

# Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order (1915) is the oldest and most commonly used guide to parliamentary procedure, a set of rules for conducting meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion, interruption, and in a timely way.

## DECISIONS

It is critical that the body agrees to how decisions will be made. This should be in the by-laws. Most bodies use majority rule of voting members. All voting and non-voting members must agree to the process with freedom to agree or disagree and then move on collegially after the vote. Minutes must reflect enough so that decisions are documented, preserved for the good of the order and followed. Members are responsible to pay attention in the meeting and to the minutes. Otherwise, decisions won't be implemented, honored, and then issues resurface because members did not pay attention and refer to minutes.

It is a good idea for members to review previous minutes before each meeting so they can fully participate.

## MOTIONS

Motions are typical methods used by members of a body to express themselves during a meeting and is a proposal that the entire membership can take action on. The agenda should show action or information items. Only action items are voted on. This saves time.

1. Main Motion: Introduces items to the membership for their consideration, discussion, and action. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor.

## HOW TO PRESENT A MOTION

1. Person makes a motion: "I move that we..." After motion made, then someone must second it. This opens the motion up for discussion. If there is no second, then the group moves on to next agenda item. In General Meetings the President must ask for the motion and ask the person to give their name for the minutes.
2. Friendly Amendment: During discussion a change may be made to the motion if the person who made the motion agrees to the change requested by another member, as well as the person who seconded it.
3. Chair: Prior to vote, the motion is repeated by the chair. "All those in favor say "aye", nays, abstentions. It is important to note number who vote "no" and abstentions. In a close vote all votes are counted by a show of hands and not voice.

## MEETING STRUCTURE

The following outlines the structure of a typical meeting using this method. Agenda must have time limits for each item with the total equaling the meeting time. Items are labeled information or action.

1. Chair calls meeting to order.
2. Secretary must take minutes.
  - a. These include summary of what was said and lists actions (who does what by when) as the body determines.
  - b. Attendance noted in minutes. (We can skip this for general, but it would be good for board meetings.)
3. Volunteer tracks a list of speakers for each speaker.
  - a. Monitors attendees and makes a list of speakers who raise hands.
  - b. Calls on Speakers in order that hands are raised. Speakers may only provide new information or raise new questions. Redundancy and repetition of information is not allowed. This keeps discussion shorter and is critical.
  - c. You can decide as a group if you want to do the next part: 1) have time limit for each speaker (typically 2 minutes), 2) can extend time if all members agree by a show of hands. Otherwise the group moves on collegially. This is important.
4. Agenda: Request Motion to approve agenda. Open to discussion. This is when items can be added to agenda. Next meeting date confirmed.
  - a. Agenda item order: During approval, items can be rearranged or a new emergency item(s) added. Each item is timed so that agenda times must be quickly adjusted by the President so meeting ends on time.
5. Action Item vs information item:
  - 1) The body can vote on agenda items **if action item**.
  - 2) The body cannot vote on any item not listed on the agenda.
  - 3) The body also can vote to table discussion of any item until a later meeting, but they must either set a date for more discussion or postpone indefinitely.
6. Agenda order of business
  - a. Old business: These are the action items on previous minutes that are reviewed for completion, carry over, or deletion. This is first so it is completed or deleted as no longer needed. But it is a part of the minutes.
7. Regular business: Items that are part of group, ie., committee updates, etc.
8. New business: New items added in consultation with the president.
9. Announcements: These are announcements from the body.
10. Adjournment: Chair moves for adjournment, second, meeting over with time noted.