

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

STANDARD AGENDA

If an organization's established rules do not specify an order of business, parliamentary law provides the following standard agenda for a meeting:

- Call to order
- Reading and approval of minutes
- Reports of officers and standing committees
- Reports of ad hoc committees
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Announcements
- Adjournment

TRANSACTING BUSINESS AT A MEETING

A. Quorum:

- A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present at a meeting for business to be legally transacted.
- An organization, in its established rules, may define its own quorum.
- In the absence of such a provision, the quorum is a majority of the entire membership.

B. Obtaining the Floor:

- Before a member in an assembly can make a motion or speak in debate, he or she must obtain the floor; that is, the member must be recognized by the chair as having the exclusive right to be heard at that time.
- If two or more members rise to seek recognition at the same time, the member who rose and addressed the chair first after the floor was yielded is usually entitled to be recognized. A member cannot establish "prior claim" to the floor by rising before it has been yielded.

C. Introducing Business (Making Motions):

- Business may be introduced by an individual member or by a committee.
- Business is always introduced in the form of a motion.

D. Seconding a Motion:

- After a motion has been made, another member, without rising and obtaining the floor, may second the motion.
- A second merely implies that the seconder agrees that the motion should come before the assembly and not that he or she necessarily favors the motion.
- A motion made by a committee requires no second, since its introduction into the assembly has been approved by a majority of the committee.
- The purpose of a second is to prevent time from being consumed by the assembly having to dispose of a motion that only one person wants to see introduced.

E. Placing a Motion Before the Assembly:

- After a motion has been made and seconded, the chair repeats the motion verbatim, thus placing it before the assembly for debate and action.
- During the brief interval between the making of a motion and the time when the chair places it before the assembly by restating it, the maker of a motion may modify or withdraw it simply by stating the intention to do so; after the motion has been restated by the chair, it is officially before the assembly and must be dealt with appropriately (e.g., adopted, rejected, postponed).

F. Debate:

- Every member of the assembly has the right to speak on every debatable motion before it is finally acted upon; this right cannot be interfered with except by a motion to limit debate.
- All discussion must be confined to the immediately pending question and to whether or not it should be adopted.
- While debate is in progress, amendments or other secondary motions can be introduced and disposed of accordingly.
- In an organization that has no special rule relating to the length of speeches, a member can speak no longer than 10 minutes unless he or she obtains the consent of the assembly; such permission can be given by unanimous consent or by means of a motion to extend debate. Likewise, debate may be curtailed by a motion to limit debate.
- No member may speak twice on the same motion at the same meeting as long as any other member who has not spoken on the motion desires to do so.
- Unless the rules are suspended, a member who has spoken twice on a particular question on the same day has exhausted his or her right to debate that question for that day.
- During debate, no member can attack or question the motives of another member.
- The maker of a motion, although allowed to vote against it, is not allowed to speak against it.

G. Amendments:

- As noted above, before a motion has been restated by the chair, the maker has the right to modify his or her motion or to withdraw it entirely. After it has been restated by the chair, however, a motion may be modified only by means of an amendment.
- There are six ways to amend a motion: a. Add words, phrases, or sentences at the end of a motion; b. Insert words, phrases, or sentences; c. Strike words, phrases, or sentences; d. Strike and insert words, phrases, or sentences; e. Strike and add words, phrases, or sentences; and f. Substitute whole paragraphs or an entire text.
- Only two amendments (primary and secondary) may be pending on a main motion at any time.
- Discussion of an amendment must relate only to the amendment, unless the whole motion is involved by substitution.
- An amendment must be germane to the question under consideration.

H. Voting:

- Unless special rules apply, a majority decides. A majority is more than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blank ballots or abstentions.
- Unless otherwise provided for, voting is by voice vote.
- If the presiding officer is a member of the assembly, he or she can vote as any other member does when the vote is by ballot. In other cases, the presiding officer, if a member of the assembly, can (but is not obliged to) vote whenever his or her vote will affect the result; i.e., he or she can vote either to break or to create a tie.
- A member has no right to explain his or her vote" during voting since that would be the same as debate at such a time.
- Any member may request a division of the assembly if there is uncertainty as to the true result of the vote.

I. Announcing a Vote:

- In announcing the vote on a motion, the chair should: a. report on the voting itself, stating which side has prevailed; 1~. declare that the motion is adopted or lost; and c. state the effect of the vote or order its execution.
- For a voice or rising vote in which no exact count is taken, the chair might say, for example, "The ayes have it, the motion carries, and the brochure will be published." For a vote in which an exact count is taken, the chair might say, "There are 14 in the affirmative and 15 in the negative. The negative has it and the motion is lost. No additional funds will be spent on publicity this semester."

J. Adjournment:

- A motion to adjourn may be made by any member. It may be made during the consideration of other business, although it may not interrupt a speaker.
- A motion to adjourn is not in order when the assembly is engaged in voting or verifying a vote.
- If the motion to adjourn is voted down, it may be made again only after the disposition of some business.
- The motion to adjourn is out of order when the assembly is arranging for the time and place of the next meeting.
- When it appears that there is no further business to be brought before the assembly, the chair, instead of waiting for a motion, may simply adjourn the meeting.