

# **ORDER IN THE BOARDROOM: Robert's Rules of Order**

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# Disclaimer



Summary of common topics and issues with regards to Robert's Rules of Order and is not intended to be comprehensive or a full discussion on each of the topics presented. You are advised to research and read any and all rules you wish to use during a meeting.

# Sources

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th Edition (\$15 on Amazon)

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief (\$10 on Amazon)

[https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/roberts\\_rules\\_simplified.pdf](https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/roberts_rules_simplified.pdf)

<https://robertsrules.com/>

\*\*Be careful online to ensure you are reading an article based on the newest edition.\*\*

# Outline

1. *Business–Unfinished and New*
2. *Motions*
3. *Debate Discussion*
4. *Different Types of Motions*

\*\*This is not comprehensive and does not cover all the details of every rule. Be sure to read the rules and your own Board's rules. Today will have an emphasis on putting these into practice and tips for running and participating in a meeting.\*\*

# Unfinished Business & New Business

Unfinished Business (often thought of as “Old Business”):

-Unfinished Business is not items or topics that were discussed and settled at prior meetings.

**-Unfinished business is:**

“The item that was actually in the process of being considered when the last meeting adjourned, followed by any items that were scheduled to come up at the last meeting but were not reached before its adjournment, in the order these were due to come up at that meeting.”

**NEW BUSINESS:** Chair: “Is there any new business?”

-Proper Procedure: Any Member can make a **motion** as to the new business to be discussed.

-New business is subject to S.C. Freedom of Information Act laws.

# Motions and Competing Motions

MOTION Definition: A formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the group take certain action. [R. 3:21 & 3:22]

Main Motion [R. 3:23]--Introduction brings the business before the group.

The Main Motion is the starting motion and then other motions will follow during the discussion and business of the Main Motion.

Chairman: “The Chair will entertain a Motion...”

# **How to Make a Motion**

**\*\*Precision and Specificity are keys in making motions.\*\***

**Be precise and be specific. You want everyone to know what they are voting on.**

**If you know the motion you want to make beforehand, write it down!**

# How to make a Motion

1. Seek recognition from the Chair
2. Upon recognition by the Chair, state your motion.
  - a. When stating your motion and position, you have the floor.
  - b. “I Move that...” or “I make a Motion that...”
3. State precisely and exactly what the Motion should be.
4. Best practice is to make the Motion in writing (have it written down).
5. The vote is on the exact language of the Motion (not just it’s idea).
6. Chair can require Main Motions in writing [R. 4:18]
7. R. 4:18 and R. 4:19 about amending motions
8. Seconding the Motion prior to Discussion [R. 4:9]
9. After Motion and Second, Chair “States the Question”
  - a. “It is moved and seconded that .... (restate the Motion)”
10. Debate/Discussion begins at that point (Motion is “on the floor”).



# Debate / Discussion

- Chair should be consistent and fair.
- If Chair is going to enforce the time limits in the rules, then enforce it on all Members and not just those agree with on the issue.
- Members should be respectful and calm.
- Address debate to the Chair and not to individual Members.
- It is ok to pause when debate becomes too heated or confused. It is ok for the Chair to pause or slow down the meeting to ensure everyone is on the same page.

# Debate / Discussion

1. NOW, group debates the merits of the Motion and what action to take.
2. Normally, first the Motion's author will explain the Motion and the reasoning behind the Motion after recognition by the Chair.
3. Meeting would then proceed with the Chair recognizing individuals before they speak on the Motion.
4. Speech Limits in Debate: Any organization can set rules on how to conduct discussion. [R. 43:8-13] Without separate rules, You can speak twice for 10 minutes each on a motion.
5. Decorum in Debate [R. 43:19-43:28]; Chair participation [R. 43:29-43:30]

# Debate / Discussion

1. Germaneness—Stick to the Subject of the Motion [R. 43:20]
  - a. Do your comments have bearing on whether the Motion before the group should be adopted or not adopted?
2. Refraining from attacking a Member's Motives [R. 43:21]
  - a. Debate the idea of the Motion, not the one who made the Motion. Deliberative bodies debate ideas, not people.
3. Addressing All Remarks through the Chair [R. 43:22]
4. Maker of the Motion can withdraw the Motion [R. 43:25]

# Debate / Discussion

1. Informal Consultation to Assist the Framing of the Motion [R. 43:33 & 43:34
  - a. Sometimes it is best to take a step back and make sure everyone is on the same page about what is being debated and information relevant to the debate.
2. Some Motions non-debatable (see chart included with packet)
3. Motion for the Previous Question [R. 16:6-16:28]
  - a. Immediately closes debate & prevents certain secondary motions (Amend, Commit, Postpone to a Certain Time)
  - b. Requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote & is undebatable
  - c. “I move the previous question.” or “I call the question.” or “I move we vote now.”

