

### **Parliamentary Basics: Presiding**

Two essential components of effectively presiding over a meeting are preparing and following an agenda, and handling motions fairly and consistently.

#### **Sample Meeting Agenda**

(Excerpted from the NAP publication, *The Chair's Guide: Order of Business*)

- Call to Order
- Opening Ceremonies (optional)
- Roll Call (if customary)
- Reading and Approval of Minutes
- Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees
- Reports of Special Committees (announced only if such committees are prepared or instructed to report)
- Special Orders (announced only if there are special orders)
- Unfinished Business and General Orders
- New Business
- Announcements
- Program (if a program or a speaker is planned for the meeting- many organizations put the program after the opening ceremonies, before the business)
- Adjourn

#### **Procedure for Handling a Main Motion**

##### **Obtaining and Assigning the Floor**

1. A member rises when no one else has the floor and addresses the chair: "Mr./Madam President," "Mr./Madam Chairman," or by other proper title. (In a large assembly, the member gives his name and identification.)

The member remains standing and awaits recognition by the chair.

2. The chair recognizes the member by announcing his name or title, or, in a small assembly, by nodding to him.

##### **How the Motion is Brought Before the Assembly**

1. The member makes the motion: "I move that (or 'to')..." and resumes his seat.

2. Another member, without rising, seconds the motion: "I second the motion," or "I second it" or even just "second."

3. The chair states the motion: "It is moved and seconded that .... Is there any debate/discussion?"

## Consideration of the Motion

1. Members debate the motion.
2. The chair puts the motion to a vote.  
The chair asks: "Are you ready for the question?" or less formally, "Is there any further discussion?" If no one rises to claim the floor, the chair proceeds to take the vote.  
  
The chair says: "The question is on the adoption of the motion that... As many as are in favor, say 'Aye'. (Pause for response.) Those opposed, say 'No'. (Pause for response.)"
3. The chair announces the result of the vote.  
"The ayes have it, the motion is adopted, and .... (indicating the effect of the vote)," or  
"The noes have it, and the motion is lost."

### Basics: Motions

There are several *classes* of motions you may encounter in meetings, listed below. The most commonly used motions belong to the *thirteen ranking motions*.

#### Classes of Motions

There are several classes of motions you may encounter in meetings:

The **main motion** is the basis of all parliamentary procedure. All business to be considered by an assembly is introduced by a main motion. This type of motion may only be considered if no other business is pending.

**Subsidiary motions** are those that may be applied to another motion for the purpose of modifying it, delaying action on it, or disposing of it.

**Privileged motions** are motions that are unrelated to the current motion, but are of such urgency or importance that they are considered immediately. These motions are related to members, the organization, and meeting procedure rather than the item of business being considered.

**Incidental motions** are motions that are related to, or incidental to, the business being considered, but do not directly modify the pending motion.

Motions that bring a question again before the assembly, or **bring-back** motions, are a special type of main motion that permit the assembly to consider business that was previously disposed of.

### Thirteen ranking motions

The main motion, subsidiary motions, and privileged motions all have rank relative to one another. The table below illustrates the motions' rank and basic characteristics.

**Thirteen Ranking Motions**

Name of Motion	Is it in order when another has the floor?	Does it require a second?	Is it debatable?	Is it amendable?	What vote is required for adoption?	May it be reconsidered?	
Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn*	No	Yes	No	Yes	M	Yes	PRIVILEGED
Adjourn**	No	Yes	No	No	M	No	
Recess*	No	Yes	No	Yes	M	No	
Raise a Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	(1)	No	
Call for the Orders of the Day	Yes	No	No	No	(2)	No	
Lay on the Table	No	Yes	No	No	M	No	SUBSIDIARY
Previous Question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes	
Limit or Extend Limits of Debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	(3)	
Postpone to a Certain Time (Definitely)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	M(4)	Yes	
Commit (Refer to a Committee)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	M	(5)	
Amend	No	Yes	(6)	Yes	M	Yes	
Postpone Indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	M	(7)	
Main Motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	M	Yes	

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)*

\* A main motion if made when no business pending

\*\* Check RONR for specific rules

- (1) Chair grants
- (2) No vote: demand
- (3) Yes, the unexecuted part may be reconsidered
- (4) 2/3 vote required if made a special order
- (5) Yes, if the committee has not started work
- (6) Yes, if applied to a debatable motion
- (7) Only an affirmative vote may be reconsidered

Motions have an order, or "precedence" (*prece den*s). The lowest ranking motion in the hierarchy is the Main Motion and the highest is Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn. No motion may be made if a motion that is higher in precedence is still pending. An example: a motion for the Previous Question would be out of order if a motion to Lay on the Table has been made but not yet voted upon.

