

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules is a system of priority of motion – its purpose is to help better take care of business at a National Council meeting, for example. Robert's Rules has nothing to do with how we function as an organization. You don't look to Robert's Rules to see how a chapter is chartered, or how a brother is suspended. We govern that by practice and precedence. But in what order can motions be put down, taken up and acted upon: that is the realm of Robert's Rules of Order. It allows for the following when followed in a reasonable manner:

- It allows business to be handled in an organized logical fashion.
- It allows for majority rule, and a manner for the use of super-majorities for which our Constitution and Bylaws (or Chapter bylaws) may call.
- It protects the rights of the minority to be protected, and have a say
- It allows large bodies like the National Council to have a formal sense of order
- It gives "language" to our legislative (parliamentary) actions.

The following are certain points that can well guide our proceedings – on the chapter and national level. Remember these rules are to guide our deliberations and actions in an organized manner; they should not be used as weapons or to obstruct.

The following motions are in order of priority.

| TO DO THIS | YOU SAY THIS | May one interrupt the speaker? | Do you need a second? | Is it debatable? | Can it be amended? | What vote is needed? | Can it be reconsidered? |
|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| Adjourn | "I move that we adjourn." | NO | YES | NO | NO | MAJORITY | NO |
| Call for a break | "I move that we recess for" | NO | YES | NO | YES | MAJORITY | NO |
| Complain about noise or room temperature | "I rise to a question of privilege" | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO VOTE | NO |
| Temporarily suspend consideration of a motion | "I move to table the motion" | NO | YES | NO | NO | MAJORITY | NO |
| End debate and amendments to a motion | "I move the previous question" | NO | YES | NO | NO | 2/3 | NO <i>Unless vote on question is not yet taken</i> |
| Postpone discussion to a specific time | "I move to postpone the discussion until" | NO | YES | YES | YES | MAJORITY | YES |
| Give a matter at hand closer study or review it further | "I move to refer the matter to committee" | NO | YES | YES | YES | MAJORITY | YES <i>Unless the committee has already taken up subject</i> |
| Amend a motion | "I move to amend the motion by" | NO | YES | YES <i>Only if the motion to be amended is debatable</i> | YES | MAJORITY | YES |
| Introduce New Business (i.e. make a motion) | "I move that" | NO | YES | YES | YES | MAJORITY | YES |

The following motions are no particular order.

| TO DO THIS | YOU SAY THIS | May you interrupt the speaker? | Do you need a second? | Is it debatable? | Can it be amended? | What vote is needed? | Can it be reconsidered? |
|--|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|---|---|
| Adopt a Motion | "I move that the report be adopted..." | NO | YES | YES | YES | MAJORITY | YES |
| Ballot Vote (or Roll Call Vote) | "I move that the vote be taken by ballot (or roll call)" | NO | YES | NO | YES | MAJORITY | YES |
| Protest a violation of rules, practices or conduct | "I rise to a point of order" | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO VOTE <i>Except in doubtful cases</i> | NO |
| Vote on a ruling of the chair (to overturn the ruling of the Chair) | "I appeal from the chair's decision" | YES | YES | YES | NO | MAJORITY <i>(A majority vote in negative needed to reverse ruling of chair)</i> | YES |
| Suspend rules* (temporarily) | "I move to suspend the rules so that" | NO | YES | NO | NO | 2/3 | NO |
| Rescind or repeal an action taken | "I move that the motion to ... be rescinded." | NO | YES | YES | YES | 2/3 <i>without malice</i> | N/A |
| Avoid considering an improper matter | "I object to consideration of this motion" | YES | NO | NO | NO | 2/3 <i>(2/3 vote in negative needed to prevent consideration of main motion)</i> | <i>Only if the main question or motion was not, in fact, considered</i> |
| Verify a voice vote by having members stand and be counted (e.g., yeas stand; then nays) | "I call for a division" or "Division" | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO VOTE | NO |
| Request information | "Point of information" | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO VOTE | NO |
| Take up a matter previously tabled | "I move to take from the table" | NO | YES | NO | NO | MAJORITY | NO |
| Reconsider a hasty action (at same meeting) | "I move to reconsider the vote on" | YES | YES | <i>Only if motion to be reconsidered is debatable</i> | NO | MAJORITY | NO |

Robert's Rules of Order – Key Terms to Know

ACCEPTING A COMMITTEE REPORT – A motion is made as follows: "I move we accept the committee's report." By this motion, the chapter supports the action of the committee. Most committee reports need not be accepted because they require no action; they should be received, not accepted (See RECEIVE A REPORT). Sometimes "adopt" is used instead of "accept."

ACCLAMATION – A voice vote made by stating "Aye" or "No."

ADOPT – To pass or carry a motion: to approve a committee report.

APPEAL FROM THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR – An incidental motion (See MOTIONS below). Any member disagreeing with the chairman's decision may thus petition the matter to a vote of the chapter. It is in order even when another member has the floor, and often arises out of a point of order. The member arises, saying, "I appeal from the decision of the Chair." If it is seconded, the chairman states his decision and allows limited debate. He then says, "All those in favor of the chair's decision, say Aye," etc. A tie vote sustains the chair.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE QUESTION? – "Are you ready to vote on the motion?"

CARRY A MOTION – To adopt (pass) a motion.

CONVENE – To call the meeting to order. All delegates must be seated at this point.

DEBATE AND DISCUSSION – Debating or talking about a motion or question; reasonable time must allotted and apportioned, if not a call to end the debate will close discussion (call the previous question).

