

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER GUIDEBOOK

Robert's Rules are a means of presiding over a meeting with the order of parliamentary procedure. A meeting should be called to order when a "quorum" is established.

A quorum is the proportion of the members of an organization that must be present in order to transact any business as defined in the bylaws. In the absence of a provision regarding quorum, common law provides that a majority of members constitutes a quorum. Once a quorum is present, the meeting and business may proceed. Robert's Rules allow your meetings to run much more effectively and efficiently.

CHAPTER MEETING PROCEDURES

The "order of business" is the established sequence in which business is taken up during a meeting. If the bylaws do not include a standard order of business, parliamentary procedure has established the following pattern after the Call to Order by the chair:

- Roll Call
- Guest Speakers
- Reading and Approval of Minutes
- If copies of the minutes are made available, the actual reading may be waived. Following any corrections of additions, the minutes should be approved. Approval of the minutes is usually handled by a mutual consent.
- Correspondence Received
 - From Alpha Sigma Phi Headquarters, University or College, other student organizations.
- Reports of Directors, Boards, and Standing Committees
 - The chair usually calls on members who have reports. A motion arising out of one of these reports is taken up immediately, since the object of the order of business is to give priority to the classes of business in the order listed.
- Reports of Special Committees
 - Special committees do not have continual existence, but exist solely for the purposes of a specific project.
- Old Business
 - Old business refers to questions that have carried over from the previous meeting as a result of that meeting having adjourned without completing its order of business. The following items are considered under old business:
 - The question that was pending, when the previous meeting adjourned
 - Any questions not reached at the previous meeting before adjournment
 - Any questions postponed to the present meeting
- New Business
 - Following any old business, the chair asks, "Is there any new business?"
 - Members can introduce new items of business or move to take from the table any matter that is on the table.
- Comments for the Good of the Society
 - This step has a variation, "Passing the Gavel" which allows any member wishing to speak the opportunity to address the chapter.
- Adjournment

BASIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE TERMS & RULES

When Speaking to the Chapter

No member may speak unless he has been recognized by the Chairman. Once granted the floor, a member should speak briefly, avoid repetition, and confine all remarks to the topic at hand. If the speaking member does not follow these rules, he shall be called “out of order,” and may be subject to interruption when a member would “rise to a point of order.”

Voting Rules

Voting is done normally by voice, by a show of hands, or by standing. If votes are to be recorded, a roll call may be taken. For elections, a ballot is required. The chairman is required to determine the “ayes” and “nays.”

Majority – More than half the votes cast are required to pass a motion

Two-thirds – Two-thirds of those voting are usually required to amend the by-laws, to take up any matter out of its proper order of business, to suspend the rules, to limit or close debate, to discharge a committee, and to refer reports back to a committee.

Unanimous – A unanimous vote is rarely used because just one dissenter can prevent the vote from passing. Usually not used unless for extreme circumstances.

Breaking Ties – The chairman of a meeting does not vote, unless there is a tie, in which case he would break the tie.

Main Motions

A motion for any group action may be made by a member who obtains the floor. Motions must be seconded by another member before the chairman may call for discussion.

Secondary Motions

A secondary motion can be made to alter the wording of a motion being discussed or to hasten/postpone a vote. Any member may move the following:

Rank	Name	Purpose	Datable	Vote Required
1	To Table	Postpone	No	Majority
2	To Close Debate	Hasten	No	Two-thirds
3	To limit/extend debate	Hasten/Postpone	Limited	Majority
4	To Postpone	Postpone	Limited	Majority
5	To Refer to a Committee	Postpone	Yes	Majority
6	To Amend	Alter	Yes	Majority

Tabling

The member wants to drop the matter under discussion until some indefinite later time. The member must have the floor, it must be seconded, it must be voted upon without debate, and it requires a majority vote to pass.

Previous question

The member wants to, “end the debate immediately.” The member must clarify whether it applies to the main motion or secondary motion. The member must have the floor; it must be seconded, and voted on without debate. Requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass.

Limit (or extend) debate

The member wants to set a specific amount of time for each speaker, for the entire discussion, or both (or to extend the previously set time limit). The member must have the floor, it must be seconded, it may only be debated to decide the time limit, and it requires a majority vote to pass.

Postpone

The member has similar intentions regarding tabling; however, in this case the member must define a specific time when matters will be brought up again. The member must have the floor, it must be seconded, it may only be debated to determine the time it will be brought up again, and it requires a majority vote to pass.

Refer to Committee

The member thinks that there is not enough information about some new business that has been introduced to the floor. The member must have the floor, it must be seconded, it may be debated, and it requires a majority vote.

Amend

The member wants to change something about the initial motion so that the group can come to an agreement on any discrepancies. The member must have the floor, it must be seconded, it may be debated, and it requires a majority vote.

Reopening Matters

- Matters that are referred to committees will be on the agenda for the next meeting as a committee report, even if the committee is not ready to introduce a motion.
- Matters postponed will appear on the next agenda as “Old Business”.
- Matters tabled will not come up automatically; there must be a motion for them to be “taken from the table” during Old Business, that motion must be seconded, it is not debatable, and it requires a majority vote.

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**Point of Order**

Any member may interrupt proceedings whenever he believes that an error has occurred regarding:

- The Constitution
- Laws
- By-laws
- A mistake or omission in parliamentary procedure
- A violation of decorum
- An irrelevancy in debate

The member shall calmly rise and interrupt by saying, “Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order.” There is no second or vote required, and the Chairman rules on the point of order. He may open the floor to discussion and/or debate if he wishes to seek advice. If the speaker is ruled “out of order,” he may not continue to speak unless granted that permission by a majority vote.

Question of Privilege

Any member may interrupt proceedings at any time to raise a question involving the physical condition of the meeting place, the conduct of members present, or similar obstacles that would hinder adequate discussion. This requires no second, is not debatable, can't be amended, and is ruled by the chair.

Suspension of the Rules

Though he may not interrupt a speaker, any member who obtains the floor may request a suspension of the rules to permit the group to do something ordinarily prohibited, such as permitting a guest speaker to speak out of the normal order of business. This requires a second, cannot be debated, and requires a 2/3 vote.

Appeal

If any member takes exception to any ruling by the chairman, he may “appeal the ruling of the chair.” An appeal requires a second, is debatable, and requires a majority vote to reverse the ruling.

Recess

Any member who has the floor may request a short recess. When seconded, it may not be debated, and may be amended only as to the length of the recess. It requires a majority vote and if accepted, takes effect immediately. This motion takes precedence over all other motions except the motions to adjourn or to fix the time of adjournment.

Fix the Time to Adjourn

Any member who has the floor may move to fix the time of adjournment. It requires a second, is not debatable, may be amended only as to the time of adjournment, and requires a majority vote. This motion takes precedence over all motions except that to adjourn.

Adjourn

Any member who has the floor may move to adjourn. It requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a majority vote. It takes precedence over all other motions.

Decorum

The purpose of meetings is to reach agreement on community actions. Good taste demands that members use the time for this purpose. Do not abuse your undeniable right to speak, even within Parliamentary rules. Do not unnecessarily repeat that which has already been said. Respect the rights and opinions of others, and learn to be a good loser if the vote goes against you.