

# Simplified Parliamentary Procedures



Provided as a guide to the members of Public School  
Employees of Washington/SEIU Local 1948

Union  Made

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# Voting

## Rising Vote

May be ordered if the chair is in doubt about a voice vote or a show of hands and if necessary a vote count can be obtained. Any member, by demanding a “division” can require a voice vote or show of hands be taken as a rising vote, but cannot compel it to be counted. If a member desires votes be counted, a motion must be made and seconded. A majority vote is needed to compel a vote count.

## Motion for a Ballot

Also called a secret written vote, can be made if the bylaws do not already require one. This motion is not debatable and requires a majority vote.

## Results

Should be announced immediately and recorded in the minutes. A member may change his/her vote if the change is announced before the presiding officer announces the results of the vote.

## Abstaining

Any member may abstain from voting at any call for the vote. A member who is present at the call for the vote but who abstains from voting is counted for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum.

## Quorum

Number of members who must be present to legally conduct business. The actual number is usually stated in the bylaws. The only business which can legally be transacted without a quorum is procedure business: adjourn to a specific time, adjourn, recess, take measures to procure a quorum.

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# Parliamentary Procedure Guide

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order*, Newly Revised

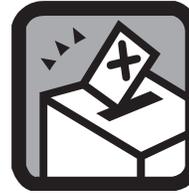


*Robert's Rules of Order*, Newly Revised is the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations and other groups. It is a time-tested method of conducting business meetings. By using both formal and informal parliamentary procedure, business meetings can be conducted in a thorough, orderly fashion ensuring democratic rule, flexibility and a fair hearing for everyone.

At all meetings, it is up to the presiding officer to use the rules of parliamentary procedure appropriately so that good order and reasonable decorum are maintained and the business of the meeting goes forward. At times, the technical rules of parliamentary procedure may be relaxed as long as the meeting accomplishes its purpose and the rights of absentees and minorities are protected. Large meetings are conducted more formally than the meetings of small boards and committees.

This guide is a simplified reference; a manual or book should be consulted for more complete information of parliamentary procedures.

# Voting



The vote needed to pass a motion or elect an official is based on the votes actually cast, unless the bylaws or rules provide otherwise. Thus a majority is more than half of those voting; abstentions and blank ballots are disregarded.

Once debate seems to have ceased, the presiding officer says "If there are no objections, the vote will be taken." Hearing no objections, the chair states the question and takes the vote. If there is an objection, discussion continues until such time the chair recognizes that the board is ready to vote or when a member moves to close debate and the motion to close debate carries by a two-thirds vote.

## FORMS OF VOTING

### **General Consent**

Members show their approval by their silence. The presiding officer says, "If there is no objection...(pause) and declares the decision made." If someone objects, the matter must be put to a vote.

### **Voice Vote**

"Aye" or "Nay" is the most commonly used form of voting, but should not be used where more than a majority is needed. A member may move for an exact count.

### **Show of Hands**

An alternative to a voice vote sometimes used in small groups or committees.

### **Roll Call**

Can only be ordered by a majority of the assembly unless the bylaws specify the size of the minority that can order it.

## Debate

### Pending

A question (motion) is pending when it has been stated by the chair, but not yet voted on.



### Immediately Pending Question

Once the question is stated by the presiding officer, debate or discussion of the proposal begins. The question most recently stated by the chair is the immediately pending question, the one to be acted on first. Discussion is limited to the immediately pending question. In committees or on small boards of 12 or less, the chair can speak in discussions, make motions and usually votes on all questions, unless a rule of the board directs differently.

### Seconding the Motion

Usually required, a second indicates that another member would like to consider the motion. It prevents spending time on a question that is only of interest to one person.

### Out of Order

A motion should be ruled out of order by the chair if not proper for consideration at the time it is presented.

### Rules of Debate

Normal rules of debate limit a member to speaking twice to an issue and allow ten minutes for each speech. In small boards, this limitation need not be imposed.

## Principles of Parliamentary Law

- Specific provisions of organizational bylaws are utilized first. *Robert's Rules* are used when the bylaws are silent.
- Courtesy and justice to all.
- Members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
- Rights of the minority must be protected.
- Majority vote usually decides.
- Full and free discussion of each and every proposition presented for decision.
- Every member has the right to know the meaning of the question and what its effect will be if approved or disapproved.
- All meetings must be characterized by fairness and good faith.
- Expedite and facilitate the transaction of business and promote cooperation.
- The presiding officer is the channel through which the business flows.

## Role of the Presiding Officer

1. Be ready to call the meeting to order at the time set.
2. Follow the agenda and clarify what is happening and what is being voted on at all times.
3. Deal firmly with whispering, commotion, and frivolous or delaying debate and motions.
4. See that debate is confined to the merits of the question and that personal comments are avoided. No one should speak more than twice on a subject, and no one should speak a second time until all who wish to speak for the first time have had a chance to do so.
5. Talk no more than necessary. Except in small boards and committees, the presiding officer should not enter the debate without giving up the chair to a substitute until the motion under debate has been voted on.
6. Remain calm and deal fairly with all sides regardless of personal opinion. To preserve this impartiality, the presiding officer abstains from voting except by ballot or to cast the deciding vote on an issue either to make or break a tie. A tie vote always loses.



