

THE BASICS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary procedure is simple in principle. It is based largely on common sense and courtesy. It just seems technical due to the special vocabulary used. If the vocabulary is understood, the rules are easy.

The Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure:

1. Only one subject may claim the attention of the assembly at one time.
2. Each proposition presented for consideration is entitled to full and free debate.
3. Every member has rights that are equal to every other member.
4. The will of the majority must be carried out, and the rights of the minority must be preserved.
5. The personality and desires of each member should be merged into the organizational unit.

MOTIONS

The proper way for an individual to propose that the group take a certain action is by making a motion.

Main Motions have for their object the bringing of questions, or propositions before the assembly for consideration. **Only one main motion can be considered at a given time by the assembly.**

Subsidiary Motions have for their object the modification or disposition of the main motion being considered. It is in order to propose them while a main motion is still before the assembly, and to vote upon them before voting upon the main motion.

Privileged Motions have no connection whatsoever with the main motion before the assembly, but are motions of such importance that they are entitled to immediate consideration. The main business before the house may be temporarily set aside to address a privileged motion.

Incidental Motions arise "incidentally" out of the business of the assembly, and have very common characteristics.

PROCESS FOR HANDLING A MOTION

1. A member rises and addresses the presiding officer. The officer should be addressed as Mr. President or Mr. or Madame Chairman.

2. The member is recognized by the presiding officer. When a member has been recognized, the member is the only member entitled to present or discuss a motion.

3. The member proposes a motion. The motion should begin "I move that" followed by a statement of proposal. It is not permissible to discuss the merits of the motion either prior to or immediately following the formal proposal of the motion.

4. Another member seconds the motion. The member simply states "I second the motion"
If nobody seconds the motion, the presiding officer may ask "Is there a second to the motion?"
If there is none, he may declare "The motion is lost for want of a second"

5. The Presiding officer states the motion to the assembly. When a motion has been properly proposed and seconded, the chairperson repeats the motion to the assembly. It may then be spoken of as a "question", a "proposition", or a "measure."

6. The assembly discusses or debates the motion. To speak, a member must obtain the floor in the same manner as when presenting a motion.

- a. The presiding officer should show preference to the proposer of the motion.
- b. A member who has not spoken has prior claim over one who has already spoken.
- c. The presiding officer should alternate between proponents and opponents of the motion.
- d. The presiding officer should recognize a member who seldom speaks in preference to one who frequently speaks.

DISCUSSION MUST BE CONFINED TO THE QUESTION THAT IS "BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY".

7. The presiding officer takes the vote on the motion. Before taking the vote, the chairman ask, "Is there further discussion?" or "Are you ready for the question?" The chairman proceeds to take the vote by announcing "All in favor of the motion (STATE THE MOTION) say 'aye'. The chairman then says "Those opposed say 'No'."

8. The presiding officer announces the results of the vote. The chairman announces the vote by saying "The motion is carried; therefore (STATE THE INTENT OF THE MOTION)." or if the vote is in the negative, the chairman states "The motion is lost."

9. Another motion is then in order.

AMENDING A MOTION

The purpose of the motion-to-amend is to modify a motion that has already been presented in such a manner that it will be more satisfactory to the members. The following are common methods of amending:

1. **By addition or insertion** to add something to the motion which it did not contain.
2. **By eliminating or striking out** to subtract or eliminate something from the original motion.
3. **By substitution** to eliminate something from the original motion and substitute something else in its place.

AN AMENDMENT MAY BE HOSTILE, BUT IT MUST BE GERMANE.

A hostile amendment is opposed to the spirit of the motion to which it is applied. To be germane, an amendment must have direct bearing on the subject of the motion to which it is applied. An amendment may nullify the original motion, but if it relates to the same subject matter, it is germane.

TYPES OF AMENDMENTS:

1. Amendment of the First Rank - An amendment to the motion.
2. Amendment of the Second Rank - An amendment to an amendment, that modifies and relates directly to the amendment, and NOT to the original motion.

NO AMENDMENT BEYOND THE SECOND RANK IS POSSIBLE.

If it is desired to amend two separate and unrelated parts of a motion, then it must be done with two amendments of the first rank. Until an amendment of the second rank is voted on no other amendment of the second rank is in order. Until the amendment of the first rank is voted upon, no other amendment of the first rank can be proposed.

ORDER OF VOTING ON AMENDMENTS:

Amendments are voted upon in inverse order of proposal.

1. Discussion is held and the vote is taken upon the amendment to the amendment.
2. Discussion is called for and the vote is taken upon the amendment to the motion.
3. When the vote on the amendment has been taken, discussion on the motion as amended is opened and when completed, a vote is taken upon the motion as amended.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS AND SUMMARY OF GOVERNING RULES

