

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

A PRIMER

CALL TO ORDER

This occurs at the beginning of the meeting, once quorum has been attained. Quorum for is at least a majority (50%) of all members.

MOTIONS

Business is resolved at meetings by voting on propositions put forward by members. Such propositions are called motions. Any person who is eligible to vote at a meeting may make a motion. Depending on the type of motion, another member is usually needed to second the motion. Motions are then debated and voted upon. **No member may speak more than once to any motion** (although the speaker may choose not to enforce this rule if he deems it appropriate.) A member must raise his hand. A speaker's list is kept acknowledging individuals in the order in which they have raised their hands.

AMENDMENTS

A motion may be amended by a subsequent motion. If the mover and seconder of the original motion consent to the amendment, the amendment is deemed “friendly” and it does not require a seconder and is not subject to debate. If an amendment is not deemed friendly, it does require a seconder. Such a motion must then be debated and voted upon before the debate resumes on the original motion.

MOTIONS THAT TAKE PRECEDENCE

Normally, a motion cannot be made while another motion is being debated. There are, however, certain types of motions that take precedence over “normal” motions.

- **Motion to Amend** (as above)
- **Motion to Table** – This is a motion to defer further debate on the main motion until some future time. The motion requires a seconder and is debatable only as to the length of time that the main motion will remain tabled.
- **Motion to Refer** – This is similar to a Motion to Table, except that instead of deferring a motion for a specific amount of time, it is deferred until advice can be sought from another body.
- **Motion to Call the Question** – This is a motion to cease debate and proceed to the vote on the main motion. If there is an objection to the motion, the motion requires a seconder and must pass by a two-thirds vote. The motion is not debatable.
- **Motion to Reconsider** – This is a motion to re-open debate on a motion that has already been voted upon earlier in the same meeting. This motion requires a seconder.
- **Motion to Adjourn** – A motion to end the meeting; requires a seconder and is not debatable.

POINTS

There are several special motions called “Points” that have priority over all other motions or discussion. Points are considered serious enough that a speaker may be interrupted by another individual who wished to make a Point. Points do not require a second.

- **Point of Order** - An individual may raise a point of order if they feel that business is proceeding incorrectly. The speaker must either agree or disagree with the point raised. An individual may also use this point if they do not understand the proceedings and/or wish to have a clarification made on a specific ruling.
- **Point of Privilege** – Individuals may raise Points of Privilege if it is felt that their rights as members of the assembly have been violated. This Point can also be used if an individual is unable to participate in the discussion due to an inability to hear the speaker, because the room is too hot or cold, or because s/he is unclear on matters of procedure. **If you do not understand what is happening, you can interrupt the speaker and request clarification on a Point of Privilege.**
- **Point of Information** - This point is the most misused one in the book. This Point is used to ask for information that you feel is essential to your understanding of the debate. It may not be used to give information. The member may decide not to answer the question by refusing to yield the floor. Again, it is not in order to give someone information on a point of information.
- **Challenge to the Speaker** – This Point is used when an individual disagrees with the Speaker’s ruling. The mover must state why he or she disagrees with the ruling. The Speaker may then give the reasoning behind the ruling. A vote is then taken to affirm the Speaker’s ruling.

VOTING

Voting on motions normally requires a simple majority. Voting is normally done by a show of hands, however, anyone eligible to vote has the right to demand a vote by roll call. Voting by secret ballot normally occurs only when an election to fill a position is required, and the assembly does not desire to conduct the election by a show of hands. To ensure smooth discussion:

- **Raise your hand if you wish to speak.** The Speaker will take note and ask you to speak at the appropriate time.
- **State your name and department before speaking to the topic at hand.**
- **Speak to the topic or motion at hand!** If you wish to raise something not on the agenda, there are always the “Question Period” or “New Business” agenda items.
- **If you wish to make a suggestion regarding the motion on the floor, form it in terms of an amendment.** Your amendment will need seconding, after which it will become the current item on the floor.
- **Try not to repeat points other people have already made** unless you have something new to add to the point.