

# ROBERT'S RULES

of ORDER *QuickStudy*



## Introduction

Published in 1876, *Robert's Rules of Order* was originally written by U.S. Army Brigadier General Henry Robert. Robert wanted to write a manual for parliamentary procedure after presiding over a church meeting for which he felt he was woefully unprepared. In his work, Robert discovered that people from different regions of the country have different ideas of parliamentary procedure, resulting in organizations focused more on the procedure and less on the substance of their work. As a result of his *Rules of Order*, people could belong to many organizations without needing to learn new procedural rules at every new organization.

• *Robert's Rules of Order* are based on those used in the U.S. House of Representatives (*Jefferson's Manual*), but adapted for smaller organizations and societies.

**NOTE:** "Parliamentary law" is not actual law in the sense that it is not codified or used in a court proceeding; instead, "parliamentary law" and *Robert's Rules of Order* should be seen less as binding on an assembly and more as a set of strong guidelines an assembly can mold to its own needs.

Robert intended his *Rules of Order* to be adopted by organizations, assemblies, and clubs to use as their parliamentary, or procedural, authority; following the procedures for adopting bylaws then, these *Rules of Order* become binding upon the organization to establish its procedural rules of order.

## Terminology

### Types of Assemblies

**Deliberative assemblies** convene meetings; they are groups of people who come together with a common agenda: *the meeting*; the different types of deliberative assemblies are: **Mass meetings:** Open and unorganized meetings with a purpose defined by the meetings' sponsors (e.g., political or social rallies).

**Conventions:** Meetings of delegates chosen to enact or debate decisions affecting a large group of people (e.g., the meetings by political parties to choose their nomination for the U.S. presidency).

- **Legislative bodies:** Lawmaking bodies chosen by a group of people for a fixed period of time (e.g., Congress).

**Boards:** Administrative or managerial bodies with an assigned, specific function (e.g., a Board of Trustees of a university).

**Committees:** Bodies that are usually very small and subordinate to an assembly or board (e.g., a congressional committee).

### Mass Meetings

A special kind of meeting that is publicized and open to the public is a *mass meeting*; it usually takes on a "town hall meeting" format; to prepare for a mass meeting, the sponsors must:

- Choose who they prefer as a chairperson
- Choose who calls the meeting to order and nominates the chairperson
- Choose who should be nominated for secretary and by whom
- Decide the rules that will be proposed for the meeting
- Choose who makes the initial speech opening the meeting and explaining its purpose
- To conduct business, the assembly at the meeting should adopt *resolutions*; these resolutions may be drafted before the meeting, or the assembly can appoint a committee to draft the resolutions at the meeting.

### Conventions

A *convention* is an assembly of *delegates*, or representatives of the assembly or constituency, sitting as a single body and acting in the name of the larger group; an assembly may call a convention any time the bylaws authorize the assembly to call one; the bylaws that govern a convention should outline:

- The authorization for a periodic convention
- The powers and duties for the convention and the delegates
- The quorum for the convention
- The voting members
- Qualifications for the delegates and alternates and their election
- Anything the convention needs for its organization and operation

A *caucus* is a meeting the delegates hold before the actual convention where they decide how they will deal with certain procedural matters of the convention.

Planning a convention requires a lot of preparation that usually starts months in advance; the established society should create committees for the convention to help organize the convention; usually the organization needs:

- A **credentials committee**, which performs the following duties:
  - Distributes information for attending the convention
  - Distributes information for being a delegate
  - Examines all applications to verify the eligibility of the members who wish to be delegates
  - Compiles the list of eligible members
  - Arranges for registration to take place at the convention, usually starting one or two days before the convention starts
  - Handles registration
  - Prepares the committee's first report
  - Continues until the convention ends
- A **committee on standing rules**, which drafts rules for the convention, including:
  - Parliamentary rules
  - Rules for conducting business at the convention
  - Any other non-parliamentary rules that the committee feels should be added
- A **program committee**, which plans the schedule of meetings, proceedings, and convention events
- A **convention arrangements committee**, which makes the arrangements for the site of the convention and any hotel arrangements for the members
- A **resolutions committee**, which screens all the main motions that are about to come in front of the convention

### Legislative Bodies

A *legislative body* is a constitutionally established public body of representatives chosen by an electorate for a fixed term of office, charged with making laws; each legislative body is specific to its own laws, procedural rules, and decorum; therefore, *Robert's Rules of Order* does not delve into the parliamentary procedure of legislative bodies.

