

# Roberts Rules of Order – Simplified

## Guiding Principles:

- Everyone has the right to participate in discussion if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- Only one thing (motion) can be discussed at a time.

A **motion** is the topic under discussion (e.g., “I move that we add a coffee break to this meeting”). After being recognized by the president of the board, any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table. A motion requires a second to be considered. If there is no second, the matter is not considered. Each motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely).

## How to do things:

**You want to bring up a new idea before the group.**

After recognition by the president of the board, present your motion. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for discussion, or consideration.

**You want to change some of the wording in a motion under discussion.**

After recognition by the president of the board, move to amend by

- adding words,
- striking words or
- striking and inserting words.

**You like the idea of a motion being discussed, but you need to reword it beyond simple word changes.**

Move to substitute your motion for the original motion. If it is seconded, discussion will continue on both motions and eventually the body will vote on which motion they prefer.

**You want more study and/or investigation given to the idea being discussed.**

Move to refer to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee.

**You want more time personally to study the proposal being discussed.**

Move to postpone to a definite time or date.

**You are tired of the current discussion.**

Move to limit debate to a set period of time or to a set number of speakers. Requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote.

**You have heard enough discussion.**

Move to close the debate. Also referred to as calling the question. This cuts off discussion and brings the assembly to a vote on the pending question only. Requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote.

**You want to postpone a motion until some later time.**

Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.

You believe the discussion has drifted away from the agenda and want to bring it back.  
 “Call for orders of the day.”

You want to take a short break.  
 Move to recess for a set period of time.

You want to end the meeting.  
 Move to adjourn.

You are unsure the president of the board announced the results of a vote correctly.  
 Without being recognized, call for a “division of the house.” A roll call vote will then be taken.

You are confused about a procedure being used and want clarification.  
 Without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The president of the board will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

You have changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side.  
 Move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

You want to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.  
 Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, a 2/3<sup>rds</sup> vote is required.

**Unanimous Consent:**

If a matter is considered relatively minor or opposition is not expected, a call for unanimous consent may be requested. If the request is made by others, the president of the board will repeat the request and then pause for objections. If none are heard, the motion passes.

- **You may INTERRUPT a speaker for these reasons only:**
  - to get information about business –point of information to get information about rules– parliamentary inquiry
  - if you can't hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. –question of privilege
  - if you see a breach of the rules –point of order
  - if you disagree with the president of the board’s ruling –appeal
  - if you disagree with a call for Unanimous Consent –object

Quick Reference					
	Must Be Seconded	Open for Discussion	Can be Amended	Vote Count Required to Pass	May Be Reconsidered or Rescinded
Main Motion	√	√	√	Majority	√
Amend Motion	√	√		Majority	√
Kill a Motion	√			Majority	√
Limit Debate	√		√	2/3 <sup>rds</sup>	√
Close Discussion	√			2/3 <sup>rds</sup>	√
Recess	√		√	Majority	
Adjourn (End meeting)	√			Majority	
Refer to Committee	√	√	√	Majority	√
Postpone to a later time	√	√	√	Majority	√
Table	√			Majority	
Postpone Indefinitely	√	√	√	Majority	√

