

Parliamentary Basics





Purpose of Roberts Rules of Order (RONR)



Purpose

- To run meetings uniformly, regardless of where the meeting is held.
- To facilitate the transaction of business and promote cooperation.
- To insert logic and common sense into the operation of a meeting.
- To protect the rights of all members of the body.



The Rules Protect

- The rights of the majority to decide an issue.
- The rights of the minority to be heard on an issue.
- The rights of the individual members.
- The rights of the absent.



- Federal, state, and local laws
 - Articles of Incorporation/Corporate Charter
 - Bylaws
 - Special rules of order
 - Parliamentary authority
 - Standing rules
 - Custom
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Typical rules follow this hierarchy

Robert's Rules of Order, 12th
Edition (RONR)



General “Rules of Robert”

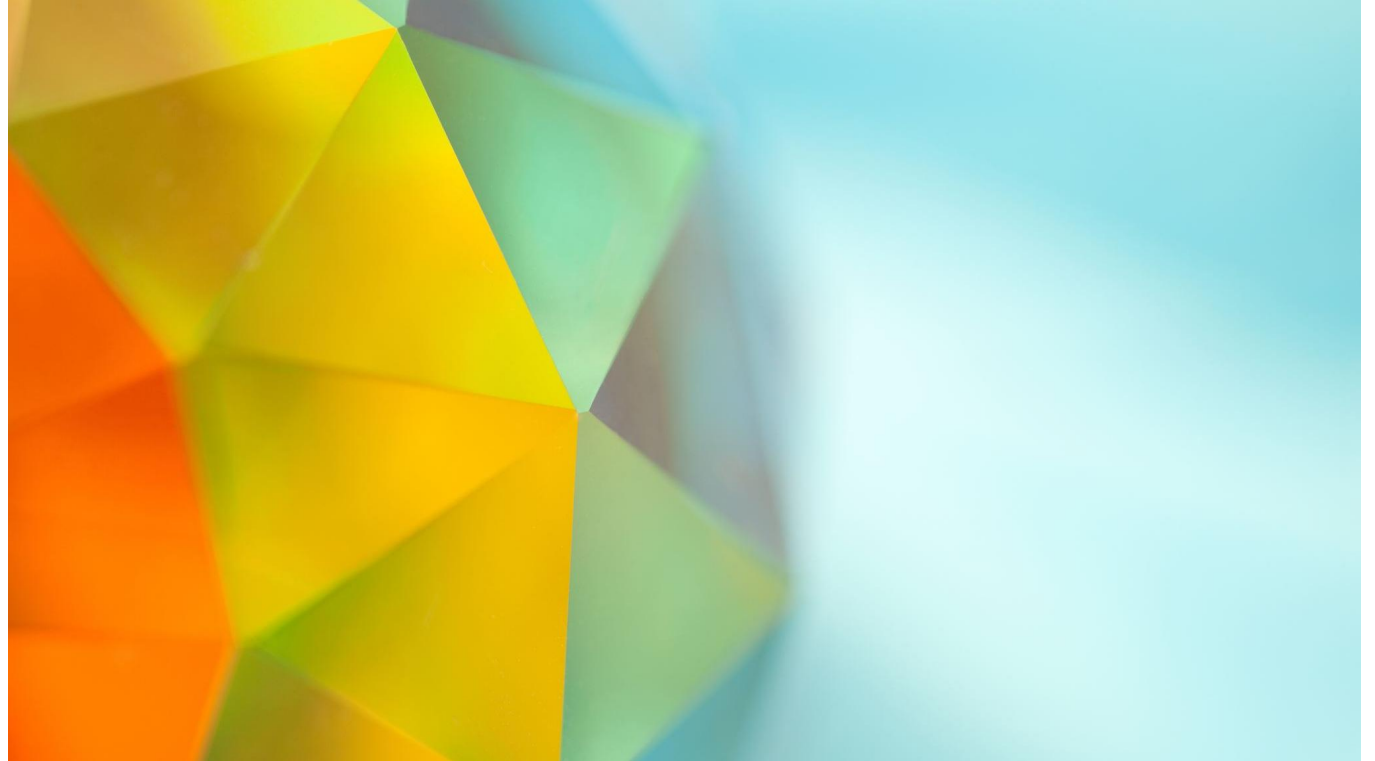
- All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
- Only one question can be considered at any given time.
- Members always have the right to know what question is pending and to have it stated on the record again before a vote is taken.





General “Rules of Robert”

- No member can speak until recognized by the chair.
- No person can speak a second time on the same question without consent of the House.
- The chair shall be impartial.





Quorum

- The number of members that **must** be present in order to hold the meeting.



General Components of Robert's Rules of Order



Order of Business

- The order of business in the House is generally set by the Chair
- Consists of:
 - Calling the meeting to order
 - Call for addition/deletions of agenda items
 - Reading and approval of the minutes
 - Reports of Officers, Executive Director, and Standing Committees
 - New Business
 - Old Business
 - Adjournment





Ten Basic Rules



The Ten Basic Rules

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1. The rights of the organization supersede the rights of the individual member.
 2. All members are equal and their rights are equal.
 3. A quorum must be present to transact business, i.e. to vote.
 4. The majority rules
 5. Silence means consent. Those who do not vote agree to go along with a decision of the majority.



