

# 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
<b>Privileged Motions</b>					
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
<b>Subsidiary Motions</b>					
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
<b>Main Motions</b>					
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
<b>Incidental Motions</b>					
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.