### Boards & Officers

A *board* is the administrative and judicial body of the assembly with the power to act on behalf of the organization; usually the members of the board are elected or appointed.

**Officers** are leaders of an assembly and are usually elected; there are three main officers that are essential to an organized group, especially a large group:

- **President or chairperson**, although if the president is acting as the chairperson for the meeting, he/she is referred to as the chairperson
- **Vice president**, who serves as the president or chairperson, if needed
- **Secretary**, who keeps the minutes (or notes) of each meeting and is the records keeper for the assembly

The president or chairperson has many important duties in running the meetings and the assembly; they include:

- Opening a meeting on time and calling it to order
- Announcing the order of business and keeping to the stated order
- Recognizing members to speak on the floor
- Keeping tabs on voting procedures and announcing the legitimate results of each vote
- Refusing to honor frivolous motions and ensuring that all members act with decorum
- Handling business in the most efficient way possible
- Deciding questions of order and responding to members' questions about parliamentary procedure
- Authenticating his/her signature
- Properly adjourning the meeting



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## Committees

**Committees**, or bodies of one or more elected or appointed people who consider, investigate, or take action on specific matters, can take many forms:

- **Ordinary committee:** A small number of people to whom the assembly gives a specific task, such as the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is charged with vetting Supreme Court candidates
  - **Committee of the whole:** A whole assembly charged with acting as an ordinary committee; this is usually used only in larger legislative assemblies, when a motion to commit passes
  - **Standing committee:** Committees that continue to exist, such as a committee created by the bylaws
  - **Special committees:** Committees that stop existing when they finish the task they were assigned; an example is the Watergate committee, which investigated President Nixon
- Committees are created through the bylaws or through a main motion; there are various methods of appointing or electing members to the committee:
- **Election by ballot**, where the assembly nominates the committee members and votes according to a ballot

- **Nominations from the floor**, where the assembly nominates the committee members without the secrecy of ballot voting
  - **Nominations by the chair**, if the chairperson has special knowledge and judgment about the committee's tasks
  - **Appoint by adoption of a motion naming members to a committee**, where the assembly adopts a motion to create the committee that includes the committee members' names
- Committee meetings follow the same parliamentary procedure as do the larger assembly meetings, including the rules outlined in the bylaws

## Committee of the Whole

A *committee of the whole* and its alternate forms are procedural devices that allow the full assembly to consider a matter deeply as a committee would

- A **committee of the whole** is usually used in larger assemblies; any voting results are used as recommendations to the assembly and not as a final decision of the assembly

- A **quasi-committee of the whole** is usually used in medium-sized assemblies; the voting operates the same as in a committee of the whole, except that the chairperson of the assembly remains as the chairperson of the committee
  - **Informal consideration** is best suited for a small assembly; it lifts the formal speaking and debating requirements
- Even though a committee of the whole (or quasi-committee of the whole) acts like the general assembly, important exceptions include:
- Committees of the whole cannot create subcommittees or comment on another committee's work
  - Appeals from the decision of the chair must be directly voted on
  - Debate can be closed or limited by the assembly only before going into committee of the whole
  - Committees of the whole cannot order roll call or ballot votes
  - Committees of the whole cannot impose disciplinary measures; they may only report the facts to the assembly
  - Committees of the whole cannot adjourn or recess

**NOTE:** Permanent Society = Club = Organization = Assembly; *Robert's Rules of Order* uses these terms interchangeably

## Starting a Permanent Society

Organizing a *permanent society* starts much the same way as a mass meeting, but the invitations are limited to interested people; anyone may organize a permanent society, and the organizer should choose the interested people to begin the organization; at the first organizational meeting, the proposed members should accomplish these tasks:

- Elect temporary officers
- Adopt a resolution to form an organization or society
- Provide background information for the organization or society
- Give opinions as to the direction the organization should take
- Introduce and adopt a motion to form a committee to draft bylaws
- Introduce and adopt a motion to fix the meeting dates and times for the report of the bylaws committee
- Introduce and adopt a motion authorizing the bylaws committee to reproduce copies of the complete draft for everyone

At the second organizational meeting, the members should:

- Read and approve the minutes from the first meeting
- Receive the report from the bylaws committee
- Read each article and section from the bylaws
- Vote to adopt the bylaws
- Decide the date and time for the next meeting

## Combining or Ending Organizations

- When two existing organizations wish to combine, they may *merge*, where one organization loses its independent identity, or *consolidate*, where each organization keeps its independent identity, and they form a new organization to absorb the two organizations' assets and liabilities
- When an organization ends, it *dissolves*; an incorporated organization must dissolve according to the laws of the state in which it is incorporated, through a resolution