The Ten Basic Rules

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6. A 2/3 affirmative vote is necessary whenever limiting or taking away the rights of members or changing a previous decision.
 7. One question and one speaker at a time.
 8. Once a member has been 'recognized' this individual has been granted 'the floor' and may not be interrupted by another member.
 9. The meeting chair may not put a motion to vote as long as members wish to debate it.
 10. Once a decision is made, an identical motion may not be brought forward during the same meeting.
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BONUS



Personal remarks in a debate are **always** out of order.



Debate motions, not motives.



Debate must be directed at principles, not personalities or people.



Motions



Motions Generally

- A motion is a formal process for consideration of and action on a question or item brought before the House.
 - Only one motion can be made at a time.
 - No main motion can be made while the House is considering a prior motion.
- General motion procedure:
 - Motion is made (“I move that”)
 - Motion is seconded
 - Motion is debated/discussed
 - Motion is voted on.

How to Make a Motion



Steps	What to Say
1. The member rises and address the chairperson.	"Madam Chair..."
2. The chairperson recognized the member.	"The chair recognizes..."
3. The member makes a motion.	"I move to..."
4. Another member seconds the motion.	"Second"
5. The chairperson states the motion.	"It is moved and seconded to...."
6. The members debate the motion.	"The chair recognizes the need to speak to the motion..."
7. The chairperson put the question to the members to vote.	"All those in favor will say 'aye', those oppose will say 'no'."
8. The chairperson announces the result.	"The 'ayes' have it and the motions carries and (restate what happened)"



Main Motions

- A member makes a motion.
- Another member seconds the motion, unless recommended action comes from a Committee or Section (RONR 4:11)
- The chair states the question on the motion and calls for discussion among the House. The members debate the motion, unless no member claims the floor for that purpose.
- The chair puts the question to a vote, by stating the question before the House.
- The chair takes the vote: "All in favor of the motion, say aye." "Those opposed, say no."
- The chair announces the result of a vote. A complete announcement includes:
 - Report on the vote itself, stating which side prevailed (and giving the count if a count is taken).
 - Declaration that the motion is adopted or defeated.
 - Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution.



Subsidiary Motions

Many of these motions involve procedural steps relating to a main motion already begin considered. (RONR 3:23)

- **Tabling** - Used to postpone discussion until the group decides by majority vote to resume discussion. By adopting the motion to "lay on the table", a majority has the power to halt consideration of the question immediately without debate. Requires a second, non-debatable, not amendable.
- **Previous question or close debate** - Used to bring the body to an immediate vote. It closes debate and stops further amendment. The majority decides when enough discussion has occurred, not the chair. The formal motion is to "call for the question" or "call for the previous question," or simply, "I move to close debate." The motion requires a second, is not debatable and requires a two-thirds majority.
- **Limit/extend debate** - May be desired if the group has adopted a rule limiting the amount of time that will be spent on a topic, or if the group desires to impose a time limitation.
- **Postpone to a definite time** - Like tabling, except that the motion directs that the matter will be taken up again at some specific date and time.



Subsidiary Motions

Many of these motions involve procedural steps relating to a main motion already begin considered. (RONR 3:23)

- **Refer to committee** - Directs that some other body will study the matter and report back.
- **Amendment** - Used to "fine tune" a motion to make it more acceptable to the group. The amendment must be related to the main motion's intent and cannot be phrased in a way that would defeat the main motion. Two amendments may be on the floor at one time: the first amendment modifies the main motion, and the second amendment must relate to the first amendment. When an amendment is on the floor, only the amendment may be debated. The amendments are voted on in the reverse order in which they were made, as each amendment changes to some degree the intent of the main motion. As each amendment is voted on, an additional primary or secondary amendment may be introduced. Requires a second, debatable, majority vote.
- **Postpone indefinitely** - This motion effectively kills a motion, because, if adopted, a two-thirds vote is subsequently required to take the matter up again.



Incidental Motions

Most of these are undebatable and arise in such a way that they must be decided immediately, before business can proceed. (RONR 6:16)

- **Point of order** - To bring to the group's attention to whether a rule is being violated. One does not need to be recognized prior to making a point of order. While not a motion, it requires the chair to make a ruling as to whether immediate consideration is proper.
- **Appeal from the decision of the chair** - The House can overrule the chair on any decision. While the motion must be seconded, it cannot be amended. When this motion is moved and seconded, the chair immediately states the question, "Shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of the House?" If there is a tie vote, the chair's decision is upheld. The motion is not debatable when it applies to a matter of improper use of authority or when it is made while there is a pending motion to close debate. However, the motion can be debated at other times. Each person may speak once, and the chair may also state the basis for the decision.
- **Parliamentary inquiry** - Not a motion, but a question as to whether an action would be in order.
- **Point of information** - A person may rise to offer or obtain information that is considered necessary for the group. This provision is not used to offer debate.



Incidental Motions

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- **Division of assembly** - To require a more precise method of counting votes than by a voice vote, such as having persons raise hands, or stand. No second, not debatable, and no vote required.
- **Request to withdraw a motion** - A motion cannot be withdrawn by its mover. This request requires majority approval.
- **Suspension of the rules** - When matters are to be taken out of order, or a particular task can be better handled without formal rules in place, this motion can be approved by a two-thirds vote of the group. However, until the rules are restored, only discussion can occur; no decisions can be made. Second required, not debatable, and not amendable.
- **Object to consideration of a question** - When a motion is so outrageous, intended to distract the House from resolving legitimate business. The motion can be objected to and ruled out of order without debate. However, if the chair does not rule the motion out of order, a two-thirds vote of the House can block further consideration.

Final Thoughts

- If you ever have any questions, contact the Chair.
- Do not be afraid to make mistakes!
- Enjoy your service!