DIVISION – Count the vote again. It may be requested by any member, without recognition or rising, after the chairman has announced the outcome of a vote when the count is not definite, generally after a voice vote. Not used after a roll call.

HAS THE FLOOR – When a member has been recognized by the chair, he has the floor. He should only in rare instances be interrupted; he may yield the floor to another delegate if he so desires; the chair may limit this practice and it doesn't serve to allocate additional time.

MAJORITY – More than half the votes cast. (50%+1)

METHOD OF VOTING – An incidental motion: It provides for the type of vote desired on a motion, such as a vote by rising,

show of hands, acclamation, secret ballot, roll call vote, or secret roll call vote (members sign names.)

MOTIONS – Proposals looking to action; a formal proposal made in a deliberative assembly; a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the group.

INCIDENTAL MOTION – Must be disposed of before action is taken on the motion out of which it arises. Example: Motion to close nominations, point of order, method of voting.

MAIN MOTION – introduces an action to the group for its consideration. Only one main motion should be placed before the group at one time. It is always debatable and amendable, and it ranks below all other motions.

PENDING MOTION – On the floor, but not as yet disposed of. Several motions may be on the floor at one time, provided they were made in order of ascending rank. When several motions are pending, the one made last is always disposed of first.

PRIVILEGED MOTION – Refers to the action of the group as a whole (Recess, adjourn, question of privilege, fix time of next meeting), outranks all other motions.

RENEWAL MOTION – Brings back to the floor a motion once considered, but which the group wishes to consider again (To reconsider, take from table, discharge a committee, etc.)

SUBSIDIARY (Secondary) MOTION – Applied to other motions, usually the main motion, to alter, postpone, or temporarily dispose of them; ranks right below privileged motions, and above the main motion. (An AMENDMENT is a subsidiary motion.)

OBJECTION TO CONSIDERATION OF A MOTION – An incidental motion, the purpose of which is to avoid consideration of a motion that is undesirable or impractical. It is usually applied to a main motion and must be made immediately after the main motion is opened for discussion, and before any amendments are made to it. It can be made when another has the floor, does not require a second; no debate, no amendments. The chairman says, "An objection has been made to the motion, shall we consider the motion?" The vote must be two-thirds in the negative to dismiss the main motion and sustain the objection.

ON THE FLOOR – A motion is on the floor when it is being considered by the group.

OUT OF ORDER – Discussions, motions or Interjectioni which are contrary to parliamentary procedure, fact, recognition, administrative procedure, or good taste.

PLURALITY – More votes than any other candidate.

POINT OF ORDER – A member may rise to a point of order without waiting to be recognized, to call the attention of the chair to a breach of parliamentary procedure. The chairman will then reply that the member's point is (or is not) well taken, and continue accordingly.

PREVIOUS QUESTION – A subsidiary motion which means "to close debate." If passed, it stops discussion and puts the pending motion to a vote. It is not debatable or amendable and requires a two-thirds vote.

"PUTTING THE MOTION" – To vote on the motion.

QUESTION – When a member calls "Question," he means "I am ready to vote on the motion." It does not close discussion, but expedites it.

QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE – A privileged motion more accurately called a point of privilege and concerned with the welfare of the group. A member states, "I rise to a question of privilege." The chair asks him to state his point, which he does ("I should like to have the windows opened." "I should like to have the gentleman withdraw his remarks about member A." etc.) The chair then makes a decision on the point (subject to the appeal of the group). It requires no second, is in order when another has the floor, is not debatable or amendable, and requires no vote.

QUORUM – The number of members required to be present to transact business. This number is determined by our Constitution and Bylaws and should be in a Chapter's Bylaws.

RECEIVE A REPORT – To hear or listen to a report. It does not mean that the group approves the report or takes any official action on it. Since most reports are reports of information, it is reasonable "To receive the report as read." instead of adopting or accepting it." Receiving the report also recognizes work done.

RECOGNITION – A member is recognized by the chairman when the latter announces the member's name. A member obtains recognition by raising his hand, rising, and in some cases calling "Brother President (Chairman)." No member should speak or make a motion until he is recognized by the presiding officer, except in the case of a Point of Order, parliamentary inquiry, or information.

REPEAL – When the group desires to change a former action the motion to repeal is in order. It must be made when the floor is clear, is debatable, amendable and requires a two-thirds vote. If sentiment is strong, the motion may include the words, "and strike from the records."

RISE FOR INFORMATION – A member without being recognized may rise and say "Brother President (Chairman), I rise for information" or "I should like to ask the member a question."

SUSPEND THE RULES – An incidental motion used in urgent cases to save time. It is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote.

TABLE – To lay on the table: to set aside a motion temporarily for further consideration or committee action. This takes precedence of all other subsidiary motions: cannot be debated or amended. To bring a tabled motion back to the floor, a member moves to take such motion from the table.

UNANIMOUS BALLOT – A ballot cast by the secretary for a candidate who is the only person nominated for an office, and no objection is made. This method should not be used when the constitution requires an office to be filled by ballot, since it does not permit any negative votes to be cast.

WITHDRAW A MOTION – An incidental motion permitting a previous motion to be withdrawn. If the maker of a motion refuses to withdraw his motion, that motion cannot be withdrawn. If the motion to withdraw is made before the chairman states the motion for the group, only the maker and seconder need agree upon the withdrawal. If after the chairman states the motion for the group, the maker and the entire group must be consulted for its withdrawal.

YIELD THE FLOOR – A member who has the floor may yield the floor to another member; in so doing the former surrenders his right to continue speaking at that time. Yielding the floor does not extend time allocations.