

Guide to Parliamentary Procedure



Source: <http://www.csufresno.edu/comm/cagle-p3.htm>
"Parliamentary Procedure: Toward the Good Order of the University"
Advice from Dr. John A. Cagle,
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"The parliamentary authority for California State University, Fresno is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (2000 edition).

"This website is provided as a community service. The homepage provides basic instruction on important topics in Parliamentary Procedure, an opportunity to ask a real Parliamentarian questions, and a link to Questions & Answers I have received and given. I have tried to make this a user-friendly environment. This homepage contains all the instructional material and while it takes longer to load, moving from place to place within it is easy and quick.

This website was last edited 9 October 2006."

"Use at your own risk. If internet or these principles mess up your meetings or organization, please don't blame cyberme."

Making Meetings Work

1. Effective meetings require planning in advance, both on the part of the person who chairs them and of the people who participate.
2. Do not have a meeting unless it is necessary.
3. Don't engage in political game playing or parliamentary maneuvering. Members must commit themselves to the group purpose.
4. Listen to what others at the meeting have to say.
5. Make sure you understand the reason for a meeting and do your homework in accordance with this understanding.
6. Actively engage in the discussion.
7. Recognize that five kinds of knowledge are all needed for a successful meeting participant:
 - Knowledge of the subject matter at hand
 - Knowledge of parliamentary rules of order
 - Knowledge of rhetoric-the power to persuade
 - Knowledge of problem solving and decision making
 - Knowledge of human social-emotional dynamics
8. Be sure the purpose of each meeting, and each item on the agenda, is clear to the members:
 - To share ideas and information only
 - To brief members before action
 - To generate new ideas
 - To make a decision
 - To make a recommendation
9. Be sensitive to the physical, informational, and social needs of others.
10. Suggest committee work when an issue is too big for the group or the group hasn't adequately considered the topic. Demand hard work and good reports from the committee.



Basic Principles

1. Parliamentary procedure exists to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony.
 2. All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
 - The majority has the right to decide.
 - The minority has rights which must be protected.
 3. A quorum must be present for the group to act.
 4. Full and free discussion of every motion considered is a basic right.
 5. Only one question at a time can be considered at any given time.
 6. Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
 7. No member can speak until recognized by the chair.
 8. No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
 9. The chair should be strictly impartial.
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Handling a motion.

Three steps by which a motion is brought before the group

1. A member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.

Three steps in the consideration of a motion

1. The members debate the motion (unless no member claims the floor for that purpose).
 2. The chair puts the question to a vote.
 - A. The chair restates the question.
 - B. The chair takes the vote:

"All in favor of the motion, say aye."
"Those opposed, say no."
 3. The chair announces the result of a vote. A complete announcement should include:
 - A. Report on the voting itself, stating which side prevailed (and giving the count if a count prevailed).
 - B. Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.
 - C. Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution.
 - D. Where applicable, announcement of the next item of business or stating the question of the next motion that consequently comes up for a vote.
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Voting

Basic Methods of Voting

Voice vote A vote by voice is the regular method of voting on any question that does not require more than a majority vote for its adoption.

Rising vote Used principally when a voice vote has produced an inconclusive result and as the normal method of voting on motions requiring a two-thirds vote, members indicate their vote by standing.

Show of hands As an alternative to the voice vote or as a way to verify an inconclusive result, members show their vote by raising their hand. A vote by show of hands should be limited to very small meetings.



Other methods which may be ordered:

- Ballot** Voting by ballot is used when secrecy of the member's votes is desired. Voting by ballot is sometimes required in certain cases by the bylaws of an organization. Any vote relating to charges or proposed charges against a member or an officer should always be by ballot.
- Roll call** A roll call vote has the effect of placing on record how each member votes. It should not be used when members are not responsible to a constituency.

Bases for determining a voting result

- Majority vote** The basic requirement for approval for action, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote. The term "majority" means "more than half," excluding blanks and abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum.
- Two-thirds vote** Two-thirds vote means at least two-thirds of the votes cast, excluding blanks and abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum.

Modifications

- Majority of members present (or two-thirds of . . .)
- Majority of entire membership (or two-thirds of . . .)

Rules Governing Debate

The term debate applies to the discussion on the merits of a pending question.

[Note that less formal rules apply to boards and committees. Also, smaller groups may relax the formality of these rules.]