*Finally, the best advice that I can give you:*

**KNOW YOUR BYLAWS.....ALWAYS HAVE A COPY WITH YOU.  
THEY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT IN YOUR  
ORGANIZATION AND WILL NEARLY ALWAYS ANSWER YOUR  
QUESTIONS.**

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**Parliamentary Motions Guide**  
Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)*

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

<b>YOU WANT TO:</b>	<b>YOU SAY:</b>	<b>INTERRUPT?</b>	<b>2<sup>ND</sup>?</b>	<b>DEBATE?</b>	<b>AMEND?</b>	<b>VOTE?</b>
\$21 Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
\$20 Take break	I move to recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
\$19 Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
\$18 Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
\$17 Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
\$16 Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
\$15 Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
\$14 Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
\$13 Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
\$12 Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
\$11 Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
\$10 Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

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**PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING A MAIN MOTION**

What is Happening/Notes	The Chair Says/Does	Members Say/Do
<b>Obtaining and assigning the floor</b>		
A member rises when no one else has the floor		"Mr./Madam President/Chairman"
	Recognizes the member by name, title or nodding	
<b>How the motion is brought before the assembly</b>		
Member sits after		"I move that (or "to")..."
Another member believes the motion is worth discussing		"I second the motion" or just "Second"
"Is there any debate?" is a less formal alternative to "Are you ready for the question?"	"It is moved and seconded that (or "to") ... Are you ready for the question?"	
<b>Consideration of the motion</b>		
See rules for debate (sidebar)		Debate
<b>The chair puts the question to a vote of the assembly</b>		
	"Are you ready for the question?"	Further debate
After debate is ended, or if the formal motion Previous Question has been moved and adopted to stop debate, a vote is taken	"The question is on the adoption of the motion that ..." "Those in favor of the motion, say aye." (Pause) "Those opposed say no." (Pause)	Members vote
<b>The chair announces the results of the vote</b>		
	"The ayes have it, the motion is adopted, and ... (indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution)." OR "The noes have it and the motion is lost."	

**PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING PARLIAMENTARY LAW**

As stated in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, rules of parliamentary law balance the rights of individuals or groups within an organization's total membership. These rules are based on a regard for the rights:

- of the majority,
- of the minority, especially a strong minority greater than one third,
- of individual members,
- of absentees, and
- of all these together.

Ultimately the will of the majority decides matters, but only after full and free discussion. The rights of all (even those absent) must be protected. This pamphlet will help you run meetings more efficiently and effectively and help protect the rights of all members.

**RULES FOR DEBATE**

1. Members first obtain the floor.
2. The maker of the motion may speak first.
3. Debate is made to the chair; it is confined to the merits of the motion and not the motives or personalities of other members.
4. Amendments may be offered to improve the motion. They must be approved by the body, and the motion must still be adopted as amended.
5. Debate can be closed only by the assembly (2/3 vote) or by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate.

### PERTINENT FACTS

- A **main motion** brings business before the assembly.
- A **subsidiary motion** assists the assembly in treating or disposing of a main motion.
- A **privileged motion** deals with matters of immediate importance. It does not relate to the pending business.
- An **incidental motion** is related to the parliamentary situation so that it must be decided before business can proceed.

### MEANING OF SYMBOLS

- # Main motion when no other motion is pending.
- I In order when another has the floor; may interrupt.
- S Requires a second.
- D Is debatable.
- A Can be amended.
- M Requires a majority vote (i.e. more than half of votes cast).
- § Requires a 2/3 vote (twice as many in the affirmative as in the negative).
- + Usually no vote is taken; the chair decides.
- N No vote; chair responds.
- R Vote may be reconsidered.
- \* See *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, current edition, for specific rules.

### TYPES OF AMENDMENTS

- To insert (within) or add (at the end of a sentence or paragraph) a word, consecutive words, or paragraph.
- To strike out a word, consecutive words, or a paragraph.
- To strike out and insert (which applies to words) or to substitute (which is applied to at least a paragraph of one or more sentences.)
- To strike out a word or paragraph and insert it in a different place.

## RANKING MOTIONS

Motions on this page are listed in rank order, with the highest ranking at the top. After a motion has been stated by the chair, higher ranking motions are in order but not lower ranking.

motions except that Amend and Previous Question can be applied to amendable and/or debatable motions of higher rank than themselves.

