

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order is a standard for facilitating discussions and group decision making. Having an agreed-upon set of rules makes meetings run easier.

Neighborhood Associations are not required to follow Robert's Rules. However, utilized properly they can result in efficient meetings. Your group is free to modify them or utilize other decision-making models, such as consensus, which is used very successfully by numerous Associations.



Key concepts in Robert's Rules

Motion: To introduce a new piece of business or propose a decision or action, a motion must be made by a group member ("I move that..."). A second motion must then also be made (raise your hand and say, "I second it."). After limited discussion the group then votes on the motion. A majority vote is required for the motion to pass (or quorum as specified in your bylaws.)

Postpone Indefinitely: This tactic is used to kill a motion. When passed, the motion cannot be reintroduced at that meeting. It may be brought up again at a later date. This is made as a motion ("I move to postpone indefinitely..."). A second is required. A majority vote is required to postpone the motion under consideration.

Amend: This is the process used to change a motion under consideration. Perhaps you like the idea proposed but not exactly as offered. Raise your hand and make the following motion: "I move to amend the motion on the floor."

This also requires a second. After the motion to amend is seconded, a majority vote is needed to decide whether the amendment is accepted. Then a vote is taken on the amended motion. In some organizations, a "friendly amendment" is made. If the person who made the original motion agrees with the suggested

Robert's Rules of Order



changes, the amended motion may be voted on without a separate vote to approve the amendment.

Commit: This is used to place a motion in committee. It requires a second. A majority vote must rule to carry it. At the next meeting the committee is required to prepare a report on the motion committed. If an appropriate committee exists, the motion goes to that committee. If not, a new committee is established.

Question: To end a debate immediately, the *question* is called (say “I call the question”) and needs a second. A vote is held immediately (no further discussion is allowed). A two-thirds vote is required for passage. If it is passed, the motion on the floor is voted on immediately.

Table: To table a discussion is to lay aside the business at hand in such a manner that it will be considered later in the meeting or at another time (“I make a motion to table this discussion until the next meeting. In the meantime, we will get more information so we can better discuss the issue.”) A second is needed and a majority vote required to table the item being discussed.

Adjourn: A motion is made to end the meeting. A second motion is required. A majority vote is required for the meeting to be adjourned (ended).

Note: If more than one motion is proposed, the most recent takes precedence over the ones preceding it. For example if #6, a motion to table the discussion, is proposed, it must be voted on before #3, a motion to amend, can be decided.

Robert's Rules of Order

Modifications for Smaller Meetings

In a smaller meeting, like a committee or board meeting, often only four motions are typically used:

- **To introduce** (a motion).
- **To change a motion** (amend).
- **To adopt** (accept a report without discussion).
- **To adjourn** (end the meeting).



Remember, these processes are designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and to share ideas in an orderly manner. Parliamentary procedure should not be used to prevent discussion of important issues.

Board and committee chairpersons and other leaders may want to get some training in meeting facilitation and in using parliamentary procedure. Additional information on meeting processes, dealing with difficult people, and using Robert's Rules is available from district neighborhood office staff and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

Robert's Rules of Order



Tips in Parliamentary Procedure

- **Before discussion:** A main motion must be moved, seconded, and stated by the chair before it can be discussed.
- **Stand to speak:** If you want to move, second, or speak to a motion, stand and address the chair.
- **Approve of motion:** If you approve the motion as is, vote for it.
- **Disapprove of motion:** If you disapprove of the motion, vote against it.
- **Amend motion:** If you approve of the idea of the motion but want to change it, amend it or submit a substitute for it.
- **Need advice:** If you want advice or information to help make your decision, move to refer the motion to an appropriate quorum or committee with instructions to report back.
- **Refer to committee:** If you feel they can handle it better than the assembly, move to refer the motion to a quorum or committee with power to act.
- **Delay motion:** If you feel that the pending question(s) should be delayed so more urgent business can be considered, move to lay the motion on the table.
- **Defer a motion:** If you want time to think the motion over, move that consideration be deferred to a certain time.
- **Discussion unnecessary:** If you think that further discussion is unnecessary, move the previous question.
- **Further consideration:** If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a motion referred to a quorum or committee, move the motion be tabled.
- **Reconsider motion:** If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a matter already voted upon, move that it be reconsidered.
- **Appeal decision:** If you do not agree with a decision rendered by the chair, appeal the decision to the assembly.
- **Point of order:** If you think that a matter introduced is not germane to the matter at hand, a point of order may be raised.
- **Time limit on speeches:** If you think that too much time is being consumed by speakers, you can move a time limit on such speeches.
- **Dividing a motion:** If a motion has several parts, and you wish to vote differently on these parts, move to divide the motion.