

## **The A,B,Cs of Robert's Rules of Order Henderson County League of Women Voters Lunch and Learn**

*Every meeting is a partnership between the leader and the participants.*  
Stran L. Trout, PRP

### **Why bother with parliamentary procedure?**

“Parliamentary rules have the same value in the conduct of a business meeting as have the rules in a football game or the laws which drivers follow in manipulating autos through city traffic. Contrary to the belief of many, parliamentary morasses occur when rules are not followed. Their purpose is to expedite business, not hamper it. When they are properly observed, business progresses expeditiously and successfully. Best of all, when properly conducted, the actions of a voluntary body will stand up in court.” William S. Tacey

These rules are based on a regard for the rights:

- of the majority
- of the minority, especially a strong minority—greater than a third
- of individual members
- of absentees, and
- of all these together

### **Rights of Members**

Members have the right to attend meetings, to make motions, to speak in debate, and to vote.

### **Responsibilities of Members**

Members have a responsibility to attend meetings from beginning to end, participate actively and follow the rules of debate, be familiar with the bylaws and basics of parliamentary law, be courteous to and respect the rights of others, and promote the organization and its purpose.

### **Agenda for a Meeting**

Meetings can vary from a few minutes to seemingly without end. The business to be transacted should be within the scope and purpose of the organization. The chairman, in consultation with the secretary should prepare an agenda prior to the meeting. Only those who have reports should be called on.

The standard order of business is:

1. Reading and Approval of Minutes
2. Reports of Officers and Standing (permanently established) Committees in order listed in the bylaws
3. Reports of Special (Select or Ad Hoc) Committees (appointed to exist only until they have completed a specified task) in the order in which they were appointed
4. Special Orders (matters which have previously been assigned a type of special priority)
5. Unfinished Business and General Orders (matters previously introduced which have come over from the preceding meeting)
6. New Business (matters initiated in the present meeting)

### **Handling a Simple Motion (see sample script p. 4)**

There are six essential steps in handling a motion, three to bring the motion before the assembly and three to consider the motion.

1. A member makes a motion. The member
  - seeks recognition
  - is recognized by the chair
  - makes the motion
2. Another member seconds the motion
  - It is not necessary to obtain the floor
  - The seconder says, "I second it," or just, "Second"
  - The purpose of a second is to show that more than one person is interested in the motion
  - The seconder does not have to be in favor of the motion, but may just think it is worth discussing
3. The chair states the question on the motion
  - The chair restates the motion
  - Until the chair does this the motion is not open for discussion
  - This bring the motion before the assembly

Now that the motion is before the assembly, the next three steps guide its consideration.

4. Members debate the motion
  - The maker of the motion has the right to speak first
  - Members must obtain the floor before speaking
  - Each member has the right to speak twice on the same question but cannot make a second speech as long as any member who has not spoken on that question desires the floor (not followed in small boards)

5. When debate appears to have ended the chair puts the question, that is puts it to a vote
  - The chair repeats the exact motion being voted on
  - A voice vote is taken, both affirmative and negative
6. The chair announces the result of the vote
  - The chair reports the result of the vote, that is, which side "has it"
  - The chair declares that the motion is adopted or lost
  - The chair states the effect of the vote

### **Ways to Amend a Motion**

- Insert or add words or a paragraph
- Strike out words or a paragraph
- Strike out and insert
  - Words may be struck out of one part of a sentence or passage and inserted in another part
  - Words may be struck out of a sentence or passage and different words inserted in their place
  - A paragraph or the entire motion may be struck out and another inserted in its place (substitution)

### **Common Mistakes and Confusing Situations**

- 1) Motions
  - a) Making motions
    - i) "So move" (so what?)
    - ii) Improper form of making motions
  - b) Debating motions
    - i) Who has the right to speak first
    - ii) To whom is the debater speaking?
  - c) Amending motions
    - i) "Friendly" amendments
    - ii) Thinking vote on amendment is a vote on main motion
    - iii) Not stating amendment clearly, not stating clearly the wording of the motion if amendment passes, not stating effect of amendment if passed
  - d) Limiting/extending/ending debate
    - i) Call the question
    - ii) Confusion over what Previous Question applies to
- 2) Voting
  - a) Not using a ballot if bylaws call for a ballot
  - b) "All in favor, say 'aye,' opposed like sign
  - c) Failure to ask for negative vote on all but courtesy motions
  - d) Majority votes, two-thirds votes, majority of membership votes

## Handling a Motion Script

Chair: Is there any new business?

Member A: (raises a hand) Mister/Madam President.

Chair: Member A.

Member A: I move that we have a booth at this year's Apple Festival.

Member B: I second it.

Chair: The question is on the motion that we have a booth at this year's Apple Festival. Is there any discussion? (Member A raises a hand) Member A.

Member A: This is a great opportunity for us to let the community know the great work this organization is doing.

Member C: (raises a hand) Mister/Madam President.

Chair: Member C.

Member C: I don't think people know all the services we provide, so this would be a good chance to let them know.

Member B: (raises a hand) Mister/Madam President.

Chair: Member B.

Member B: We could also use this as a way to recruit new board members.

Chair: Is there any further discussion? (brief pause) The question is on the motion that we have a booth at this year's Apple Festival. All those in favor say, "Aye."

Members A, B, C: Aye.

Chair: All those opposed say, "No." (brief pause) The ayes have it, the motion is passed and the secretary will contact the Apple Festival director on how to apply for a booth space.

# Robert's Rules Parliamentary Procedure Motions Chart (Jim Slaughter PRP)

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

§	You Want:	You Say:	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?		
§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	Yes
Majority								
§13	Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to...		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Majority								
§12	Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by...		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Majority								
§11	Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Majority							
§10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"]...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	

Incidental Motions - no order of precedence. Arise incidentally and are decided immediately.

§	You Want:	You Say:	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?		
§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	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	Division	Yes	No	No	No	None	
§33	Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry		Yes	No	No	No	No
§33	Request for information	Request for information		Yes	No	No	No	

Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly - no order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.

§	You Want:	You Say:	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?		
§34	Take matter from table	I move to take from the table...		No	Yes	No	No	
Majority								
§35	Cancel previous action	I move to rescind...		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3
	or Majority with notice							

## **Resources**

National Association of Parliamentarians (NAP) <http://parliamentarians.org>

American Institute of Parliamentarians (AIP) [www.AIPParl.org](http://www.AIPParl.org)

## **Reference Material**

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules, Nancy Sylvester

Robert's Rules for Dummies, C. Alan Jennings

The Guerilla's Guide to Robert's Rules, Nancy Sylvester

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Parliamentary Procedure Fast-Track, Jim Slaughter