
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Short History of Robert's Rules

Henry Martyn Robert was an engineering officer in the regular Army. Without warning he was asked to preside over a public meeting being held in a church in his community and realized that he did not know how. He tried anyway and his embarrassment was supreme. This event, which may seem familiar to many readers, left him determined never to attend another meeting until he knew something of parliamentary law.

Ultimately, he discovered and studied the few books then available on the subject. From time to time, due to his military duties, he was transferred to various parts of the United States, where he found virtual parliamentary anarchy, since each member from a different part of the country had differing ideas of correct procedure. To bring order out of chaos, he decided to write *Robert's Rules of Order*, as it came to be called (see chart of editions on the [Robert's Rules of Order](#) website).

The twelfth, current, edition has been brought about through a process of keeping the book up to date with the growth of parliamentary procedure. All editions of the work issued after the death of the original author have been prepared by persons who either knew and worked with the original author or are connected to such persons in a direct continuity of professional association.

Simplified Roberts Rules of Order

Main Ideas

- Everyone has the right to speak once if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times.
- Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- The [members] discuss only one thing at a time.

How to do Things

1. **You want to bring up a new idea before the group.**

After recognition by the [president], present your motion. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for debate, or consideration.

2. **You want a motion just introduced by another person to be killed.**

Without recognition from the [president] simply state "I object to consideration." This must be done before any debate. This motion requires no second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote.

3. **You want to change some of the wording in a motion under debate.**

After recognition by the [president], move to amend by

- a. adding words,
- b. striking words, or
- c. striking and inserting words.

4. **You like the idea of a motion under debate, but you need to reword it beyond simple word changes.**

Move to substitute your motion for the original motion. If it is seconded, debate will continue on both motions and eventually the body will vote on which motion they prefer.

5. **You want more study and/or investigation given to the idea under debate.**

Move to refer to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee.

6. **You want more time personally to study the proposal under debate.**

Move to postpone to a definite time or date.

7. **You are tired of the current debate.**

Move to limit debate to a set period of time or to a set number of speakers. Requires a 2/3 vote.

8. **You have heard enough debate.**

Move to close the debate. Requires a 2/3 vote.

Or move to previous question. This cuts off debate and brings the assembly to a vote on the pending question only. Requires a 2/3 vote.

9. **You want to postpone a motion until some later time.**

Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3 vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.

10. **You want to take a short break.**

Move to recess for a set period of time.

11. You want to end the meeting.

Move to adjourn.

12. You are unsure that the [president] has announced the results of a vote correctly.

Without being recognized, call for a "division of the house." At this point a standing vote will be taken.

13. You are confused about a procedure being used and want clarification.

Without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The [president] will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

14. You have changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side.

Move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

15. You want to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.

Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, as 2/3 vote is required.

You May INTERRUPT a Speaker for These Reasons Only

- to get information about business – point of information
- to get information about rules – parliamentary inquiry
- if you can't bear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. – question of privilege
- if you see a breach of the rules – point of order
- if you disagree with the [president]'s ruling – appeal

You May influence WHAT the [members] Discuss

- if you would like to discuss something – motion
- if you would like to change a motion under discussion – amend

You May Influence HOW and WHEN the [members] Discuss a Motion

- if you want to limit debate on something – limit debate
- if you want a committee to evaluate the topic and report back – commit
- if you want to discuss the topic at another time – postpone or lay it on the table
- if you think people are ready to vote – previous question

Parliamentary Procedure Motions Chart

| Motion | Must Be Seconded | Debatable | Amendable | Requires a Simple Majority Vote | Requires a 2/3 Vote | May Be Reconsidered or Rescinded |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Adjourn | YES | no | no | YES | no | no |
| Recess | YES | no | YES | YES | no | no |
| Table | YES | no | no | YES | no | no |
| Close Debate | YES | no | no | no | YES | YES |
| Limit Debate | YES | no | YES | no | YES | YES |
| Postpone to later Time | YES | YES | YES | YES | no | YES |
| Refer to Committee | YES | YES | YES | YES | no | YES |
| Amend Amendment | YES | YES | no | YES | no | YES |
| Postpone Indefinitely | YES | YES | YES | YES | no | YES |
| Main Motion | YES | YES | YES | YES | no | YES |

Adapted from Case Western Reserve Graduate Student Senate; changes in []
<http://www.cwru.edu/orgs/gradsenate/rules/handbook.html>