## Procedural Rules & Bylaws for All Types of Organizations

Assemblies and organizations need *procedural rules* to guide parliamentary procedure; the different kinds of rules assemblies and organizations can adopt are:

- **Corporate charters:** Legal instruments needed for incorporating an assembly or organization under the laws of a particular state
  - **Constitution/bylaws:** A society's own basic rules for itself as an organization, such as its name, purpose, and committees
  - **Rules of order:** Rules of parliamentary procedure for running ordinary business while in meetings
  - **Standing rules:** Rules for the administration of the organization instead of parliamentary procedure
- Bylaws** are the rules that the organization uses for its own administration; usually an organization appoints a committee to draft the bylaws before implementation; the basic way to structure bylaws is:
- **Article 1 – Name:** Describes the name of the organization if not already done in a corporate charter or constitution
  - **Article 2 – Object:** Describes the society's objective and the reason behind its creation
  - **Article 3 – Members:** Describes the different types of members, qualifications for membership, and any dues or fees that must be paid
  - **Article 4 – Officers:** Describes the offices, their duties, and how the officers will take their office
  - **Article 5 – Meetings:** Describes the dates and times for regular meetings or how the assembly will schedule meetings
  - **Article 6 – Executive Board:** States which offices are included in the executive board, delineates the powers of the board, and describes any rules for the board to conduct its business
  - **Article 7 – Committees:** Establishes standing committees as well as their functions and procedures
  - **Article 8 – Parliamentary Authority:** Describes the process through which the organization adopts its rules of order
  - **Article 9 – Amendment of Bylaws:** Describes the procedure for amending the bylaws

Organizations may always add additional articles if needed to describe the duties of officers, financial obligations, etc.

## Amending Bylaws

Bylaws are amended through the main motion *amend something previously adopted*; the procedure for raising the motion is the same as any other motion except:

- The bylaws may specify any special rules for the motion's adoption, although the bylaws must include notice and a two-thirds vote for adoption of the amendment
- The notice of the motion for amendment must limit the permissible primary and secondary amendments
- The organization cannot reconsider affirmative votes on the motion to amend the bylaws
- Even though the motion is a main motion, other main motions may be pending at the same time for changes to the bylaws

Depending on the length of the bylaws, the organization amends them through:

- **Isolated changes**, made by motion, could include multiple changes in one motion
- **General revisions**, made by substituting a whole new revised set of bylaws if the revisions are extensive enough

The procedure for considering many amendments at one time is the same as amending a motion by seriatim, or by paragraph:

1. The assembly is given notice of each individual amendment, even if two or more are competing
2. The chairperson organizes each amendment as though the assembly were to fill in the blanks of the bylaws
3. The chairperson reads the first submission, and it is explained by its proponent
4. The chairperson then asks if there is any debate on the amendment
5. Once debate has ended, the assembly votes on the amendment
6. Once all amendments have been voted upon, the chairperson opens the entire document for amendments, and the process starts over if needed
7. Once all amendments are made and included, the chairperson presents the amended rule and asks for a vote for the entire document
8. The assembly votes on the entire document

Amendments to bylaws take effect immediately upon adoption; the bylaws should specify the margin by which an amendment must win

## Procedures for Conducting a Meeting

Major vocabulary terms for meetings:

- A **meeting** is an assembly of members in a single room to conduct business
- A **session** is a series of connected meetings for a single order of business or agenda
- A **recess**, taken in the middle of a meeting, is a short break having no effect on the business of the meeting, after which the meeting is resumed where it left off
- An **adjournment** ends a meeting
- An **adjournment sine die** ends a session or a series of meetings

The assembly and its bylaws decide how many meetings and sessions to hold and their frequency; when a meeting ends, the assembly should decide when and where to hold the next meeting

Assemblies must finish any pending business before adjourning a session; the assembly in the following session is not tied to any business that was not discussed in the previous session

There are different types of meetings an assembly can hold:

- A **regular meeting** is a meeting held on the date and time specified in the bylaws to discuss any business that arises within the scope of the assembly
- A **special meeting** is a meeting that is not held at the regular time and date to deal with urgent business that cannot wait until the following regular meeting
- An **adjourned meeting** is one that continues the previous session or special meeting, taking up the business that was interrupted at the adjournment of the last meeting
- An **annual meeting** is a meeting held once each year, usually to give the various reports of officers and committees
  - An **executive session** is a secret meeting for executive business
  - A **public session** is the opposite of an executive session and must be open to the public, even if the public is not a member of the assembly