	Interrupt	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote	Reconsider
<b>PRIVILEGED MOTIONS</b>						
# Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn		S		A	M	R
# Adjourn		S			M	
# Recess		S		A	M	
Raise a Question of Privilege	I				+	
Call for the Orders of the Day	I				+	
<b>SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS</b>						
Lay on the Table		S			M	R*
Previous Question		S			sup	R*
# Limit or Extend the Limits of Debate		S		A	sup	R*
Postpone to a Certain Time (or Definitely)		S	D	A	M	R*
# Commit or Refer		S	D	A	M	R
Amend <sup>1</sup>		S	D	A*	M	R
Postpone Indefinitely		S	D		M	R*
<b>MAIN MOTIONS</b>						
		S	D	A	M	R

## NON-RANKING MOTIONS

	Interrupt	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote	Reconsider
<b>INCIDENTAL MOTIONS</b>						
Appeal Chair's Decision	I	S	D*		M*	R
Close Nominations or Close the Polls		S		A	un <sup>2</sup>	
Consider by Paragraph or Seriatim		S		A	M	
Create a Blank		S			M	
Division of the Assembly	I				N	
Division of the Question		S*		A	M*	
Object to Consideration of a Question	*				un <sup>2</sup> *	R*
Parliamentary Inquiry	I				N	
Point of Order	I		*		+	
Reopen Nominations or Reopen the Polls		S		A	M	R*
Request for Information	I				N	
<sup>2</sup> Request for Permission to Withdraw a Motion	*	*				neg
Suspend the Rules		S			un <sup>2</sup> *	
<b>MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY</b>						
Take from the Table		S			M	
<sup>3</sup> Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted		S	D	A	*	R*
<sup>3</sup> Discharge a Committee		S	D	A	*	R*
<sup>4</sup> Reconsider	*	S	D*		M	

### NOTES

<sup>2</sup> Before a motion has been stated by the chair, it can be withdrawn or modified by the maker. After it has been stated by the chair, it can be withdrawn or modified only by unanimous consent or by a majority vote of the assembly.

<sup>3</sup> An Incidental Main Motion which usually requires a majority vote with previous notice, a 2/3 vote without previous notice, or a majority vote of the entire assembly/membership.

<sup>4</sup> Hasty or ill-advised action can be corrected through the motion to Reconsider. This motion can be made only by one who voted on the prevailing side and made only on the same day the original vote was taken. In a session of more than one day, a reconsideration can also be moved on the next succeeding day within the session on which the meeting is held.

### FORMS OF VOTING

- A **voice vote** is the most commonly used form of voting (ayes and noes).
- A **rising vote** is the normal method of voting on motions requiring a 2/3 vote for adoption. It is also used to verify a voice vote or a vote by show of hands. The chair can order a rising vote or a single member can call for a Division of the Assembly.
- A **show of hands** is an alternative for a voice vote, sometimes used in small boards, committees, or very small assemblies, or for a rising vote in very small assemblies, but only if no member objects.
- Some conventions use **voting cards**, provided to delegates, to raise for voting.
- A **count** can be ordered by the chair or by a majority vote of the assembly.
- **Unanimous consent** is a vote of silent agreement without any objection.
- A **ballot** or **roll call** vote can be ordered by a majority of the assembly.

## EXAMPLE OF A TYPICAL MEETING

After determining that a quorum is present, the presiding officer rises, waits or signals for quiet and says, "The meeting will come to order."

Opening Ceremonies: Based on the group, religious, patriotic, and customary rituals may be included. If given, the invocation, the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States are arranged in that order. Inspirational messages follow patriotic exercises.

Roll Call (If customary): The chair states, "The secretary will call the roll of members."

Reading and Approval of Minutes: After the minutes are read, or if they have been previously distributed, the chair asks, "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" (Pause) "If there are none, the minutes are approved as written." With any corrections, "The secretary will make the corrections. If there are no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected."

Reports of Officers, Boards, Standing and Special Committees: Called on only if they have reports to make.

- Officers, boards, and standing committees report in the order they are listed in the bylaws. Special committees report in the order in which they were created.
- A treasurer's report is never adopted; instead a financial review or auditor's report is adopted annually.
- If an officer's report contains a recommendation, another member can make a main motion following the report to adopt the recommendation.
- Committee chairmen may make motions for recommendations contained in their reports.

Special Orders: Announced only if there are such items or matters required by the bylaws for a meeting. For example, "The secretary will read from the Bylaws Article \_\_ Section \_\_ concerning the election of a nominating committee."

Unfinished Business and General Orders: Announced only if there are such items (matters previously introduced but not finished at the prior meeting) or items postponed by way of motion to the next meeting.

New Business: The chair takes up any new business that is listed on the approved agenda. The chair then asks, "Is there any new business?" or "Is there any further new business?"

Announcements: "The chair has the following announcements... Are there any other announcements?"

Program: The chair does not "turn the meeting over," but announces, "The program committee will now present the program..." Or "...will introduce our speaker."

Adjournment: "Is there any further business?" (Pause) "Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned." Or "A motion to adjourn is in order."