QUICK GUIDE · FOR FAIR AND ORDERLY MEETINGS

Robert's Rules of Order

MINNIKIN
GOVERNANCE FOR STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

TYPICAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to order
2. Roll call / quorum
3. Conflict of interest declarations
4. Approval of the agenda
5. Consent agenda (incl. previous minutes)
6. Officers' reports
7. Committee reports
8. Special orders (business set for this meeting)
9. Unfinished business
10. New business
11. Announcements
12. Adjournment

FOUR KINDS OF MOTIONS

- **Main motion:** brings new business before the meeting. Only when nothing else is pending.
- **Subsidiary:** changes how the main motion is handled (amend, refer, postpone, limit debate). Decided first.
- **Privileged:** urgent matters unrelated to the business at hand (recess, adjourn, question of privilege).
- **Incidental:** questions of procedure (point of order, appeal, suspend the rules). Decided right away.

WAYS TO VOTE

- **Voice:** "All in favour say aye... opposed, no."
- **Show of hands / standing (division):** to confirm an unclear voice vote. Any member may call "Division!"
- **General consent:** "If there is no objection..." Silence means consent; one objection means a vote.
- **Roll call:** each name called; used when a record of each vote is needed.
- **Ballot:** written and secret; often required for elections by the bylaws.

Your bylaws come first
Check quorum before any business. Your bylaws and policies override Robert's Rules wherever they differ.

HOW A MOTION MOVES

1. **Get the floor.** Wait for the speaker to finish, address the Chair ("Madam/Mr. Chair") and wait to be recognized.
2. **Make the motion.** Be clear and positive: "I move that we...", not "I move that we do not..."
3. **Second.** Another member says "Second." No second? The motion fails without debate.
4. **Chair states it.** "It is moved and seconded that..." Now it belongs to the meeting; the mover can't change it alone.
5. **Debate.** Mover speaks first. All remarks go through the Chair. No one speaks twice until all who wish have spoken once.
6. **Put the question.** "Are you ready for the question?" When debate ends, the Chair calls the vote.
7. **Announce the result.** "The motion carries / is defeated." Then, what happens next.

RULES OF DEBATE

- Debate starts only after the Chair states the motion.
- Stick to the motion. Speak to the issue, never about people or their motives.
- Respect the time limits set by the meeting.
- Agendas and committee reports are recommendations until the meeting acts on them.
- Before the Chair states a motion, the mover may change or withdraw it freely.

Silence means consent.
If you disagree, say so. Speak up or vote no.

Only one motion at a time.
Deal with the last motion stated (the "immediately pending question") first.

The point of it all
Robert's Rules exist so the majority can decide, the minority is heard, and everyone is treated fairly. Use them to help the meeting, never to trip it up. **Be courteous.**

HANDY PHRASES FOR THE CHAIR

- "The meeting will come to order."
- "Is there a second?" · "The motion fails for lack of a second."
- "It is moved and seconded that... Is there any discussion?"
- "Is there any objection to approving the agenda as circulated?"
- "All in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion carries."
- "Your point is well taken." / "Your point is not well taken."
- "There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned."

Motions at a Glance

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Motion	What to say	Interrupt speaker?	Second?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote
PRIVILEGED MOTIONS (HIGHEST RANK FIRST)						
Adjourn	"I move to adjourn."	–	✓	–	–	Majority
Recess	"I move to recess for 10 minutes."	–	✓	–	✓	Majority
Question of privilege	"Point of privilege!" (noise, heat, comfort)	✓	–	–	–	Chair rules
Orders of the day	"Call for the orders of the day." (back to agenda)	✓	–	–	–	None*
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS (HIGHEST RANK FIRST)						
Lay on the table	"I move to lay the motion on the table."	–	✓	–	–	Majority
Previous question	"I move the previous question." (vote now)	–	✓	–	–	2/3
Limit / extend debate	"I move to limit debate to 2 minutes each."	–	✓	–	✓	2/3
Postpone to a set time	"I move to postpone this to the next meeting."	–	✓	✓	✓	Majority
Refer to committee	"I move to refer this to the … Committee."	–	✓	✓	✓	Majority
Amend	"I move to amend by striking / inserting…"	–	✓	**Varies**	✓	Majority
Postpone indefinitely	"I move to postpone indefinitely." (kills it)	–	✓	✓	–	Majority
MAIN MOTION						
Main motion	"I move that…" (new business)	–	✓	✓	✓	Majority
INCIDENTAL MOTIONS (DECIDED AS THEY ARISE)						
Point of order	"Point of order!" (raise it right away)	✓	–	–	–	Chair rules
Appeal the Chair	"I appeal the decision of the Chair."	✓	✓	**Varies**	–	Majority†
Parliamentary inquiry	"Parliamentary inquiry." (how do I…?)	✓	–	–	–	None
Point of information	"Point of information." (a question)	✓	–	–	–	None
Suspend the rules	"I move to suspend the rules so that…"	–	✓	–	–	2/3
Object to consideration	"I object to consideration." (before debate)	✓	–	–	–	2/3 against
Divide the question	"I move to divide the question."	–	✓	–	✓	Majority
Division of the assembly	"Division!" (re-check a voice vote)	✓	–	–	–	None*
Withdraw a motion	"I ask to withdraw my motion."	✓	–	–	–	Consent
BRING A QUESTION BACK						
Take from the table	"I move to take from the table…"	–	✓	–	–	Majority
Reconsider	"I move to reconsider the vote on…"	✓	✓	**Varies**	–	Majority
Rescind / amend adopted	"I move to rescind…"	–	✓	✓	✓	2/3‡

"Table" doesn't mean kill

Laying on the table sets a motion aside for something more urgent, and it can be taken back up. To drop a motion, postpone it indefinitely or vote it down.

Also useful

Consider by paragraph: debate and amend a long document one section at a time, then adopt it as a whole. **Committee of the whole:** informal debate; votes are still formal.

Rank runs highest to lowest within privileged and subsidiary motions; a higher-ranking motion can be made while a lower one is pending. ✓ = yes, – = no. Reconsider can only be moved by someone who voted on the winning side. * A single member's demand is enough. † A tie sustains the Chair. ‡ Majority if notice was given, or a majority of the entire membership. Your bylaws always take priority.