### Starting a Meeting

To start a meeting, the chairperson of the meeting must **call the meeting to order** by taking his/her position (usually at the front of the room) and saying, "The meeting will come to order"; once the chairperson calls the meeting to order, the meeting can begin on the **order of business**; this order is usually:

1. Reading and approval of minutes
2. Reports of officers, boards, and committees
3. Reports of special committees, or committees appointed to exist for a specific task
4. Special orders, or business that has a special priority, such as committee reports left over from the previous meeting
5. Unfinished business and general orders, or business left over from the previous meeting
6. New business

Meeting business is usually handled with **motions**; to bring a motion before the assembly, the steps are:

1. The member must be recognized by the chairperson, usually by standing and waiting to be called upon
2. He/she then makes the motion by saying, "I move to..."
3. Another member seconds the motion, saying, "Seconded"
4. The chair repeats the motion; at this time, the motion is **pending**, or open to discussion

Motions usually made at the beginning of meetings are:

- **Call for the orders of the day**, in which the assembly adopts its agenda or order of business
- **Fix the time to which to adjourn**, where the assembly decides when the meeting will end and sets a time for the next meeting

### Minutes

The **minutes** are the record of the meeting's procedures and what was accomplished at the meeting; minutes generally include:

- The name of the assembly and the kind of meeting
- The date and time of the meeting
- Who was present at the meeting and who operated as the chairperson
- The approval of the previous meeting's minutes, if needed
- All main motions, their topics, and who proffered them
- Whether the main motions were approved or denied and the number of votes for each side
- All secondary motions when needed for clarity or completeness
- All notices of motions
- All points of order and appeals and their dispositions
- When the meeting adjourned

### Reports

**Reports of officers** are reports of an officer's administrative duties; examples of these reports include:

- **Reports of executive officers**, which usually contain information or recommendations for actions
- **Treasurer's reports**, which report on the financial state of the organization
- **Reports of other officers**, which are usually made annually and for informational purposes only

**Reports of boards and committees** are official statements formally adopted by the body as information for the assembly (e.g., a report of the committee for drafting the bylaws); the reports must contain only information that has been legally agreed to in the board or committee meeting

### Quorum

To hold a meeting and conduct business, there must be a **quorum**, or a certain number of members present, at the meeting; the number is usually a percentage of the total members and can be fixed by the assembly or by rules

If a quorum does not exist at a meeting, the meeting must immediately adjourn, as all business completed without a quorum would be illegal

### Decorum in Debate

Once there is a quorum and the chair calls the meeting to order, members can be recognized for motions:

1. To obtain the floor, the member must stand and address the chairperson by saying, "Mr./Madam Chairperson"
2. The chairperson recognizes the member by saying the member's name
3. The member may then introduce a motion for **debate**; the general rules of debate are:
  - The speaker must be recognized by the chairperson before speaking
  - The speaker cannot usually speak for more than ten minutes unless the members decide otherwise



- Members should not speak more than twice on a motion
- The chairperson cannot close debate before every member who wishes to speak is able, within a reasonable period of time
- Everyone must adhere to **decorum**, carrying on the debate in an orderly manner without personal attacks on other members

Members can adhere to decorum by:

- Confining their statements and remarks to the merits of the pending question and not outside the scope of the question
- Not attacking a member's motives for speaking for or against or presenting a motion
- Addressing all statements and remarks through the chairperson
- Addressing the speaker or the chairperson correctly (never use "you," but always refer to the speaker or the chairperson in the third person)
- Avoiding the use of members' names
- Not speaking adversely on a prior action that isn't pending and has already been finalized
- Refraining from speaking against his/her own motion
- Reading from reports or quotations only without objection or with permission; a member may read from reports or quotations with the chairperson's permission as long as no other member objects
- Continuing to stand when the chairperson addresses him/her directly during an interruption
- Refraining from disturbing the assembly during debate

The chairperson has guidelines for decorum as well:

- The chairperson always refers to him/herself in the third person
- When reporting in his/her presidential capacity, the chairperson may speak of him/herself as "Your President"
- The chairperson does not refer to a member's name, only referring to him/her in the third person (e.g., "Will the speaker...")
- The chairperson may refer to a member by name when assigning the floor, however
- The chairperson must not participate in the debate except through the vice president

### Recognition Preference

The preference rules for recognizing a member when there is a debatable question pending on the floor are:

