



# Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary law has evolved as a set of procedures that protect the individual and the group in their exercise of the rights of free speech, free assembly, and the freedom to unite in organizations for the achievement of a common aim. It is based on common sense and courtesy and allows you to conduct your organization's business in an orderly and timely fashion.

The following basic rules of procedure should be followed. For specific questions on the more technical aspects of parliamentary law refer to [Robert's Rules of Order - Newly Revised](http://www.constitution.org/rror/rror--00.htm) [ <http://www.constitution.org/rror/rror--00.htm> ].

## Five Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure:

1. Only one subject may claim the attention of the assembly at a given time.
2. Each proposition presented for consideration is entitled to full and free debate.
3. Every member has rights equal to every other member.
4. The will of the majority must be carried out, and the rights of the minority must be preserved.
5. The personality and desires of each member should be merged into the larger unit of the organization.

## Developing an Agenda or Order of Business:

It is customary for every group to adopt a standard order of business for meetings. When no rule has been adopted, the following is the order:

1. Call to order
2. Reading and approval of minutes
3. Reports from officers and standing committees
4. Reports from special committees
5. Unfinished business
6. New business
7. Program
8. Adjournment

## **Motions:**

The proper way for an individual to propose that the group take a certain action is by "making a motion." The following is the process for handling a motion:

1. A member rises and addresses the presiding officer for recognition.
2. The member is recognized.
3. The member proposes a motion.
4. Another member must second the motion.
5. The presiding officer states the motion to the assembly.
6. The assembly can now discuss or debate the motion. Only one person at a time may speak. He/she must first be recognized by the presiding officer. Preference should be given to
  - A. The person who proposed the motion.
  - B. A member who has not spoken yet to the motion.
  - C. A member who seldom speaks as opposed to one who frequently addresses the assembly.

The presiding officer should try to alternate between those favoring and those opposing the motion.

Discussion must be confined to the question that is "before the house."

7. The presiding officer takes the vote on the motion. Voting can be done by voice, show of hands or balloting.
8. The presiding officer announces the result of the vote.
9. The floor is now open and another motion can be proposed.

## **Amending a Motion:**

The purpose of the motion TO AMEND is to modify a motion that has already been presented in such a manner that it will be more satisfactory to the members.

Methods of amending:

1. By addition or insertion. To add something to the motion which it did not contain.
2. By elimination or by striking out. To subtract or eliminate something from a motion that was originally part of it.
3. By substitution. This method is a combination of the first two methods, since in amending by substitution something is stricken and something is inserted in its place. The substitution portion may consist of a word, a phrase, a clause, or an entirely new motion.

The most important principle to understand in connection with any form of the motion TO AMEND is that an amendment "MAY BE HOSTILE, BUT IT MUST BE GERMANE."

By `hostile' is meant opposed to the spirit and aim of the motion to which it is applied.

By `germane' is meant having direct bearing upon the subject of the motion, that is, relevant or relating to it.

An amendment may be opposed to the actual intent of the original motion and, in fact, nullify it; but if it relates to the same subject matter, it is germane.

### **Types of Amendments:**

1. Amendment of the First Rank - an amendment to a motion.
2. Amendment of the Second Rank - An amendment to the amendment. (The amendment to the amendment must modify and relate directly to the amendment and NOT to the main motion; otherwise it is OUT OF ORDER).

### **No Amendment Beyond That of Second Rank is Possible:**

It is never in order to propose more than one amendment of each rank at one time. If one desires to amend two separate and unrelated parts of a motion, this must be done by two amendments of the first rank; and one must be voted upon before the other is proposed. It is possible, however, to have a motion, one amendment to the motion (amendment of the first rank), and one amendment to the amendment ( amendment of the second rank) before the assembly at once. Until the amendment of the second rank has been voted upon, no other amendment of the second rank is in order. Until the amendment of the first rank has been voted upon, no other amendment of the first rank can be proposed.

### **Order of Voting on Amendments:**

Amendments are voted upon in inverse order; that is, the one of second rank is disposed of first.

