

Parliamentary Procedure

Two main **functions** are performed by the rules of parliamentary procedure:

1. They permit the group to carry out their desires in an orderly manner.
2. The rights of the minority are protected.

Duties of the Chairman.

The chairman or presiding officer is established as a referee or neutral official and is charged with the responsibility of seeing that the rules of are observed and that order prevails in the meeting.

Much is granted to the Chairman so that he may carry out his responsibilities. In order to protect the rest of the group from the possibility of his using this power unfairly, the rules provide certain checks which may be used by members of the group to restrain his actions.

Conduct of the Meeting. (General Rules)

1. The chairman, or person who called the meeting, brings the meeting to order.
2. The agenda of the meeting is announced and followed.
3. The Chairman or other presiding officer has the power to recognize one person at a time for motions.
4. Persons who wish to be recognized or are recognized by the Chairman should address the Chairman, i.e., "Mr. Chairman, ..."
5. All sides of an issue should be given equal chance for discussion.
6. Motions should be stated clearly and to the point.
7. If time is limited for the business of the group, an agreed upon debate limit for speakers should be followed.
8. The purpose of the meeting should be kept in mind and all discussion should be germane to the business at hand.
9. Voting can be done by voice vote, show of hands, or by ballot.
10. Conduct all meetings in an orderly and fair manner.

Types and Order of Motions.

I. Main Motion.

- A group takes action by voting on a question or proposition after deliberation or discussion. The question or proposition is brought before the group when a member makes a motion.
- In making a motion, the member rises, gets the attention of the Chairman, is recognized by the Chairman, and then states his motion: "I move that we purchase a typewriter for the use of our secretary." It is necessary for another member to second the motion, after which discussion is in order.
- Only one such motion may be before the group at one time.

II. Subsidiary Motions. There are a number of subsidiary motions which affect the disposition of the main motion.

A. Amendment. Any member may move to amend the main motion, or, when discussion is on an amendment rather than a main motion, may move to amend the amendment.

Such a motion requires a second. It may then be debated or discussed.

The amendment may be disposed of by the vote of the group before debate on the main motion is again in order. It is disposed of by a vote of the group or by being withdrawn by the person who made the motion.

During the discussion of a main motion, amendments may be moved and disposed of one after the other as long as any member wishes to make one, unless debate is stopped in some manner.

B. Postpone Action. Any member may move "the matter may be postponed indefinitely" or "postpone until..." A second is required and the motion may be debated. The only amendment to such a motion which would be in order is to change the time specified in the motion.

C. Refer to Committee. Another method of stopping debate is a motion to "refer the matter under discussion to a committee." Such a motion requires a second, is debatable, and amendable.

D. Lay on the Table. A motion to "lay the question on the table" may also be used to stop debate. It requires a second. It differs from the other motions in that it may not be discussed or amended. Once it is seconded, the Chairman immediately calls for a vote. If the motion passes, the question cannot be discussed further at the same meeting. At any subsequent meeting any member may move that the question be "taken from the table" and considered further. All motions discussed in this group require only a majority vote for passage.

E. Previous Questions. This subsidiary motion requires a two-thirds vote. That is the motion to "call for the previous question." The reason for requiring the greater majority becomes clear if we consider the affect of these motions. All the motions discussed in the preceding paragraph would stop debate at the time they are adopted, but a call for previous question puts a final stop to consideration. After such a motion is seconded the Chairman must immediately take a vote on the amendment or main motion which was under discussion at the time the motion was made to call for the previous question.

F. Limit Debate. A very similar motion is one "to limit debate to (length of time) or to move that "debate be stopped at (time)." When one of these motions has been made and seconded, it may not be debated.

An amendment to change the time or length of time would be in order, however. These motions also require a 2/3 vote.

III. Incidental Motions. These motions concern matters of procedure arising out of the business of the group and must be settled at once. Any member may:

- **"rise to a point of order"**
- **"rise to a parliamentary inquiry"**
- **"rise for information"**

In the truest sense, these three actions are not motions. They require no second and are not voted upon by the group. Nevertheless, any member has the right to rise for such purpose at any time and may in fact, interrupt the person who has the floor and is speaking in order to make such a point or ask such a question.

When he is recognized, he states his point of order or asks his questions and receives an answer from the Chairman.

In raising a point of order, a member is objecting to the procedure being followed as being contrary to the rules of order or parliamentary procedure. If he is correct, the Chairman announces that "His point is well taken" and corrects the procedure to conform to proper procedure. If the Chairman believes the member to be wrong, he states that the "point is not well taken" and proceeds. The Chairman may give other members an opportunity to state their views before ruling.

When a member rises to a parliamentary inquiry or rises for information, the Chairman may give an answer or explanation or may call on another member to answer.

When the Chairman has ruled on a point of order, or has held any attempted motion or action to be out of order, a member may "appeal from the decision of the chair." Such a motion requires a second, may be debated, and requires a majority vote to either uphold or reverse the ruling of the Chairman. When the Chairman has announced the results of a voice vote, any member who questions the result may "call for a division of the assembly" (usually merely stated as "I call for a division.").

The Chairman then calls for a standing vote or for the raising of hands to verify the voice vote. The Chairman may refuse to grant a division if he feels it is requested merely to delay business or annoy the group, but his refusal would be subject to an appeal as discussed above.

- **Suspend the rules.** A member may "move to suspend the rules" in order to do something which would not ordinarily be permitted or which would be out of order at that time. The motion requires a second, cannot be debated or amended, and requires a 2/3 vote.

IV. Privileged Motions. Because of their importance or urgency they outrank all other motions. They may be made at any time except when a vote is in progress, even if it is necessary to interrupt the person who has the floor.

- **Adjourn or Recess.** Either a motion to "adjourn" or to "recess" requires a second and is not debatable. If the motion calls for adjournment or recess to a particular time or place, an amendment is in order to change the time or place. A majority vote is necessary.

- **Questions of Privilege.** At **any** time a member may "rise to a question of privilege" in order to raise a point relating to the right of one member or relating to the assembly's comfort or interest. This is not a true motion in that no second or vote is required. An example would be "we in the back of the room are unable to hear the speaker."
- **Reconsider Question.** Any member who voted with the prevailing side on a question, may at the same or the next meeting, "move to reconsider the vote by which ..." This motion requires a second and is debatable. No amendment is possible. A majority vote on such questions immediately brings up the question previously voted for more discussion and another vote.

These motions and rules are taken from Robert's Rules of Order, which is the standard set of rules used for most organizations in the United States.