1. A member can stand to give previous notice of a different motion
2. The member who presents the motion and who has not yet spoken on the motion, including:
  - The reporting member's motion to implement a recommendation from a committee report
  - The member who moved to un-table a motion that was previously laid on the table
  - The member who made a motion to reconsider
3. Members who have not yet spoken on the question; if everyone who wishes to speak on the question has, members may speak again

- The chairperson should recognize alternating opinions on the question or motion

The preference rules for recognizing a member when there is no debatable question pending on the floor are:

- A member assigned to offer a motion or an important prearranged main motion
- When a set of motions is presented in a series, the member presenting the motions has preference to present each motion in turn
- A member who offers a similar motion to one that the assembly voted down at the member's suggestion
- A member may be recognized over a member offering a main motion when a member rises:
  - To move to reconsider and enter on the minutes
  - To move to reconsider a vote
  - To call up a motion to reconsider
  - To give previous notice
  - To move to un-table an issue

Members cannot interrupt each other, except in some urgent situations:

- A call for the orders of the day when they are not followed
- Raising a question of privilege
- Raising a point of order, brought by a member who believes the chair has breached the parliamentary rules
- The chair calling to a member's attention that he/she is not observing the speaking rules
- Calling for a separate vote on a set of resolutions on different subjects that were included in one motion
- A request that requires an immediate response
- An appeal
- An objection to the consideration of a question
- A division of the assembly

At the end of the interruption, the member who had the floor regains it when the chairperson asks him/her to stand to regain his/her position on the floor

Assemblies may set their own rules for debate in their bylaws; some general guidelines that assemblies should use when creating their debating rules are:

- Speeches should be no longer than ten minutes each
- The member speaking should immediately conclude his/her speech when the chairperson rises
- If the member needs only a minute more for his/her speech, the chairperson need not dismiss the member immediately
- No member should speak more than twice per question per day
- Members are not allowed to yield their unelapsed time to another member to allow one member a particularly long speech
- Merely asking a question or making a brief suggestion is not speaking in debate and should not be counted against a member for his/her daily speech limit

## Motions

### Main Motions

**Original main motions** are motions that bring a substantive question to the assembly for debate and action; these are different from **incidental main motions**, which are motions dealing with the procedure of the assembly, like the **call for the orders of the day** motion

Characteristics of main motions:

- Every other motion takes precedence over the main motion
  - Main motions cannot be applied to any other motions
  - They must be seconded
  - There can be only one main motion on the floor at a time
  - They are debatable, amendable, and can be reconsidered
  - They mostly require a majority vote
- After a member brings a motion to the assembly, the assembly must either consider the motion or dispose of the motion; to fully consider a motion:
- The assembly debates the motion, unless no one in the assembly wants to debate the motion
  - The chairperson puts the motion to a vote
  - The chairperson announces the results of the vote

### 10 Easy Steps for Making Motions

- The member asks permission from the chairperson for the floor
- The chairperson grants permission
- The member makes the motion, stating, "I move to..."
- The chairperson asks for any seconds
- Members may stand and call out "Second," or they may simply call out "Second"; if there is no second, the motion fails immediately
- If there is a second, the chairperson states the question of the motion; this opens debate
- The assembly debates the motion; during this time, the motion may be amended or tabled for further debate at a later time
- When debate is finished, the chairperson puts the motion to a vote
- The chairperson counts the votes
- The chairperson announces the votes and enacts or defeats the motion

### Subsidiary Motions

There are different types of motions; **subsidiary motions** deal with the original main motion, such as:

- Postpone indefinitely**, which kills the original main motion without a direct vote on it
- Amend**, which modifies something in the main motion before the assembly acts on the motion (**NOTE:** The assembly must agree to amend the motion and then agree on the amendment before the amendment can be thought of as the main motion)
- Commit or refer**, which assigns the motion to a committee for investigation or a report
- Postpone definitely**, which puts off the question until an expressed time
- Limit or extend debate**, which either shortens or lengthens the time for debate on a motion if the assembly needs it
- Previous question**, which closes debate and amendments, bringing the assembly to a vote on the motion
- Lay on the table**, which interrupts the current business to introduce urgent business immediately

Subsidiary motions have four characteristics that make them subsidiary:



- These motions always apply to motions and do something to them, or change their status
- They may be applied to any main motion
- They fit an order of preference (as listed previously)
- They may be applied at any time from the point when the chairperson states a question upon which they may be applied to the time when the question is voted upon

### Privileged Motions

**Privileged motions** do not relate to any business, but they take precedence over everything else in the assembly; these motions include:

