



## OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER PETE CONSTANT

### District 1, City of San José

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#### ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

##### What Is Parliamentary Law (Roberts Rules)?

Parliamentary law (Roberts Rules of Order) is a series of rules that were formulated to facilitate the transaction of business and structure within a group or assembly. The name “Robert’s Rules of Order” is named after the American book of parliamentary rules published in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert.

##### Principles of Parliamentary Law

The overall principals of parliamentary procedure are based in some basic principals, expectations of members and rights.

##### Basic Principles and Expectations

**Majority-vote decisions:** All decisions will be made by a majority vote of the authorized members of the assembly.

**Equal rights and privileges:** Every member possesses the same rights. This means each member has the rights to propose motions, to debate them, to oppose them and to run for offices.

**Equal Obligations:** Each member is expected to be responsible for various (basic) duties as part of the assembly. Those include

- Attend Meetings
- Be on time
- Stay until the end of the meeting
- Be ready to talk knowledgeably on a topic
- Be attentive
- Be open-minded
- Participate actively in the meetings
- Work with others in a cooperative fashion
- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect
- Speak openly, but also allow others to speak
- Follow the rules of debate
- Make points concisely
- Attack issues, not people
- Abide by the final decision of the majority
- Respect the chair’s opinions and rulings.
- Insist on order during the meetings
- Be familiar with then basic rules of parliamentary law
- Select well-qualified officers
- Participate in committees

**Protection of minority rights:** True democratic organizations, those governed by parliamentary law, protect certain basic minority rights, which can never be infringed upon. These include the following rights:

- The right to be heard
- The right to protest
- The right to seek and convince
- The right to understand fully the question under discussion



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#### How to use Robert's Rules of Order in a Meeting

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

1. Call to order.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

There are four Basic Types of Motions:

1. **Main Motions:** The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. **Subsidiary Motions:** Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
3. **Privileged Motions:** Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
4. **Incidental Motions:** Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

How are Motions Presented?

1. **Obtaining the floor**
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the Chairman by saying, "Mr. Chairman, or Mr. President."
  - c. Wait until the Chairman recognizes you.
2. **Make Your Motion**
  - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
  - b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we ..." rather than, "I move that we do not ..."
  - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
3. **Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion**
4. **Another member will second your motion or the Chairman will call for a second.**
5. **If there is no second to your motion it is lost.**
6. **The Chairman States Your Motion**
  - a. The Chairman will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we ..." Thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
  - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
  - c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairman it becomes "assembly property", and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
7. **Expanding on Your Motion**



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- a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
  - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - c. All comments and debate must be directed to the chairman.
  - d. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
  - e. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.
8. Putting the Question to the Membership
- a. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. On a motion to move the previous question may be adapted.

#### Voting on a Motion:

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the by-laws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

1. By Voice -- The Chairman asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
2. By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
3. By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chairman says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
4. By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairman so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
5. By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper, this method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

1. Motion to Table -- This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table", for reconsideration by the membership.
2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely -- This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. But, it will only work if you use it properly.

1. Allow motions that are in order.
  2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
  3. Speak clearly and concisely.
  4. Obey the rules of debate.
- Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.



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**Full and free discussion:** The right (and expectation) that the committee or assembly will have a full and free discussion on every issue brought to the table.

**Simple and direct procedure:** This procedure will not become bureaucratic, it will maintain a straightforward process which all will be expected to understand and participate.

**Order of motions:** The introduction and disposition of all motions is governed by a definite, logical order.

**Consideration of one question at a time:** To expedite business and prevent the meeting from disintegrating into chaos, only one question can be considered at a time.

**Voting:** Before members vote, they have the right to know the question before the assembly. It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to keep the motion before the assembly, clear at all times.

**Delegating duties:** As the organization progress', it is expected that many of the duties necessary to run the organization will be delegated to members of the assembly.

**Maintaining impartiality:** The rules of parliamentary law must be administered impartially. Presiding officers serve the organization most effectively when they remain strictly neutral.

