

## Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

### 1. Introduction of Business

- 1.1 All business should be brought before the assembly in the form of a motion.
- 1.2 Before a member can make a motion or address the assembly they must obtain the floor.
  - 1.2.1 Raise your hand, wait to be recognized and address the presiding officer by their title, thus "Mr. Speaker" or "Madame Speaker"
    - 1.2.1.1 The member introducing a motion has the first right to the floor
    - 1.2.1.2 Members who have not spoken to a motion shall have precedence over those who have
    - 1.2.1.3 The Chair must recognize any member who seeks the floor while entitled to it.
- 1.3 Before a motion is open to debate it must be seconded (if required) and stated by the Speaker after which it is open to debate.
- 1.4 All principle motions and amendments shall be in writing.
- 1.5 After the Speaker has stated a motion it is the property of the assembly and can only be withdrawn with unanimous consent or permission of the assembly.

### 2. Debate

- 2.1 10 min maximum speech (modified in Council 6 min)
- 2.2 If a speaker yields to a question (point of information) it takes up time in their debate
- 2.3 Decorum in Debate
  - 2.3.1 Remarks must be confined to the merits of the pending question
  - 2.3.2 Refrain from attacking a members motives
  - 2.3.3 Addressing all remarks through the chair
  - 2.3.4 Avoiding the use of members' names
  - 2.3.5 Refraining from speaking against one's own motion
  - 2.3.6 Stop speaking during an interruption by the chair
  - 2.3.7 Refraining from disturbing the assembly
- 2.4 The presiding officer is a member of the society but is not to take part in the debate
- 2.5 The presiding officer should alternate the debate between those for and those against the motion

### 3. Voting

- 3.1 Shall be as the Speaker suggests, unless required by Standing Orders (voice/rising/show of hands/roll call)
- 3.2 Abstain from voting on a question of direct personal interest
- 3.3 A member can change their vote up until the time that the result is announced
- 3.4 Straw Polls are not in order (unless the rules are suspended)

### 4. Classification of Motions

- 4.1 *A Principal or Main Question or Motion*
  - a motion made to bring before the assembly for consideration, any particular subject
  - Takes precedence over nothing
- 4.2 *Subsidiary or Secondary Motions*
  - motions that apply to the main motion
  - take precedence over the main motion
- 4.3 *Incidental Questions*
  - motions that arise out of other questions
  - take precedence over all subsidiary question and the main motion
  - they are undebatable
- 4.4 *Privileged Questions*
  - motions that due to their importance take precedence over all other motions
  - they are undebatable

### 5. Motions and Their Order of Precedence (In order of Increasing Importance)

#### 5.1 *Subsidiary or Secondary Motions*

##### 5.1.1 To Postpone Indefinitely

- “is a motion that the assembly decline to take a position on the main question. Its adoption kills the main motion and avoids a direct vote on the question. It is useful in disposing of a badly chosen main motion...”
- “is sometimes used by strategists to test their strength on a motion they oppose ... by giving the opponents of the pending measure a chance to kill it without risking its adoption.”
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely.*”
- **Rules:** no amendment allowed

### 5.1.2 To Amend

- “is a motion to modify the wording of a pending motion before the pending motion itself is acted upon.”
- can be applied to a primary but not a secondary amendment
- must be germane
- must not “merely make the adoption of the amended question equivalent to a rejection of the original motion.”
- friendly amendments are allowed with the unanimous consent of the assembly
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to amend the motion by adding/replacing/striking*”

### 5.1.3 To Commit or Refer

- “is generally used to send a pending question to a relatively small group of selected persons – a committee – so that the question may be carefully investigated and put into better condition for the assembly to consider”
- also “allows reference to:
  - a) Committee of the Whole
  - b) Informal Consideration
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to refer the motion to the \_\_\_\_\_ committee.*”
- **Rules:** Debate on motion must be confined to its merits only, and cannot go into the main question except as necessary for debate of the motion to postpone.

### 5.1.4 To Postpone to a Certain Day

- “is the motion by which action on a pending question can be put off, within limits, to a definite day, meeting, or hour, or until after a certain event”
- reasonable time limits must be used
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to postpone the question to the next meeting.*”
- **Rules:** Debate on motion must be confined to its merits only, and cannot go into the main question except as necessary for debate of the motion to postpone.