- Call for the orders of the day**, which need not be seconded
- Raising a question of privilege**, which permits an emergency motion or question dealing with the rights and privileges of the members
- Recess**, which gives the assembly a short break
- Adjourn**, which closes the meeting
- Fix the time to which to adjourn**, which sets the time for the meeting to end

Privileged motions are privileged because they take precedence over debate to deal with urgent procedural matters; they take the order of preference as listed previously

### Incidental Motions

**Incidental motions** do not necessarily relate to business but answer questions of procedure with regard to motions; they are in order only when they are legitimately incidental to another pending motion or to other business at hand, at which point they take precedence over any other pending motions; they must be decided before business can continue; these motions include:

- Point of order**, which asks the chairperson for a ruling and enforcement of the rules when a member thinks the rules were broken, which need not be seconded
- Appeal**, which takes away a decision from the chairperson and gives it to the assembly if a member thinks the chairperson's decision was wrong
- Suspend the rules**, which suspends the rules when the assembly wants to do something it cannot do without breaking the rules
- Objection to the consideration of a question**, which avoids a main motion if the assembly thinks the motion should have never come before it
- Division of a question**, which separates different parts of a question or motion that can stand on their own
- Consideration by paragraph or seriatim**, which permits debate on different parts of a long motion or question without putting the different parts into question
- Division of the assembly**, which requires the chairperson to take a vote by each member rising to give his/her vote

- **Motions relating to nominations**, which must be raised if the bylaws do not outline mechanics for nominations and an election
  - **Request to be excused from duty**, which relieves the member from an obligation he/she holds
- While the incidental motions look like subsidiary motions, none of the incidental motions has all four characteristics of the subsidiary motions; it should be noted that each incidental motion is applicable only in the specific period of time in which it is raised; generally, incidental motions deal with procedural questions arising out of:
- Another pending motion
  - Another motion or business item that:
    - The motion attempts to introduce
    - Has been made but not yet repeated by the chairperson
    - Was just pending

**Requests and inquiries** are special types of incidental motions that connect to the business at hand; they include:

- **Parliamentary inquiry**, which directs a question on parliamentary procedure or the organization's rules to the chairperson, which need not be seconded
- **Point of information**, which requests information from the chairperson about the matter at hand, which need not be seconded
- **Request for permission to withdraw or modify a motion**, which asks the chairperson for permission to withdraw or modify a motion already stated by the chairperson
- **Request to read papers**, which asks the chairperson for permission to read excerpts from his/her papers, which is not usually allowed in debate

### Motions That Bring a Question Again Before an Assembly

**Motions that bring a question again before an assembly** are special motions that do not fit anywhere else; they include:

- **Take from the table**, or **un-table**, which takes up a motion or an order of business that was earlier laid on the table
  - **Rescind**, which takes back a main motion, amendment, bylaw, section, or paragraph that was presented and adopted
  - **Amend something previously adopted**, which modifies a motion, amendment, bylaw, section, or paragraph that was presented and adopted if rescinding is too much
  - **Discharge a committee**, which takes a matter out of a committee's hands before they have made a report on their findings so the assembly may act on it or the matter may be dropped
  - **Reconsider**, which prompts the assembly to reconsider a motion that was adopted earlier that day, but new information or a changed situation makes it clear that the true will of the assembly would not be followed with the previous course
- The reason why these motions are separate is because they relate to the following principles of parliamentary procedure:
- During a session or meeting when the assembly decides a question, it cannot be brought up again except through special circumstances
  - When an assembly disposes of a question without finally acting on it, no similar or conflicting motion that would restrict the assembly in acting on the first motion may be introduced
  - Changing something the assembly already adopted requires more than what was necessary to adopt it in the first place

### Enacting Motions

For an assembly to enact or approve the motion, the assembly needs to *vote* on it; usually a majority of votes is needed to enact or approve the motion; however, certain motions require a two-thirds majority of voters to approve the motion; these include motions that:

- Suspend or modify a rule of order
- Prevent the introduction of a question for consideration
- Close, limit, or extend the limits of debate
- Close nominations, polls, or otherwise limit voting
- Take away membership or an office