## Process for Amending a Motion

### Insert or Add

Applies to a word, consecutive words or a paragraph.

### Strike out

Applies to a word, consecutive words or a paragraph.

### Strike out and insert

Applies to words

### Substitute

Applies only to a complete paragraph of one or more sentences.

**Note:** Before a motion has been stated by the chair it can be withdrawn or modified by the maker. After being stated by the chair, it can be withdrawn or modified only by general consent or a majority vote of the assembly.

### TO BRING A QUESTION UP AGAIN

The following motions may be used to bring a question that has previously been acted on before a board or a group:

- **To amend something previously adopted**  
Change or amend a previous action.
- **To rescind, annul or repeal**  
Alter a previous action.
- **To take from the table**  
Remove tabled motion.
- **To reconsider**  
Reconsider vote on question that was adopted or rejected.

## Types of Motions

### 4) Incidental Motions

Questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. Incidental motions must be acted on before any other business and they cannot be amended or debated, except the motion to appeal which may be debated if the appeal is applied to a debatable motion.

### INCIDENTAL MOTIONS INCLUDE

- *Point of Order*
- *Suspend the Rules*  
(Two-thirds vote temporarily suspends the rules for a particular piece of business. Bylaws cannot be suspended).
- *Division of a Question*  
(Allows consideration of individual parts of a motion that could each stand alone).
- *Withdraw*
- *Appeal*  
(Any decision of the chair may be appealed at the time of the ruling. The board votes to sustain or to overrule the chair).
- *Division of Assembly*

### IN SUMMARY

- ⇒ **Main motions** bring business before the board.
- ⇒ **Subsidiary motions** properly dispose of the main motions.
- ⇒ Any questions that arise in this process or routine mechanics of the meeting are handled with **incidental motions**.
- ⇒ **Privileged motions** deal with urgent matters that arise.

## Order of Business

### Call to Order

The chairman or presiding officer, after determining that a quorum is present, calls the meeting to order.

### Roll Call

The secretary calls the roll and members respond with "present" as their names are called.

### Agenda

The agenda lists topics in the order they will be discussed. Board agreement on the agenda is usually the first order of business. The presiding officer may ask for additions to the agenda at this time. The presiding officer announces agenda items in their proper order for discussion. As each item on the agenda is disposed of, it is the duty of the presiding officer to announce the succeeding items in their proper order.

### Minutes

"The secretary will read the minutes." Except in the smallest of meetings, the secretary stands to read the minutes. If the minutes have been distributed prior to the meeting, it is common practice for a member to make a motion that the reading of the minutes be dispensed with. The presiding officer asks, "Are there corrections to the minutes?" (Pause). "If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as read." Or if there have been changes or additions, "If there are no objections, the secretary will make the corrections. If there are no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected." This action does not require a motion.

### Officers' Reports

Often limited to a report from the treasurer, but others may report at this time. The treasurer's report is given and questions called for. The presiding officer states, "The treasurer's report will be filed for audit." This action does not require a motion. The secretary is asked, "Is there any correspondence?"

## Order of Business

### Committee Reports

Reports of standing committees are called for by the presiding officer every month. The chair will identify the committee and name the chair. The committee chairman's report should be included in the minutes with specifics. The presiding officer accepts the report as given and it is noted in the minutes.

### Special Committee Reports

Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting. Same procedure as committee reports.

### Unfinished Business

Any questions previously introduced and not finished or any questions postponed from the previous meeting are brought up in turn by the presiding officer.

### New Business

The presiding officer asks, "Is there any new business?" New business items are also listed on the agenda.

### Program

If there is a speaker, film or other presentation, it is given here. The meeting is not turned over to the program chair or anyone else.

### Announcements

The presiding officer informs the assembly of other subjects and events. "The chair has the following announcements...Are there other announcements?" Good of the order is included here.

### Adjournment

"Is there any further business?" (Pause) "The meeting is adjourned."

## Types of Motions

There are four general types of motions:

### 1) Main Motions

Introduces a new subject before the board for action. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions.

### 2) Subsidiary Motions

Changes or affects how the main motion is handled. Subsidiary motions include: to lay on the table, previous question, postpone definitely (to a certain time), refer, amend and postpone indefinitely. An amendment itself may be amended, but only two amendments may be pending at the same time.