### 5.1.5 Limit or Extend Limits of Debate

- “one of the two motions by which an assembly can exercise special control over debate on a pending question or on a series of pending questions.”
- Can limit debate by:
  - a) reducing the number or length of speeches permitted, but without including specific provision for closing debate; or
  - b) requiring that, at a certain later hour or after debate for a specified length of time, debate shall be closed and the question shall be put to vote.
- Can extend debate by:
  - a) allowing more and longer speeches than under the regular rules
  - b) cannot impose an immediate closing of debate (the previous question)
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move that debate be limited to one speech of three minutes for each member.*”
- **Rules:** Not debatable, 2/3 majority vote required

### 5.1.6 The Previous Question (Closure/Calling the Question)

- “is the motion used to bring the assembly to an immediate vote on one or more pending questions”
- immediately closes debate on, and stops amendment of the immediately pending question and such other pending questions as the motion may specify
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move the previous question.*”

- **Rules:** Not debatable, not amendable, requires 2/3 majority vote

### 5.1.7 To Lay on the Table

- “enables the assembly to lay the pending question aside temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen, in such a way that:
  - There is *no set time* for taking the matter up again;
  - But its consideration can be resumed at the will of a majority and in preference to any new questions that may then be competing with it for consideration”
- “The motion is out of order if the evident intent is to kill a measure.”
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move the motion be laid on the table/I move to take from the table the motion relating to\_\_\_\_\_.*”
- **Rules:** Not debatable, Not amendable.

## 5.2 Incidental Question

### 5.2.1 Point of Order

- When a member thinks that the rules of the assembly are being violated, he can make a *Point of Order* thereby calling upon the chair for a ruling and an enforcement of the regular rules
- If a question of order is to be raised, it must be raised promptly at the time the breach occurs. After debate has begun on a motion – no matter how clearly out of order the motion may be – a point of order is too late, unless there is a breach of order of a continuing nature. (E.g. A by-law will continue to be broken.)
- You may “reserve” a point of order”
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, point of order.*”
- **Rules:** No debate, no amendment, decided by the chair.

### 5.2.2 Appeal

- By electing a presiding officer, the assembly delegates to him the authority and duty to make necessary rulings on questions of parliamentary law. But any two members have the right to Appeal from his decision on such a question.
- By seconding it, the question is taken from the chair and vested in the assembly for final decision
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I appeal from the decision of the chair.*” **Question:** “*Shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of the assembly?*”; “*As many as are in favour of sustaining the chair’s decision say aye. ... Those opposed to sustaining this decision, say no. ...*”
- **Rules:** Debate limited, no amendment, majority in negative required to reverse the chair’s decision.”

### 5.2.3 Suspend the Rules

- When an assembly wishes to do something during a meeting that it cannot do without violating one or more of its regular rules, it can adopt a motion to Suspend the Rules interfering with the proposed action
- Suspending the rule cannot conflict with the organization’s by-laws, constitution, local, provincial or national law, or with a fundamental principle of parliamentary law
- In making the motion the particular rules need not be mentioned; but the motion must state its specific purpose, and its adoption permits nothing else to be done under the suspension
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules which interfere with \_\_\_\_\_/I move to suspend rule \_\_\_\_\_ for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_.*”
- **Rules:** No debate, not amendable, requires 2/3 majority vote.

### 5.2.4 Objection to the Consideration of a Question

- the purpose of the motion is to enable the assembly to avoid a particular original main motion altogether when it believes it would be strongly undesirable for the motion even to come before the assembly
- The Speaker may reject a question on their own authority if it falls outside the laws of the organization
- Must be moved before debate has begun on a subject
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I object to the consideration of the question.*”
- **Rules:** No debate, not amendable, requires 2/3 majority vote, no 2<sup>nd</sup> required.

## 5.2.5 Requests and Inquiries (procedural questions & requests)

### 5.2.5.1 Parliamentary Inquiry

- a question directed to the presiding officer to obtain information on a matter of parliamentary law or the rules of the organization bearing on the business at hand
- it is the chair's duty to answer such questions as long as they are not hypothetical
- **Form:** "*Mr. Speaker, point of parliamentary inquiry.*"
- **Rules:** In order when another has the floor, is not voted upon by is responded to by the chair.

### 5.2.5.2 Point of Information

- a request directed to the chair, or through the chair to another officer or member, for information relevant to the business at hand but not related to parliamentary procedure
- although the presiding officer generally remains silent during the ensuing exchange, the inquiry, the reply, and any resulting colloquy are made in the third person through the chair
- \*\*\*\* To protect decorum, members are not allowed to carry on discussion directly with one another. \*\*\*\*
- **Form:** "*Mr. speaker, point of information. /Will the member yield for a question?*"
- **Rules:** In order when another has the floor. A member may decline to yield the floor.