### Special Note on Amendments

**Amending** a motion (or the bylaws) modifies the wording of the motion; the motion to amend:

- Must always be germane to the motion, meaning the assembly cannot amend a motion that is not pending
- Does not modify the motion if the amendment fails
- Can be applied to any main motion, but it cannot be applied to itself
- Must always be seconded
- Is out of order when another motion has the floor
- Is debatable when the motion that is being amended is debatable; if the motion is not debatable, then the motion to amend is not debatable
- May be amended, but secondary amendments are not allowed
- Requires a majority vote
- Can be reconsidered
- When applied to a main motion, takes precedence over the main motion and the motion to postpone indefinitely but gives way to all other motions
- When applied to a non-main motion, takes precedence over the motion that it seeks to amend but gives way to any other motion that would take precedence over the motion

Improper amendments include amendments that:

- Are not germane to the motion
- Have the effect of rejecting the main question
- Have the effect of repeating a question the assembly has already decided
- Change one parliamentary procedure into another
- Change the form of another amendment
- Strike out enacting words, such as "resolved"
- Are frivolous, or do not otherwise follow the rules of decorum
- Make the motion or question incomprehensible or incoherent
- Would convert the motion to an improper form
- Change the preamble of a resolution without finally amending the subsequent paragraphs or clauses

An amendment can take one of five forms:

- Inserts or adds words or paragraphs according to the following rules:
  - The motion for amendment must specify exactly where the words or paragraphs are to go by naming the words or paragraphs before and after the insertion
  - After words have been inserted or added, they cannot be removed unless there is a reconsideration or a new motion:
    - › to strike out the entire paragraph where the words were inserted or added
    - › to strike out a portion of the paragraph where the words were inserted or added
    - › to substitute an entire paragraph for the one in which the words were inserted
    - › to strike out a portion of the paragraph and enter in new words or a new paragraph that presents a different question

- If a motion to insert words is voted down, it may still be revived through a motion:

- › to insert part of the words
- › to insert part of the words in a different place
- › to insert the same words in place of others
- › to insert the same words in a different place where the effect will be different

• **Strikes out words or paragraphs** according to the following rules:

- The motion must specify the location of the words
- Only consecutive words may be struck out
- If a motion to strike words fails, it may still be revived through a motion:
  - › to strike out only part of the words
  - › to strike out the words with some others
  - › to strike out all or a part of the same words and substitute them for others
  - › to strike out all or some of the same words together with some others and substitute them for others

- A motion to strike a paragraph may be open to a secondary amendment in any form that is available to striking words

- A struck-out paragraph cannot be inserted again unless the wording is changed to present a different question

• **Strikes out and inserts** according to the rules above

• **Substitutes**, also according to the rules above

• **Fills in blanks**, using one of three ways:

- To fill a blank with a name, the chairperson takes nominations for the name and the assembly votes on them until one receives a majority
- To fill a blank with an amount of money, the chairperson takes nominations for the amount and arranges the amounts so that the least acceptable amount is voted upon first
- To fill a blank with a place, date, or number, use one of the above methods depending on the circumstances

When an amendment needs to be amended, or an amendment is applied to itself, a **secondary amendment**, or an amendment to the amendment, results

### Voting

**Putting the question** is when a chairperson calls for a vote on a motion after clarifying to the assembly upon what they are voting; an assembly votes using the following methods:

- **Voice**, which is the usual method
  - **Rising**, which is used to determine the winner of an inconclusive voice vote
  - **Show of hands**, which is used instead of rising, usually in smaller groups
- The chairperson then counts and announces the vote:
- Usually a motion needs a simple majority to pass, but some need a two-thirds (66%) majority to pass, as explained previously



- The assembly can decide if there are restrictions on who may vote, such as limiting votes to only those present at the meeting, or using another ratio of winning votes to pass a motion
- All members have a right to **abstain**, or decline from voting, if they have a personal interest in the outcome of the vote
- If the motion passes, it passes immediately
- A chairperson may vote when his/her vote will affect the result, such as to break a tie, but a chairperson may not vote twice

### Nominations & Elections

A **nomination** is a motion to elect a person to a position; the methods of nomination are:

- **The chair**, where the chairperson nominates the candidate
  - **From the floor**, where a member nominates the candidate
  - **Ballot**, where members may nominate other members for an office on a ballot (note that this is not the same as a petition election, as described below)
  - **Mail**, where members are too far away to meet together in one place; this acts much like a ballot nomination, but nominations are simply collected through the mail instead of in person
  - **Petition**, where a group of members may nominate someone by a petition
- Assemblies and organizations may have their own rules outlining how to run elections; some methods are:
- **Ballot election**, in which the assembly votes for the candidate on a ballot
  - **Viva-voce election**, in which the assembly votes for the candidate by a voice vote
  - **Roll-call election**, in which each member stands and states for which candidate he/she is voting
- Elected officers win their seats when they win the most votes; an elected officer takes his/her office immediately upon winning an election, unless the assembly's rules state otherwise