| Purpose of Motion | Interrupt Speaker? | Second Required? | Debatable? | Vote Required? | Motions That Apply |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|---|
| Privileged Motions | | | | | |
| to fix time to adjourn | no | yes | limited | maj. | amend, reconsider |
| to adjourn (unqualified) | no | yes | no | maj. | none |
| to take a recess | no | yes | limited | maj. | amend |
| to rise to a question of privilege | yes | no | no | rules | all |
| to call for the orders of the day | yes | no | no | none | none |
| Subsidiary Motions | | | | | |
| to lay on the table | no | yes | no | maj. | none |
| to call for the previous question | no | yes | no | 2/3 | reconsider |
| to limit, or extend limits of debate | no | yes | limited | 2/3 | amend, reconsider |
| to postpone definitely | no | yes | limited | maj. | amend, reconsider, previous question |
| to refer to a committee | no | yes | limited | maj. | amend, reconsider, previous question |
| to amend | no | yes | yes | maj. | amend, reconsider, previous question |
| to postpone indefinitely | no | yes | yes | maj. | limit debate, reconsider, previous question |
| Main Motions | | | | | |
| general main motions | no | yes | yes | maj. | all |
| to take from the table | no | yes | yes | maj. | none |
| to reconsider | yes | yes | yes | maj. | limit debate, table, previous question, postpone definitely |
| to reconsider and enter in minutes | yes | yes | no | none | none |
| to rescind | no | yes | yes | 2/3 | all |
| to expunge | no | yes | yes | 2/3 | all |
| to adopt a resolution | no | yes | yes | maj. | all |
| to adjourn (qualified) | no | yes | limited | maj. | all |
| to create orders of the day (special) | no | yes | yes | 2/3 | all |
| to amend constitution etc. | no | yes | yes | 2/3 | all |
| Incidental Motions | | | | | |
| to suspend rules | no | yes | no | 2/3 | none |
| to withdraw a motion | no | no | no | maj. | reconsider |
| to read papers | no | yes | no | maj. | reconsider |
| to object to consideration | yes | no | no | 2/3 | reconsider |
| to rise to a point of order | yes | no | no | rules | none |
| to rise to parliamentary inquiry | yes | no | no | none | none |
| to appeal from the decision of chair | yes | yes | limited | maj. | all except amend |
| to call for a division of the house | yes | no | no | maj. | none |
| to call for a division of a question | no | yes | no | maj. | amend |

ACTION FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

| Kind of Motion | Objective | Effect |
|---|--|--|
| to lay on the table | clears the floor for more urgent business | delays action |
| to call for the previous question | secures immediate vote on pending question | ends debate |
| to limit or extend time for debate | provides more or less time for discussion | shortens discussion |
| to postpone definitely | gives more time for information discussion | delays action |
| to commit or refer | to enable more careful consideration | delays action |
| to amend | to improve the motion | changes the motion |
| to postpone indefinitely | to prevent a vote on the question | suppresses the question |
| to raise a point of order | to call attention to violation of the rules | keeps group using parliamentary procedure |
| to appeal from decision of chair | to determine the attitude of the group | secures group ruling |
| to suspend the rules | to permit action not possible under the rules | secures action prevented by the rules |
| to object to the consideration of a question | to prevent wasting time | suppresses the motion |
| to divide the question | to secure more careful consideration | secures action |
| to call for a division | to determine the accuracy of a voice vote | secures an accurate check of the vote |
| to nominate | to suggest names for office | places names for consideration |
| to make a request growing out of pending business | to secure information or ask to be excused from duty | provides information |
| to fix the time to adjourn | to have legal continuation of the meeting | sets continuation time |
| to adjourn | to end the meeting | adjourns the meeting |
| to take a recess | to secure an intermission of the meeting | delays action |
| to raise a question of privilege | to correct undesirable conditions | corrects undesirable conditions |
| to call for the order of the day | to secure adherence to order of business | same as the objective |
| to take from the table | to continue the consideration of question | continues consideration |
| to reconsider | to reconsider the question | secures further consideration and another vote |
| to reconsider and have entered in the minutes | to reconsider the question at the next meeting | secures further consideration and another vote |
| to rescind | to repeal action previously taken | same as objective |
| to ratify | to approve previous action taken | same as objective |

GLOSSARY OF STANDARD TERMS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Agenda (or Order of Business) - The regular program of procedure of an organization.

Amend - To alter a motion by addition, deletion, or in any other way.

Chair - The Chairman or presiding officer. "**Addressing the Chair**" means speaking to the presiding officer. Being "Recognized by the Chair" means being given permission to speak further.

Power of Chair - The Chairman has the following authority:

- a. to decide in what order speakers shall be recognized
- b. to refuse to recognize members offering dilatory, absurd, or frivolous motions
- c. to restrain speakers within the limits of the rules
- d. to enforce good decorum
- e. to appoint committees
- f. to decide points of order
- g. to vote in cases where the vote would make or break a tie
- h. The chair should avoid influencing a vote by his own comment on a motion.

Actions of the chair are subject to appeal.

Commit - To refer to a committee

Committee of the Whole - The meeting, on a motion duly made, may "resolve itself into a committee of the whole." This means that the meeting is officially discontinued while everyone remains and becomes a member of a large special committee, which includes everyone present. A special chairman is appointed to preside over the committee.

Division - When all those voting stand in separate "for" and "against" groups.

Division of Question - To separate a motion into different parts that are considered individually.

Floor - The privilege of speaking before the assembly.

Indefinite Postponement - The object is not merely to "postpone" but in effect to *reject* the motion.

Informal Consideration - When a member moves for "informal consideration," and the motion is adopted, the meeting lays aside formal rules, and allows each committee member to speak on the subject under consideration.

Motion - A formal proposal to a meeting that it take certain action.

Order - An expression of the will of the assembly, in the form of a *command*.

Order of the Day - A motion to drop the present discussion, and that the chairman announce the next matter to be taken up in accordance with the organization's customary business routine.

Parliamentary Inquiry - An investigation to determine the proper course of procedure.

Privilege - The privileges and rights of the meeting in connection with matters of physical comfort or ineligibility or misconduct of a member in the meeting.

Question - The question is a proposition or motion that has been placed before the meeting for action by the chairman. To "**move the question**" is to demand that the chairman take a vote on the current motion.

Resolution - An act of the assembly that declares *facts*, expresses *opinion*, but does not command.

Suspension of Rules - To allow something to be done that would otherwise violate the meeting rules, but is not in conflict with the constitution or by-laws, or with the fundamental principles of parliamentary law.

Table - To delay action on a motion.