



Simple Parliamentary Procedure

Guidelines for Better Business Meetings

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7. **Unfinished Business.** When the minutes from a previous meeting show that the decision on an item of business was postponed to the present meeting or that a question from a previous meeting is pending, it should be listed on the agenda under "unfinished business." The chair should not ask, "Is there any unfinished business?" but simply proceed through the items listed. An idea discussed informally at a previous meeting and agreed to be brought up at the next meeting should be included under new business.
8. **New Business.** After unfinished business is addressed, the presiding officer asks, "Is there any new business?" At this point, members may introduce new items for consideration. If members are claiming the floor to introduce business, the chair may not deprive them of their rights by hurrying through the proceedings.
9. **Announcements.** When all new business has been handled and no member wishes to bring further items to the group for consideration, the presiding officer proceeds to announcements. However, urgent announcements may be made by the chair at any point during the meeting.
10. **Program.** If the meeting agenda includes any type of program, it usually is presented before the meeting is adjourned since the group may want to act as a result of the information provided. It is acceptable to have the program immediately following the opening ceremonies or just before adjournment. The presiding officer can move the program to an unscheduled portion of the agenda with consent of the group by stating, "If there are no objections, we will have our program at this time."
11. **Adjournment.** Once the full agenda has been completed, the presiding officer should ask if there is any further business. If there is none, the presiding officer can state, "Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned." The meeting can be adjourned at any point during the agenda if a member makes a motion for adjournment, the next meeting is already established, and the motion is duly enacted. Alternatively, a motion to "fix the time to which to adjourn" can be made in cases where another meeting is not already scheduled (see Table 1).

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present for a group or organization to officially conduct business. Typically, this minimum is specified in the organization's bylaws, with terms such as "a majority of members (half plus one)" or "two-thirds of membership" commonly used. If an organization does not have a defined quorum in its bylaws, *Roberts Rules of Order* generally defines a quorum as more than half of membership.

When a group does not have a quorum present, no formal business action can be taken. The group can only set a time for another meeting and continue with any general programming. If attendance drops below the minimum during the meeting, then no further business actions can be taken unless the attendance rises back to quorum.

Presenting and Processing a Motion

A motion is a proposal for the group to consider a specific item of business or take a defined action. Motions may grow out of reports or other communication. Often a committee report, letter, or memorandum will introduce information requiring action. The following steps outline the process for a motion.

STEP 1: OBTAINING THE FLOOR

Before a motion can be made, the member of the group must obtain the floor (be recognized by the presiding officer to speak). To be recognized, the member rises (or raises his or her hand) when no one else has the floor, then addresses the presiding officer by the proper title (i.e., Madam President, Mister Chairman, etc.). The presiding officer recognizes the member by stating his or her name or title or with a statement such as, "The chair recognizes the member to my right." In a small group or setting where it is obvious only one person is seeking the floor, the presiding officer may recognize that person by nodding. Once the member is recognized and has the floor, no one else may interrupt. The presiding officer must recognize any member who seeks to obtain the floor and is entitled to it.

STEP 2: MAKING A MOTION

A member makes a motion by stating, "I move that..." As soon as the motion is stated, the member should be seated. The member will have the right to speak first in debate, if desired, after the presiding officer has stated the question. To ensure the motion was heard by all members, it can be repeated by the maker, the secretary, or the presiding officer.

STEP 3: SECONDING A MOTION

After a motion has been made, another member seconds the motion by saying, "I second the motion," or "Second." The member seconding the motion does not have to rise or obtain the floor. A second to a motion indicates that another member wishes the question to be considered by the group; it does not necessarily mean that he or she is in favor of the motion. If no one seconds a motion immediately, the presiding officer normally asks, "Is there a second to the motion?"

Once a motion is seconded, the presiding officer will state the question, thus placing it before the group. The motion then belongs to the group and the maker may no longer withdraw the motion without the group's consent.