### 5.2.5.3 Permission to Withdraw or Modify a Motion

- after a motion has been stated by the chair it belongs to the meeting as a whole, and the maker must request the assembly's permission to withdraw or modify his own motion
- unanimous consent is required to withdraw a motion after it has been stated
- **Form:** "*Mr. Speaker, I move that I [or the member] be allowed to withdraw the motion.*"
- **Rules:** No debate, not amendable. Can be moved if unanimous consent denied, majority required.

### 5.2.5.4 To Read Papers

- If any member objects, a member has no right to read from any paper or book without permission of the assembly
- a member has the right to insist that any paper laid before the assembly for section be read once before being asked to vote on it.
- **Form:** "*Mr. Speaker, I move that the papers be read.*"
- **Rules:** No debate, not amendable, if objection requires a majority vote.

## 5.3 Privileged Questions

### 5.3.1 To Call for Orders of the Day

- motion by which a member can require the assembly to conform to its agenda, program, or order of business, or to take up a general or special order that is due to come up at the time
- generally only required if the chair is in error or has committed an oversight
- **Form:** "*Mr. Speaker, I call for the orders of the day.*"
- **Rules:** In order when another has the floor, no 2<sup>nd</sup>, no debate, not amendable, must be enforced on demand of one member unless set aside by a 2/3 vote.

### 5.3.2 Raise A Question of Privilege

- "permits a request or main motion relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly or any of its members to be brought up for possible immediate consideration because of its urgency, while business is pending and the request or motion would otherwise be out of order"
- the chair will determine if there is indeed a legitimate question of privilege, if admitted it becomes the main motion and is open for debate by the assembly
- there are two types of privilege
  - a) relating to the entire assembly
  - b) relating to an individual member
- **Form:** "*Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of privilege.*"
- **Rules:** In order when another has the floor, no 2<sup>nd</sup>, no debate, no amendment, admissibility of question is ruled upon by the chair.

### 5.3.3 Recess (when a question is pending)

- is a motion that "a recess begin immediately, made while another question is pending" (recess is a short intermission in the assembly's proceedings)

- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to recess for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.*”
- **Rules:** No debate.

### 5.3.4 To Adjourn

- “A motion to adjourn closes the meeting immediately”
- is not a privileged motion when a time to adjourn is already set in the agenda, unless all business on the agenda has been completed
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn.*”
- **Rules:** No debate, not amendable, no reconsideration.

### 5.3.5 To Fix the time to which the assembly shall adjourn

- “A motion to set the time, and sometimes the place, for another meeting to continue the business of the session, with no effect on when the present meeting will adjourn.”
- “A motion to fix the Time to Adjourn is in order only if at the time it is offered there is no meeting scheduled for later within the same session.”
- For Council’s purposes, unless there is a need to set an additional meeting, this motion is not needed
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move that when the meeting adjourns, it adjourns to meet next Tuesday at 6:00 P.M.*”
- **Rules:** No debate.

## 5.4 Motions that Bring again a motion before an assembly

### 5.4.1 Reconsider

- a motion that enables a majority in an assembly to bring back for further consideration a motion which has already been voted on
- the purpose of reconsidering a vote is to permit correction of hasty, ill-advised, or erroneous action, or to take into account added information
- it can only be moved by a member who voted on the prevailing side
- effect is the suspension of all action that depends on the result of the vote proposed to be reconsidered, either until the assembly takes up the motion to reconsider
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to reconsider the vote on the motion relation to ...*”
- **Rules:** Is debatable depending on whether the motion being reconsidered was debatable, no amendment.

### 5.4.2 Reconsider and Enter on the Minutes

- special form of the motion to reconsider
- “It’s purpose is to prevent a temporary majority from taking advantage of an unrepresentative attendance at a meeting to vote an action that is opposed by a majority of a society’s membership.
- “The effect of this form of the motion arises from the fact that when it is moved, it can not be called up until another day
- **Form:** “*Mr. Speaker, I move to reconsider and enter on the minutes the vote on the motion relation to ...*”
- **Rules:** Must be moved by one who voted in the majority, requires a 2<sup>nd</sup>, and is automatically approved.
- Can be moved only on the same or next day after he original vote was taken.