# End of Debate & Voting

At end of debate, Chair may call the question for voting. [R. 4:34]

-Are you ready to vote? Is there any further debate?

## Voice Vote vs. Show of Hands

**Voice Vote: [R. 4:35 & 4:37]**

Ayes / Nays/ Abstentions

Chair announces the result of the vote : “The ayes have it, the Motion is adopted.” or “The nays have it, and the Motion is defeated.”

**Show of Hands [R. 4:40 & 4:55]-Can be used when voice vote unclear.**

**Counted Vote [R. 45:14 & 45:15]**

-Can be requested by a Member; should be requested before vote is called by Chair.

# Motions within Debate/Discussion– Secondary Motions

## 1. Motion to Amend [Section 12 of Rules]

- a. State exactly where in the main motion the change should be made and exactly what the proposed change is to be.
- b. Chair can require Motion to be submitted in writing [R. 4:18]
- c. Vote on an amendment to the Motion is not a vote on whether or not the Motion should be adopted or not, but whether the Motion should be amended as stated. Therefore, upon amendment, a vote on the passage or defeat of the Amended Motion is still necessary. [R. 12:4]
  - i. Debate can continue after a Motion to Amend is adopted.
- d. Conforming Amendments [R. 12:15]--Clean up amendment to ensure Motion is worded correctly
- e. Germaneness [R. 12:16-12:21]--Any amendment proposed must in some way involve the same question raised by the Motion it seeks to amend. Chair decides germaneness or can put it to the group [R. 12:21]

# Tabling Motions

1. **Postpone Indefinitely [R. 11] vs. Postpone to a Certain Time [R. 14]**
2. Postpone Indefinitely –Motion to drop the main motion without a vote on it. Essentially kills the Main Motion.
  - a. Does not take precedence over other motions except Main Motion.
  - b. Can be applied only to Main Question; therefore should be made when Main Question is pending.
  - c. Movant should have the floor
  - d. Must be seconded
  - e. Is debatable –debate can go into the merits of the full question
  - f. Is not amendable
  - g. Requires a majority vote—an affirmative vote can be reconsidered
3. “I move that the Resolution/Motion be postponed indefinitely.” or “I move that the Resolution/Motion be tabled.”
4. If Tabling Motion wins, then Main Motion is killed. If Tabling Motion does not succeed, Chair moves to have a vote on the Main Motion. [R. 11:8]
5. Postpone to a Certain Time [R. 14]--Motion to put off a question until a certain time in the future (next meeting, etc). “I move to postpone the question to the next meeting.”

# Secondary Motions Continued

## 1. Motion to Commit or Refer [R. 13]

- a. Sends a pending question to a small group (or committee) for investigation prior to consideration by the full group.
- b. Requires majority vote, should specify committee and what it is they are to investigate or report on to the group. Can seek commitment to a standing committee or a special committee.
- c. Committee members can be stated in the Motion or appointed by the Chair.
- d. R. 13:8 sets out necessary details for the Motion.
- e. R. 13:9 allows Chair to rule out of Order a Motion to Commit or Refer that is dilatory or absurd or unreasonable or one considered to be designed to defeat the purpose of the main question.

## 2. Lay on the Table [R. 17]

- a. To interrupt the pending business so as to permit doing something else immediately.
- b. Not to be used in same manner as postponing indefinitely.



# Point of Order

## 1. Point of Order [R. 23]

- a. When a Member thinks that the rules of the group are being violated and call on the Chair for a ruling and enforcement of the rules.
- b. “Point of Order” and then state the inquiry and point by setting forth the rule violated.
- c. Takes precedence over all other pending matters.

# Motions to Reconsider – Changing of the Mind

## 1. Motion to Reconsider [R. 37]

- a. First, a Motion must have been adopted or defeated.
  - i. A Motion that died cannot be reconsidered.
- b. Second, the Motion to Reconsider must be made by someone on the prevailing side of the Motion that was defeated or adopted. (Second can come from any member).
- c. Limited time to make Motion to Reconsider –Typically, Motion can only be made on same day on with the the vote sought to be reconsidered is taken.
  - i. R. 37:5—cannot be used to an affirmative vote whose provisions have been partly carried out or to any vote that has caused something to be done that it is impossible to undo.
- d. “Having voted on the prevailing side to adopt Motion ..., I move that we reconsider the motion.”
  - i. Vote is to whether or not to reconsider the motion; then vote on the Motion itself.
- e. Requires Majority vote

## 2. Motion to Rescind or Amend [R. 35]

- a. Group can change an action previously taken.
- b. Rescind is the motion to try and cancel a previous vote or order. Amend is to change a part of the previous act.
- c. Fixing actions from a previous meeting for clarification purposes
- d. Importance of reviewing the minutes from previous meeting to ensure what you thought happened is what was recorded in the official records.

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