Amending a Motion

When a motion is before a group for discussion, the motion may be modified or amended. Typically, amendments will:

- Add to the motion,
- Remove or strike out part of the motion, and/or
- Replace or substitute wording in the motion.

Proposed amendments must directly relate to the main motion. Only two types of amendments are allowed – primary and secondary. A primary amendment is a modification to the main motion. A secondary amendment is a modification to the primary amendment. Only one amendment of each type may be considered at one time. If both primary and secondary amendments have been proposed, the group must discuss and vote on the secondary amendment, then discuss and vote on the primary amendment, then discuss and vote on the main motion as amended. See the example below.

- John moved that the board hold a two-hour breakfast meeting on Friday, June 14th. The motion was seconded by Sally.
- During discussion, Simone moved to strike Friday, June 14th from the motion and replace it with Thursday, June 13th. Theo seconded the amendment.
- Ted then moved to add “at 7:30 a.m.” after “June 13th” in the primary amendment. Liza seconded the amendment.
- The presiding officer would restate the secondary amendment, then proceed with discussion and vote, (i.e., “The question is to amend the amendment by adding at 7:30 a.m. Is there any discussion?”)
- Following a vote on the secondary amendment, the presiding officer would proceed with the primary amendment, (i.e., “The question is to amend the main motion by striking Friday, June 14th and replacing with Thursday, June 13th at 7:30 a.m. [if secondary amendment was approved]. Is there any discussion?”)
- Following a vote on the primary amendment, the presiding officer would then proceed with the main motion, either as proposed if the amendment failed or as amended, (i.e., if both amendments were approved, “The question is to hold a two-hour breakfast meeting on Thursday, June 13th at 7:30 a.m. Is there any discussion?”)

When considering amendments, remember that the proposed change must relate to the main motion and that only one primary amendment and one secondary amendment may be considered at one time. Depending upon the discussion and potential modifications, groups may find it easier to vote down a proposed motion to allow restating rather than to consider a complex amendment.

Minutes

The minutes of the organization become the permanent record of the group’s actions. The minutes are a record of facts, not opinion. They are a record of what happened and not the thoughts or feelings of members or officers. The secretary is responsible for recording and keeping the minutes of all meetings. Minutes should be written clearly and in a manner that leaves no room to question actions taken by the group. An absent member should be able to read the minutes and have a clear understanding of the business transacted at the meeting. All names should be clearly recorded, such as Nancy Jones not Ms. Jones. Guidelines for writing minutes are included in Table 2 on Page 11 of this publication.

Treasurer’s Report

At each meeting of the organization, the chair may ask for a report from the treasurer. Unless the organization’s bylaws or standing rules define guidelines for financial reports, the report may be a statement of the balance on hand or the balance minus outstanding obligations. This report requires no action by the group.

Robert’s Rules of Order do dictate that the treasurer make a full financial report once a year, following the end of the fiscal year. The format and detail of the annual financial report will depend on the size of the organization, frequency of reporting, the nature of the activities, etc. This financial report is made to provide information to the members and should be at a level of detail to be easily understood.

The annual financial report does require action of the group and always should be audited. The audit may be conducted in one of two ways:

- When the amount of money is quite large, it is advisable to use independent accountants. This can be expensive and should be budgeted.
- In many organizations, the financial statements are audited by an internal committee including two or more of its members. This committee is usually appointed in advance of the when the annual report is to be presented. The financial statement is prepared early to assist the committee in completing their work.

If an annual financial report has been audited prior to being presented:

- When the audit report states that the treasurer’s financial report has been found to be correct, the treasurer can simply read this statement as part of his or her presentation. If needed, the chairman of the auditing committee can present a detailed report at this time. The presiding officer then proceeds with adoption of the report and may state, “All in favor of adopting this report, please say ‘aye.’ All opposed, ‘no.’” The adoption of this report simply relieves the treasurer of responsibility for

VOTING

As with nominations, most organizations will have an established custom or a prescribed method for voting in the bylaws. Election by ballot generally is used by organizations. Election by voice vote also is appropriate when the election is largely uncontested and when the bylaws do not require a ballot vote.