#### Rights of Members

Parliamentary law protects the rights of the members to be dealt with fairly and equitably. The following member rights are guaranteed under parliamentary law-the right to:

- Receive notices of meetings
- Attend meetings
- Make motions
- Second Motions (when they need a second)
- Debate motions (when they can be debated)
- Vote on notions (except where there is conflict of interest)
- Nominate people for office
- Be nominated for office
- Elect people to office
- Be elected to office
- Know the meaning of the question people are debating
- Object when the rules are being violated
- Appeal the decision of the chair
- Be protected from personal abuse and attack
- Have access to minutes of meetings
- Receive the treasurer's report
- Get a copy of the organizations bylaws



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#### Motions

##### How to run a meeting

- a. Chair calls meeting to order and state the time
- b. Secretary takes roll (visually, calling out names, etc.)
- c. Approval of minutes (This is the time to fix any changes on minutes then go to motion)
- d. Approval of agenda (Items can be added then go to motion)  
(Approval of minutes and agenda only needs a second)
- e. Report of officers
- f. Report of committees
- g. Old business (where motions that have been tabled from the last meeting)
- h. New business (to make meetings run faster, all voting is done here)
- i. Announcements
- j. Adjournment of meeting (motion must be made and second. No need to vote)

##### Chair duties

- a. Speakers list – take down names of who would like to speak
- b. Motion – Chair cannot MAKE a motion but can PROPOSE a motion by stating “I entertain....” Then a member makes a motion.

##### A motion will take this path:

- M Motion made
- S Second
- D Debate
- A Amend (if necessary)
- M Majorette Vote (pass/reject)
- R Reconsider

##### General Rules

- a. Majority quorum – a total number of active members in order to vote
- b. 2/3 of votes – if voting on a document such as the bylaws, 2/3 must be present to pass (Example: *Total members present is 20. 2/3 is 10 +4 =14 to pass*)
- c. Point of order – if you feel the info given out is incorrect one must state “point of order” then state the correct information
- d. Point of information – called anytime when you feel that there is more info to be added to a subject that is being discuss or announce
- e. Acclamation – anyone can call when it looks like everyone hands are up during voting
- f. Table – If one feels that the discussion is taking to long, one can motion to table till next meeting or any date proposed)



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How to Make Motions

Motion	What to Say	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote
Adjourn	“I move that we adjourn.”	Yes	No	No	Majority
Adjourn at a future time	“I move that we adjourn at [specific time].”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Adopt a report	“I move that the report be adopted.”	Yes	No	No	Majority
Amend a motion	“I move to amend by adding...” or ”I move to amend by striking out...” or ”I move to amend by inserting the word before [or after] the word...”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Avoid improper motion	“I object to consideration of debating this motion.”	Yes	No	No	2/3
Complain about the physical conditions	“I rise to question of privilege.”	Yes	No	No	None
End debate	“I move the previous question.”	Yes	No	No	2/3



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Motion	What to Say	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote
Give closer study (move to committee)	“I move to refer the matter to committee.”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business	“I move that [insert specific motion].”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone business	“I move to postpone discussion until...”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Protest a breach of rules or conduct.	“I rise to a point of order.”	No	No	No	None
Recess	“I move that we recess for...”	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Reconsider an action	“I move to reconsider the vote on [specific issue].”	Yes	If debatable	No	Majority
Request information	“Point of information.”	No	No	No	None
Suspend an issue	“I move to table the motion.”	Yes	No	No	Majority
Suspend the rules	“I move to suspend the rules so that [specific issue]...”	Yes	No	No	Majority



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Motion	What to Say	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote
Take up a tabled issue	“I move to take from the table [specific issue].”	Yes	No	No	Majority
Verify a vote by asking members to rise	“I call for a division.” or ”Division!”	No	No	No	None
Vote on the chair’s ruling	“I appeal the chair’s decision.”	Yes	Yes	No	Majority