1. A member may not speak until recognized by the chair.
2. When no special rule relating to the length of speeches is adopted by the group, a member can speak no longer than ten minutes unless the consent of the group is obtained.
3. Rights in debate are not transferable. A member cannot yield an unexpired portion of his/her time to another member (the chair controls who speaks) or reserve any portion of time for later.
4. No member may be allowed to speak more than twice to the same question on the same day.
5. Proper decorum in debate must be observed:
 - Remarks must be germane to the question before the group.
 - Speakers should speak loudly and clearly.
 - Speakers should refrain from attacking another member's motives.
 - Remarks should be addressed through the chair.
 - Speakers should stand when speaking.
 - Thomas Jefferson's advice is still good: "No one is to disturb another in his speech by hissing, coughing, spitting, speaking or whispering to another, etc."
 - If any member objects, a speaker has no right to read from or to have the secretary read from any paper or book as part of his/her speech, without permission of the assembly.



Boards and Committees

The rules for small committee and board meetings are different from the rules which apply to large meetings of assemblies or plenary bodies. The Associated Students Senate is a board of directors and probably its business is best transacted normally using the rules for boards. On the other hand, the Fresno State's Academic Senate is a much larger body and operates normally under general plenary rules, as would many student organizations (such as fraternities and sororities) at meetings.

1. Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
 2. Motions need not be seconded.
 3. There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally are not allowed. *[Note: In practice, even these motions are in fact usually allowed.]*
 4. Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
 5. The chair can speak in discussion, make motions, and usually votes on all questions.
 6. Sometimes, when a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed by general consent, however, all proposed actions of a committee must be approved by vote under the same rules as an assembly.
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Making Committees Work

A committee, as understood in parliamentary law, is a body of one or more persons, elected or appointed by an assembly to consider, investigate, or take action on certain matters or subjects, or to do all these.

To function effectively, a committee, and especially its chair, needs to have

1. A list of committee members.
2. A copy of the motion or problem referred to the committee.
3. Special instructions to the committee, if any. These instructions should include a statement of exactly what the committee is expected to do, and whether the question is referred to it for discussion, study, hearings, investigations, recommendations, or action.
4. A statement of the powers and duties of the committee.
5. Copies of all papers or correspondence relating to the subject assigned to the committee.
6. Copies of any rules, policies, or decisions of the organization relating to the subject.
7. Information on the type of report desired and the date set for its presentation.

Reports from committees should minimally contain

1. A statement of the charge to the committee
 2. A statement of the methods employed by the committee in accomplishing its charge.
 3. A summary of information gathered or work done.
 4. A statement of conclusions or findings.
 5. A specific recommendation, together with a rationale for that recommendation.
 6. The names of the members on the committee.
 7. A summary (often called an "executive summary" at the beginning of the report is helpful for long reports.
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1. The next section elaborates the nature and content of committee reports.
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Frequent Things You Want to Do

Objective	Appropriate motion
Present an idea for consideration or action	Main motion or Resolution; Consider subject informally
Improve a pending motion	Amend; Division of the question
Regulate or cut-off debate	Limit or extend debate; Previous question (vote immediately)
Delay a decision	Refer to committee; Postpone definitely ; Postpone indefinitely (kills motion)
Suppress a proposal	Object to consideration; Postpone indefinitely; Withdraw a motion
Meet an emergency	Question of privilege; Suspend rules; Lay on the table
Gain information on a pending motion	Parliamentary inquiry; Request for information; Question of privilege; Request to ask member a question
Question the decision of the chair	Point of order; Appeal from decision of chair
Enforce rights and privileges	Division of assembly; Division of question; Parliamentary inquiry; Point of order; Appeal from decision of chair
Consider a question again	Resume consideration; Reconsider; Rescind
Change an action already taken	Reconsider; Rescind; Amend motion previously adopted
Terminate a meeting	Adjourn; Recess

This table was based on a table in Alice Sturgis's *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (3rd edition), but modified for motions in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.



Table of Rules related to Motions

John A. Cagle, 2006 -- Based on Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised

MOTION (by order of precedence)	Interrupt	Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote
Adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	No	Yes	Sometimes	Yes	Majority
Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Personal Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Parliamentary Inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Point of Information	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Orders of the Day	No	No	No	No	Chair
Lay on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority (2/3)
Previous Question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend	No	Yes	If motion is	Yes	Majority
Postpone Indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
MAIN MOTION	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
RECONSIDER	Yes	Yes	If motion is	No	Majority
RESCIND	No	Yes	Yes	No	2/3 (majority)
AMEND MOTION PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 (majority)

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS – NO ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

MOTION (no order of precedence)	Interrupt	Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote
Appeal from decision of chair	Yes	Yes	Sometimes	No	Majority
Suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Object to consideration	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 against con.
Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Withdraw a motion	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority
Division of question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Division of assembly	Yes	No	No	No	None

