

Voting Member of a Parliamentary Body



Basics

- Robert's Rules of Order are the set of guidelines used by most public organizations for how meetings are run.
- The purpose of the rules are to facilitate thorough and informed discussion without allowing one speaker or one topic to bog down a meeting.
- Meetings are typically run by a Chair, with minutes being recorded by a Secretary.
- The Chair facilitates the meeting, using their knowledge of Robert's Rules to ensure all proper procedures are followed and the meeting stays in order and on track. Importantly, only one person may speak at a time, and they almost always must be called on by the Chair in order to speak.
- The Secretary ensures that any decisions of the body are accurately recorded for future reference.
- While the chair does facilitate the meeting, the voting members collectively have all ultimate power under Robert's Rules of Order, including to add or remove items from the agenda, move the order that business is considered, and amend the rules that govern the meeting.

Making Motions

- Doing anything in Robert's Rules requires that a voting member first makes a 'motion'. ("I move to..." or "I motion to...")
- Almost all motions require a 'second' ("I second the motion" or just "second"). This is to ensure that whatever was proposed by the motion has support from other voting members, and isn't superfluous or intended to impede regular order.
- Once a motion received a second, it "has the floor", or is the subject of debate. At this point, it belongs to the body, and not the original author.

Questions & Debate

- Almost all motions can be debated. While not explicitly outlined in Robert's Rules, many bodies separate asking questions about the motion from formally debating on it, to ensure everyone fully understands what is being discussed before debate begins.
- During the questioning period, questions should focus on achieving a better understanding of the actual details of the proposal, rather than being used as debate in all but name.
- Discussion during any meeting, but especially during the questioning and debate portions, should remain formal and civil. All questions and statements should be addressed to the chair, not any other individual, and should not include slander or insults.

Voting

- When it comes time to vote, members can vote in favor of a motion (“aye”), against a motion (“nay”), or abstain. Abstentions do not count for or against; they count as if that person wasn’t in attendance at all.

Order of Business & Types of Motions

Making the Motion > Second > Presentation > Questions > Debate/Discussion > Vote > Announcing Result.

Type of Motion	Name	Purpose	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable ?	Amendable?	Votes needed?
Main Motion		Introduce Business	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Subsidiary Motion	Amendment	Amend the current motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
	Refer to Committee	Refer business to a committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
	Table to a time	Set aside business to set time	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
	Call the question	End debate and begin the vote	No	Yes	No	No	2/3rds
	Table	Set a motion aside for now	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
	Take from the table	Resume discussion of previously tabled business	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
	Limit Debate	Limit debate to save time	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3rds
Privileged Motions	Recess	Take a break	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
	Adjourn	End the business meeting	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
	Appeal	Challenge chair's ruling on parliamentary procedure	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
	Personal Privilege	e.g. If you can't hear the speaker	Yes	No	n/a	n/a	n/a
Incidental Motions	Point of Order	Question rules of procedure	Yes	No	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Point of Inquiry	Gather more information relevant to the motion	Yes	No	n/a	n/a	n/a