ELECTION BY BALLOT

If no voting takes place before all nominations are closed, one ballot may be used. When nominations are known prior to the meeting, ballots may be prepared in advance. Space should be left on the ballot for writing in additional nominees for each office.

The chair appoints tellers to distribute, collect, and count the ballots. The number of tellers varies depending on the size of the voting assembly. It is the tellers' responsibility to see that no member casts more than one ballot. This voting procedure also should be fixed by rule or custom. When everyone seems to have voted, the chair asks, "Have all voted who wish to do so?" If there is no response, the chair says, "If no one else wishes to vote, [pause], the chair declares the polls closed." The tellers collect the ballots and begin counting the votes, usually in another room.

In recording the ballots, tellers are instructed to:

- Not include blank ballots or blanks on a ballot in determining the total number of votes cast
- Accept ballots which may contain small technical errors such as a misspelled name
- Declare illegal two or more ballots folded together
- Declare illegal sections of ballots where the member votes for more than one candidate for an office and no clear choice can be determined
- Declare illegal illegible ballots; if the number of illegible ballots will affect the outcome of the election, the chair of the tellers should report this to the presiding officer who will ask the assembly to decide how these ballots should be recorded

All illegal ballots should be counted in determining the total number of votes cast for figuring the majority. However, no candidate benefits with a vote from an illegal ballot.

When counting is complete, the chairman of the tellers prepares a report which contains:

- The number of votes cast
- The number required for a majority
- The number received by each nominee
- The number of illegal votes

The chairman of the tellers addresses the presiding officer, reads the report, and hands it to him or her. The presiding officer reviews the written report and declares the winners. If one or more of the candidates does not receive a majority

of votes, the presiding officer announces, "No election," and directs new ballots be distributed for the office where no candidate was elected. The procedure is repeated until one candidate is elected.

ELECTION BY VOICE VOTE

This method is generally used where the bylaws do not require voting by ballot and a candidate is unopposed. However, it also may be used when there is more than one candidate for an office by using the following procedure:

Presiding officer: "Those in favor of Alice Adams for president, say 'aye.' Those opposed 'no.'"

If a majority vote in favor of Alice Adams: "The ayes have it, and Alice Adams is elected president."

If a majority vote "no" for Alice Adams: "The no's have it, and Alice Adams is not elected president. Those in favor of Denise Dove [the next nominee] say 'aye.' Those opposed 'no.'"

When a candidate receives a majority, he or she is declared the winner and no other candidates are voted on. The chair moves on to the next office for which an election is being held.

When using this procedure, the members wishing to vote for a later candidate must vote against those preceding him or her. This is considered to give an unfair advantage to those voted on earlier in the procedure.

Remote or Virtual Meetings

Robert's Rules of Order does apply when an organization meets remotely via phone or videoconference. For an organization to conduct official business via a remote or virtual meeting, their bylaws should include specific language authorizing them to meet in this manner. The technology or system used should allow members to hear each other at the same time (and see each other if meeting via videoconference).

Key Reminders

Every member of the organization should know the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. The presiding officer will find it helpful to learn more rules than are typically used. Practice will ensure smooth meetings and fairness to all.

PARLIAMENTARY COURTESIES

When convening a meeting using parliamentary procedure, all participants are expected to model courtesy to others. The ten courtesies noted below are a good reference for all.

1. Stand when addressing the presiding officer, as in making a motion, discussing a question, or making a report.
2. Address the presiding officer by the correct title, i.e., "Mr. Chair," "Madam President," etc.

Table 1. Types of Motions.

