), you will agree that any other form is not an amendment. Proper usage of these 3 processes will reduce the chances of chaos and confusion that is common during discussion of motions and amendments.

Un-amendable Motions

The power to amend any motion leads to a quick compromise which pleases most of the members. Notice that amending the following motion makes no sense.

In all of the motions listed in this section, the members either allow something to occur or they do not allow it. A member is either granted a request or is not. Normally, there is no half way position; there is no modification. (Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, then you probably can not amend them either!).

1. Adjourn.
2. Call for the Orders of the Day.
3. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
4. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
5. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.
6. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
7. Postpone Indefinitely.
8. Previous Question (Close Debate).
9. Parliamentary Inquiry.
10. Point of Information.
11. Point of Order.
12. Raise a Question of Privilege.
13. Suspend the Rules.
14. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair.
15. Reconsider a Motion.

Un-debatable Motions

You can make some motions which no one can speak against, mostly because sometimes the right to debate does not make sense!

(Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, you probably can not amend them either!).

Some motions perform a time sensitive task where a discussion would be counter productive.

1. Call for the Orders of the Day.
2. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
3. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
4. Division of a Question.
5. Suspend the Rules.
6. Reconsider a Motion (most).
7. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.

Some motions intend to prevent further debate. Discussing the motion defeats the purpose of the motion.

8. Adjourn.
9. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
10. Previous Question (Close Debate).
11. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate.
12. Recess.

Some motions intend to perform simple tasks which require immediate attention.

13. Parliamentary Inquiry.
14. Point of Information.
15. Point of Order.
16. Raise a Question of Privilege.
17. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair (most).

Counting Votes; Voting Results

Majority:

Does Robert mean

... the Majority of the entire membership?

... the Majority of the members present?

... the Majority of the Votes Cast?

How should you count the blank votes, the illegal votes, the abstentions?

The basic requirement for adoption of a motion by any assembly with a quorum is a **Majority Vote**, *except for certain motions as listed below*. A Majority is 'more than half' of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blank votes and abstentions. **Majority does not mean 51%**. In a situation with 1000 votes, Majority = 501 votes; but 51% = 510 votes.

Let's see an example:

- The chair instructed the members, at a meeting with a quorum, to vote by writing '**Yes**' or '**No**' on a piece of paper.
- Of the members present, 100 were entitled to vote, but 15 did not cast a ballot. Of the 85 votes cast: 75 were legal; 10 were illegal (the members wrote '**Maybe**'); and 4 were turned in blank (abstained).
- The Majority is any number larger than one half of the total of ...
(legal votes cast) - (blank votes cast) + (illegal votes cast).
- Of the 85 Votes Cast by members entitled to vote ...
(75 were valid) - (4 were blank) + (10 were illegal) = 81 Votes Cast.
- One half of 81 Votes Cast is 40 1/2. Majority was 41 votes.

2/3 Vote:

Robert specifies which motion will require at least a 2/3 vote for adoption. Notice that it is not called a 2/3 majority. A 2/3 vote is generally not taken as a voice vote, but rather as a standing count, or some other easily countable fashion. Generally speaking, a 2/3 vote is required for adoption of any motion which ...

1. Suspends or modifies a rule of order already adopted;
2. Prevents the introduction of a question to consideration;
3. Closes, limits, or extends the limits of debate;
4. Closes nominations or the polls;
5. Takes away membership or office.

Previous Notice:

There is a further requirement. As you can see from the following table, a **Previous Notice** is needed by some motions which require a 2/3 votes to adopt. A Previous Notice is an announcement of the intent to introduce the motion. A Previous Notice is typically given at least one meeting before the meeting when the proposal is to be introduced.

Votes Required to Adopt a Motion by a 2/3 Vote	
<i>A Motion Not involving a By Law, the Constitution, or an issue listed as Special Order on the Agenda:</i>	
With Previous Notice	Majority of votes cast
With NO Previous Notice	2/3 of votes cast; OR Majority of entire membership of the organization
<i>A Motion Involving a By Law, the Constitution, or an issue listed as Special Order on the Agenda:</i>	
With Previous Notice	2/3 of votes cast
With NO Previous Notice	Majority of entire membership of the organization

2/3 Vote vs Majority Vote

The basic requirement for approval of an action is a majority vote. However, the following situations require a 2/3 STAND UP vote for approval. Notice that all of these motions rob the individual of his rights. As a compromise between the rights of the individual and the rights of the assembly, a 2/3 vote is necessary:

1. **Modify an Adopted Rule of Order or Agenda:**
 - a. *Amend or Rescind the Constitutions, Bylaws, or Agenda;*
 - b. *Amend or Rescind Something Already Adopted;*
 - c. *Suspend the Orders of the Day;*
 - d. *Refuse to Proceed to the Orders of the Day;*
 - e. *Take up a Question Out of its Order.*
2. **Prevent the Introduction of a Question for Consideration:**
3. **Modify the Extend of Debate:**
 - a. *Limit or Extend Limits of Debate;*
 - b. *Call for the Previous Question.*
4. **Close Nominations:**
5. **Repeal an Assignment:**
 - a. *Take Away Membership or Office;*
 - b. *Discharge a Committee.*
6. **Make a Motion a Special Order:**

The presiding officer should take a rising vote in those motions where a 2/3 vote is required.