### 3) Privileged Motions

These are not related to the pending question, but are so urgent or important that they take precedence over all other questions. Privileged motions include: fix the time and place to which to adjourn; adjourn; take a recess; questions of privilege (involves rights or privileges of members and the board as a whole); and call for orders of the day (a demand that the board conform to its agenda). Privileged motions are generally not debatable and cannot be tabled, postponed or committed. Only the motion to recess and fix a time to adjourn can be amended.

## Procedures for Handling a Main Motion

### Obtain and assign the floor

A member rises when no one else has the floor and addresses the chair, "Mr./Madam President", or by other proper title. In a large assembly, the member gives his name and identification. The member remains standing and awaits recognition by the chair.

### Bring a motion before the assembly

The member makes a motion: "I move that..." and resumes his seat. Another member, without rising, seconds the motion, "I second the motion" or "I second it", or even, "Second." The chair states the question, "It is moved and seconded that ....Is there any discussion?"

### Consideration of the motion

Before speaking in debate, members obtain the floor as above. The maker of the motion has first right of the floor if he claims it promptly. All remarks must be addressed to the chair. Debate must be confined to the merits of the motion and time limits observed. Debate can be closed only by order of the assembly (2/3 vote) or by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate. The maker may speak again after all other speakers are finished.

### Put the question to a vote

The chair asks: "Are you ready for the question?" If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken. The chair says, "The question is on the adoption of the motion that...All those in favor, say Aye (or raise your hand or vote card). Those opposed, say No" (or raise your hand or vote card).

### Announce the result

"The Ayes have it, the motion is adopted, and ...(indicate the effect of the vote) or "The Nos have it and the motion fails."

## Motions

A proposal that the board take certain action or express itself as holding certain views is a **motion**. Business is conducted by acting on motions. A member introduces a motion by stating, "I move that ..." or by moving for the adoption of a written recommendation or resolution.

A subject is introduced by a **main motion**. Once it has been seconded and stated by the presiding officer, nothing else should be taken up until it is disposed of. Long and involved motions should be submitted in writing. Once a motion has been stated, the mover may not withdraw it without the consent of the meeting. A main motion can be debated, amended, reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

While a main motion is being considered, other parliamentary motions which affect either the main motion or the general conduct of the meeting may be made. The ones most frequently used are described below, but it should be noted that there are exceptions and modifications that cannot be included in this brief text.

### PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS

#### 1. **Amend**-debatable; majority vote.

Used to change, add or omit words in the main motion. This motion can itself be amended once. The first vote is on the amendment to the amendment. The second vote is on the first amendment, either changed or as originally proposed, depending on the first vote. The third vote is on the main motion either as introduced or as amended.

#### 2. **Refer**-debatable; majority vote.

If a motion becomes too complicated through amendments, or if more information is needed, a motion may be made to refer it to a committee for study or redrafting. The committee must report back or act as instructed.

#### 3. **Postpone Definitely**-debatable; majority vote.

Consideration of a motion can be delayed until a more suitable time, until other decisions have been made or more information is available by a motion to postpone to a stated future time. A motion to **postpone indefinitely** allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against it.

## Motions

4. **Limit or extend limits of debate**-not debatable; amendable.

5. **Previous Question**-not debatable; two-thirds vote.  
“I move to end debate” or “I move the previous question.” This motion is used to end debate that has become lengthy or repetitious. When it is seconded, the presiding officer immediately puts the question on closing debate. If this receives a two-thirds vote, the pending motion is voted on at once without further discussion.

6. **Lay on the Table**-not debatable; majority vote.  
“I move that we table this motion.” This postpones consideration in such a way that the motion can be taken up again in the near future if a majority decides to “take it from the table.” Used to set something aside temporarily to take care of more urgent matters.

7. **Reconsider**-usually debatable; majority vote.  
A vote may be reconsidered through this motion which must be made on the same day or the day following the vote by someone who voted on the prevailing side. A motion can be reconsidered only once. The first vote is on whether the motion should be reconsidered. If this passes, the second vote is on the motion itself.

8. **Point of Order and Appeal**  
A member who feels the rules are not being followed may call attention to this by rising and saying “Point of Order.” The presiding officer says, “State your point of order.” Upon hearing it, the presiding officer may say, “Your point is well taken”, or “Your point is not well taken.” If the member is dissatisfied with the ruling he/she may appeal to the meeting for a final decision “Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?” This appeal is debatable and the presiding officer may enter the debate without giving up the chair. A majority of no votes reverses the ruling; a tie sustains it.

## Motions

9. **Questions and Inquiries**

Whenever necessary, advice may be asked as to correct procedures (parliamentary inquiry), facts may be requested (point of information), or a change may be sought for comfort or convenience (questions of privilege). The presiding officer responds to the question or refers it to the proper person.

10. **Adjourn**-usually not debatable; majority vote.  
If the time set for adjournment has arrived or there is no further business, the presiding officer declares the meeting adjourned without waiting for a formal motion. A member may move to adjourn at any time except when a speaker has the floor or a vote is in process. If the motion carries, the meeting is immediately adjourned.