

Robert's Rules A Layperson's Guide to Parliamentary Procedure

This is a brief guide to parliamentary procedure.

The Agenda

The Order of Business or Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Minutes
- III. Officers Report
- IV. Committee Reports
- V. Unfinished Business
- VI. New Business
- VII. Elections
- VIII. Adjournment

When A Motion is on the Floor

If you want the group to take action, you make a motion such as "I MOVE _____.

The motion must have a second – "I SECOND THE MOTION."

If there is no second, the motion does not come before the meeting for consideration.

Note: The wording is "I MOVE" not "I motion" or "I would like to move."

If you don't want something to drag on forever, limit the debate. You need to decide the length of time to which you would like to limit the debate. What is needed is a Privileged Motion.

"I MOVE WE LIMIT DEBATE OF THIS MOTION TO _____# OF MINUTES."

If you are not prepared to make a decision now, you can Table the Motion. This means that the motion can be tabled and picked up later in the meeting or at a future meeting.

"I MOVE TO LAY THE MOTION ON THE TABLE."

If you like the idea of the motion, but it's not exactly right, you may amend it. Sections can be added, deleted or changed.

"I MOVE TO AMEND THE MOTION BY..."

If you feel the debate on a motion has gone on long enough, you can Call the Previous Question. If it is approved, it forces a vote to be taken on the motion being discussed.

"I MOVE TO CLOSE DEBATE."

When you would really like to talk to other people in your group so they may be able to see your side, call for a recess.

“I MOVE WE RECESS FOR _____ TIME.”

This allows groups to discuss items before a vote is taken.

If you know that correct procedure is not being followed, tell the group.

“I RISE TO A POINT OF ORDER.” Then tell the correct procedure.

If at any time you are confused about what is going on, don't just sit there, ask:

“I RISE TO MAKE A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY.” Then ask your question.

Order of Voting

Amendments are voted upon in inverse order; that is, the one of second rank is disposed of FIRST.

1. Discussion is held and the vote is taken upon the amendment to the amendment (amendment of second rank).
2. Discussion is called for and vote is taken upon the amendment to the motion (amendment of first rank)
3. When the vote on this has been taken, discussion upon the original or main motion as amended is opened and when completed, a vote is taken upon it.