### Disciplinary Procedures

Disciplinary procedures should be outlined in the bylaws so that every member has notice as to the procedures; a fair disciplinary procedure includes:

- A confidential investigation by a committee to determine if further disciplinary action is warranted (**NOTE:** This committee does not have power, if not delineated in the bylaws, to compel a member to appear in front of it)
- The committee prepares and presents a report on the investigation, either exonerating the member or recommending the charges for the guilty member
- The accused is formally notified, and his/her rights are suspended for the duration of the trial
- A trial, or formal hearing, on the charges at which the accused may appear to defend him/herself
- The assembly reviews the committee's findings if the trial was not held in front of the assembly

The procedure for running the trial should include:

1. The chair directs the secretary to read the charges aloud to the committee or the assembly
2. The chair asks the accused how he/she would plead (guilty or not guilty)
3. If the accused pleads guilty, the trial ends
4. If the accused pleads not guilty, the trial proceeds in this order:
  - Opening statements by both sides
  - Witness testimony
  - Testimony of defense witnesses
  - Rebuttal witnesses for the organization or society
  - Closing arguments by both sides
5. The accused leaves the room when both sides finish their closing arguments
6. The committee or the assembly deliberate as to the guilt or innocence of the accused member
7. When deliberations are complete, the chair states, "The question before the assembly is: Is the member guilty of the specifications against him/her?"
8. The assembly or the committee members vote
9. Any punishment must be decided by a ballot vote, by a two-thirds margin
10. When voting is done, the accused is called back into the hall and the result is delivered

### Ending a Meeting

A chairperson ends a meeting by **adjourning**, or closing the meeting, after all debate and business are finished; if there is unfinished business, the assembly may take it up at the next meeting; before a meeting ends, the assembly should decide the date and time of the next meeting if it is not already decided in the bylaws

Before adjourning, the chairperson must:

- Inform the assembly of any unfinished business to give the assembly the opportunity to finish it before adjourning
- Make any important announcements
- Make any motions to reconsider a previous vote if needed
- Make a motion to reconsider and enter on the minutes
- Give notice of a motion that will be presented at the next meeting if the motion is one that requires notice
- Move to set a time for an adjourned meeting if there isn't one already scheduled
- Formally state that the meeting "is adjourned"

The motion to adjourn must, like all motions, be seconded and voted upon so that the chairperson cannot end a meeting without the assembly's consent. If all business is finished and the preselected hour to adjourn has arrived, the assembly need not move to adjourn; the chairperson may ask, "Is there any further business?"; if there is none, the chairperson may then say, "Then I hereby adjourn this meeting"; the meeting is then adjourned.

### Form of Popular Motions

When you want to make a motion to...	You say...
Postpone indefinitely	I move to postpone the motion indefinitely
Amend	I move to amend the motion by...
Commit or refer	I move to commit/refer the matter to...
Postpone definitely	I move to postpone the motion to...
Limit or extend debate	I move to limit/extend the time for debate
Previous question	I move for previous question
Table	I move to table...
Un-table	I move to un-table...
Orders of the day	I move for the orders of the day
Question of privilege	I rise for a question of privilege
Recess	I move for a recess
Adjourn	I move to adjourn
Fix the time to adjourn	I move to fix the time to adjourn
Point of order	Point of order, Chairperson, (question)
Point of information	Point of information, Chairperson, (question)
Rescind	I move to rescind my motion
Reconsider	I move for a reconsideration of...
Vote	I move to vote on...
Nominate	I move to nominate...
Suspend the rules	I move to suspend the rules and...
Divide the question	I move to divide the question
Divide the assembly	I move for a rising vote

### How to Use the Book

- Go to the table of contents and search for the action for which you need help (the table of contents does not list page numbers; it lists section numbers)
- Go to the section to which the table of contents directs you; *Robert's Rules of Order* is written in prose, so you will have to read the whole section to get a comprehensive idea of what it contains
- Each individual section is part of a larger section, so it is beneficial to read other sections in the subheading if you need more direction; this is especially helpful if you do not know when the topic you are researching arises during a meeting
- If you find yourself in a part of the rules that provides little guidance, do not worry—the rules assume that your assembly will write its own bylaws to fit its own purposes
- **NOTE:** *Robert's Rules of Order* can be superseded by your assembly's bylaws; so, if *Robert's Rules of Order* does not fit your assembly's processes, there is no need to change your assembly's rules to fit those outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order*

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