# Common Motions Table

To Do This	Say This	Second?	Debatable?	Amend?
Approve Ordinance	"I Move that Ordinance No. ___ be approved on first reading."	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adopt Ordinance on Second Reading	"I Move that Ordinance No. ___ be adopted."	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adopt a Resolution	"I move that Resolution No. ___ be adopted."	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amend a Motion	"I move to amend the motion by ___."	Yes	Yes	Yes
Move to Substitute	"I move to substitute for the pending motion (or section) the following: ___." (Treated as a motion to Amend.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Table a Motion	"I move to table the motion." (Temporarily suspend consideration).	Yes	No	No
Take Matter Off The Table	"I move to take from the table ___"	Yes	No	No
Postpone Action	"I move to postpone the ___ until ___."	Yes	Yes	Yes
Call for the Question	"I move the previous question," or "I call for the question."	Yes	No	No
Suspend the Rules	"I move to suspend the rules so that ___" (Requires 2/3 vote unless local rule provides otherwise.)	Yes	No	No
Appeal Ruling of the Chair	"I appeal from the decision of the chair" (May interrupt)	Yes	Yes	No
Protest Breach of Rules	"Point of Order." (May interrupt speaker without being recognized)	No	No	No
Request Information	"A point of information, please." (May interrupt)	No	No	No
Reconsider an Action	"I move to reconsider the vote on ___." (May interrupt)	Yes	Same as Orig.	No
Go into Executive	"I move that Board go into executive session for the purpose of ___." (State specific purpose - see FOI Act).	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recess Meeting	"I move that we recess for ___ (time)."	Yes	No	Yes
Adjourn Meeting	"I move that we adjourn." (Takes precedence over all other motions)	Yes	No	No

# Presiding Over a Meeting

1. Follow the Rules
2. Begins the Meeting on time
3. Familiar with the rules of procedure (Board Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order)
4. Run the meeting firmly and courteously (Fairness to all Members and Public)
5. Maintain order
6. Follow the agenda
7. Be respectful of all Board Members
8. Require a member to be recognized before speaking
9. Allow only one person to speak at a time
10. Allow persons not on council to speak only at designated times (public and staff)
11. Rule "out of order" remarks which involve personalities or attack motives of another member
12. Rule "out of order" remarks not related to the matter before the Board
13. Apply time limits uniformly
14. Reject frivolous motions and motions not permitted by the rules
15. Require motions to be stated affirmatively
16. Allow discussion only after a motion is seconded and restated by the chair; Allow maker of motion to speak first
17. Allow a member to speak twice on a matter only after all other members have an opportunity to speak
18. Allow interruption of a speaker only by consent or for permitted reasons (e.g., point of order; question of privilege)
19. Reject discussion of motions which are not debatable (e.g., previous question, table, adjourn)
20. Allow only one main motion on the floor—maintain Order
21. Be willing to stop and take a break or let staff keep up
22. Consult the parliamentarian for advice, not a ruling (only the chair can rule)
23. Comply with the Freedom of Information Act
24. Maintain Order and Decorum

# Meeting Participation

Regardless of whether Robert's Rules or some other rules of procedure are used, meeting participation should generally follow the recommendations contained in this section.

A Member must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.

## To gain the floor

- Raise your hand or address the presiding officer.
- Do not shout "I move."

## When making a motion

- Speak clearly and concisely.
- State your motion affirmatively.

Comment or discussion is not in order unless a motion has been made and seconded. After being seconded, the presiding officer restates the motion and calls for discussion. The maker of a motion is entitled to speak first. A member may not speak a second time on a subject until all who wish to speak have done so. A member may not continue to speak when a matter is ruled out of order.

- Direct all remarks to the presiding officer.
- Confine remarks to the subject of the motion.
- Remarks involving personalities are not in order.

A member may not interrupt a speaker who has the floor without consent, except to present a privileged matter which is granted precedence over ordinary business.

Robert's Rules limit a speaker to 10 minutes. Local rules may specify a different amount of time. More time may be granted by a two-thirds vote.

Members are obligated to abide by the presiding officer's ruling, unless a motion to appeal the ruling is seconded and passed by majority vote.

Make your motion in clear, concise and affirmative language.

Wait for a second to the motion. A member may second a motion without being recognized. A motion cannot be considered without a second, if a second is required. After the motion is seconded, the chair will restate the motion and allow discussion.

- The maker of the motion is allowed to speak first on a motion. This is the time to explain the motion not when it is being made.
- Direct all comments to the chair, avoid personalities and keep to the time limit.
- The maker of the motion may speak again after all other speakers are finished.
- When discussion ends, a vote is taken.