Motion	Second Required	Amendable	Debatable	Vote Required to Pass	Purpose of Motion
Main Motions					
Main motion	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes	Majority	Brings business before the assembly.
Privileged Motions					
Fix the time to adjourn	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	To set the time, and sometimes place, of another meeting to continue the business of the session.
Adjourn	Yes	No	No ²	Majority	A way to close the meeting.
Recess	Yes	Yes	No ²	Majority	A short intermission in the meeting.
Raise a question of privilege	No	No	No	None	A means of allowing a request or main motion relating to the rights and privileges of the members which is of immediate urgency, while other business is pending.
Call for the orders of the day	No	No	No	None	A means of requiring the assembly to conform to the agenda.
Subsidiary Motions					
Lay on the table	Yes	No	No	Majority	Allows an assembly to temporarily lay aside a pending question without setting a time to resume consideration.
Previous question	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds	A motion used to bring an assembly to immediate vote on a pending question.
Limit or extend debate	Yes	Yes	No	Two-thirds	The means by which an assembly can exercise control over debate on a question.
Postpone to a certain time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Delays action on a motion for a definite time or until after an event.
Refer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Generally used to send a pending question to a committee.
Amend	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	Majority	Modifies the wording of a pending motion before it is acted upon.
Postpone indefinitely	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Means the assemble declines to take a position on the main motion. It effectively eliminates the motion.

Table 2. Guidelines for Writing Minutes.

Guidelines	Example
<p>1. Include in the first paragraph:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the kind of meeting (regular, special, annual, etc.), b. the name of the group, c. the date, time, and place of the meeting, d. whether or not the president and secretary were present and, in their absence, the name of their substitute(s), and e. the disposition of the minutes of the last meeting. 	<p>The regular meeting of the Block County 4-H Council was held on October 5, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Block County Extension Office, the president being the chair and the secretary being present. Following the roll call of members, the minutes of the last meeting were approved as read.</p>
<p>2. The body should include a separate paragraph for each subject matter and should show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All main motions or motions to bring a main question before the assembly, the exception being motions which were withdrawn. When recording a motion, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the exact wording of the motion as adopted or otherwise disposed of, ii. the disposition of the motion, including temporary disposition, and any primary or secondary amendments and all adhering secondary amendments that were pending, and iii. usually, the name of the person making the motion in all important motions. b. All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, and reasons given by the chair for the ruling. 	<p>The treasurer reported a disbursement of \$15.75 to the City Florist for the 4-H awards banquet centerpiece, leaving a balance of \$168.15 as of October 1, 2022.</p> <p>The membership committee report was received and placed on file.</p> <p>The special committee that was appointed to investigate the possibility of hosting a 4-H volunteer appreciation luncheon reported. Sam Adams, the chairman, moved that a volunteer appreciation luncheon be scheduled for May 15, 2023. After debate, the motion was adopted.</p> <p>Cindy Smith moved that the council pay the \$35.00 registration fee Bob Brown and Sandy Sloan to attend the area 4-H communications training on February 15, 2023, in Prime County. The motion was seconded and carried.</p> <p>The president announced the next meeting would be December 1, 2022, at the Block County Extension Office at 6:00 p.m.</p> <p>The president introduced the program, "4-H Thrive" presented by Jim Johnson, Block County 4-H Youth Development Agent.</p>
<p>3. Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The last paragraph of the minutes should contain the hour of adjournment. b. The minutes should be signed by the secretary or the person who took the minutes. 	<p>The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.</p> <p><u>Jenny Jones</u>, Secretary Jenny Jones</p>

10 AM Zoom Link:

Topic: Robert's Rules Refresh 10 AM

Time: Aug 27, 2024 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/84353395087?pwd=DHCtgmMlsRYLKG6TtiLzsgRpezwx9U.1>

Meeting ID: 843 5339 5087

Passcode: jGC5PA

12 PM Zoom Link:

Topic: Robert's Rules Refresh 12 PM

Time: Aug 27, 2024 12:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/88172982102?pwd=QWHGEMgAU3cDZb4aWuyL6sJux9HnGQ.1>

Meeting ID: 881 7298 2102

Passcode: rnF7h6