

Chair of a Parliamentary Body



Basics

- First and foremost, the Chair should have a comprehensive understanding of the basics of Robert's Rules
- Read over the "Voting Member" guidelines, watch video tutorials, attend public business meetings, and purchase a copy of Robert's Rules of Order to prepare for the role of the Chair and ensure a working understanding of the basics.
- Key basic concepts include the agenda, the order of business, motions, questions & debate, voting, quorum, etc.

Breaking a tie

- The Chair does not have the ability to vote in a parliamentary body, except in the case of making or breaking a tie.
- If the vote is split, with exactly half in favor and half opposed, the Chair may vote to break the tie.
- If the vote is split such that just one additional vote would result in a tie (e.g., 49 opposed, 50 in favor) the Chair may vote to make the tie, and effectively defeat the motion.

Facilitating the Meeting

- The Chair is typically responsible for scheduling the meeting, reserving the space, creating an agenda, and publicizing all the aforementioned details to the members of the body well in advance of the meeting. Some bodies will delegate this to other officers, but by default these responsibilities fall to the Chair.
- Throughout the meeting, the Chair is responsible for keeping everyone on track. This includes calling on members to speak and calling out proposed motions so everyone is aware of what is happening. Many chairs chose to keep a "speakers list" of members that have raised their hands to speak, so they can be called on in order without forgetting anyone.

Enforcing Robert's Rules

- The Chair is responsible for enforcing Robert's Rules throughout the meeting. This is mostly done simply by denying motions or other actions that are out of order, and providing guidance to members about what is and what is not in order.
- If members continue to violate Robert's Rules, more strict enforcement may be necessary. Individual organizations typically have more thorough procedures for enforcing their policies, but Robert's Rules only allows for revocation of speaking rights, expelling the member from the meeting, or in the most extreme case, expelling the member from the body permanently. All of these actions require a majority of body to vote in favor. Non-members, or guests, in attendance can be removed by the Chair at any time without a right to appeal.
- Members may raise a point of order. These are challenges to whether an action is in order, and must be made directly after the action has occurred. The Chair has the authority to rule on points of order, but the body may overrule the Chair's ruling by majority vote via a motion to appeal.

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