1. Discussion is held and the vote taken upon the amendment to the amendment (amendment of the second rank).
2. Discussion is called for, and the vote is taken upon the amendment to the motion (amendment of the first rank).
3. When the vote on this has been taken, discussion upon the original or main motion as amended is opened; and when completed, a vote is taken upon it.

## Helpful Hints for Non-Parliamentarians:

1. Remember an important fundamental principle of parliamentary procedure that allows for, “free and full discussion,” of issues, motions, and courses of action.
  - Avoid calling the question too early
  - Allow for some flexibility by the chair, such as allowing for motions to be withdrawn
  - Share new thoughts or information during debate, do not continually restate the same comments
2. When the “previous question” is called, the chair should ask for a second and repeat the motion to enable all members to be clear as to the issue being voted upon, and the process of moving the previous question.
3. Be friendly when you disagree on an issue. You are debating an issue, not personalities. Cordial debate allows for more efficient addressing of issues and maintains personal and professional relationships.
4. Avoid complex motions. Amendments often become confusing; limit non-main motions where possible to enhance clarity and expedite decision making. Keep debate, motions, and amendments germane to the issue at hand.
5. Wait to be recognized by the chair before you speak. To simply speak up and join debate, or throw a question to the table is rude. Parliamentary procedure is designed to ensure each person and each point of view is heard and considered. Only specific motions should be used to interrupt the chair or the flow of the procedure; these special motions should be used sparingly.
6. The maker of a motion has the first right to speak on the motion. Pay strict attention; in formal parliamentary procedure, a motion is made and then debate is joined. The first speaker usually presents information and shapes the nature of the debate.
7. Keep agendas short. Attempt to keep new business items minimized after the first few general meetings. Three to five items are a recommended limit to new business items.
8. Follow the order of business; avoid tangential conversations, detracting sidebars, and unnecessary disruptions to the normal flow of business.
9. Officers and reporting members should have reports prepared before the meeting, and certain reports such as minutes and budgets should be copied for each member as necessary.
10. Start and end meetings on time; be respectful of time limits during the course of business.
11. The chair must remain neutral to ensure adherence to proper parliamentary procedure. The chair may elect to pass the gavel and take a stand on an issue; however the gavel may only be passed to an executive or member who has not stated a position on the issue. Once the gavel is passed, the chair may not re-assume the gavel until the issue is voted upon and settled.

### Sources:

*The National Order of Omega* <http://www.orderofomega.org/pdf/organ.pdf> which had given credit to the Student Organization Development Center at the University of Michigan.

*University of LaVerne, Leadership Education And Development 2001, Brian A Morgan Armstrong, “Parliamentary Procedure”* <http://www.ulaverne.edu/lead/pdf/r2.pdf>

<b>Parliamentary Procedure</b>						
<b><u>To Do This:</u></b> <sup>1</sup>	<b><u>You Say This:</u></b>	<b><u>Interrupt Speaker?</u></b>	<b><u>Seconded?</u></b>	<b><u>Debatable?</u></b>	<b><u>Amendable?</u></b>	<b><u>Vote Required?</u></b>
<b>Adjourn the meeting.</b>	“I move that we ...”	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
<b>Recess the meeting.</b>	“I move that we recess until ...”	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
<b>Complain about noise, room temperature, etc.</b>	“Point of privilege.”	Yes	No	No	No	No vote required, decision of chair
<b>End debate / Move the previous question/motion.</b> <i>This motion swerves to end debate in more formal manner than calling the question. Moving the previous question (moving the previous motion) ends debate. The board must move directly into a vote upon the current main motion or return to normal debate. This process calls for debate and vote to end debate upon another main motion. NOTE: A voting member may not interrupt debate to make this motion, but must enter it according to the normal speaker process, once the chair has recognized them.</i>	“I move the previous question ...”	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote
<b>Call the question.</b> <i>If debate seems to be at an end, or nothing new is being added, any voting member may call the question. This motion ends debate and moves the process directly into a vote. Any voting member may object to the call. An objection counters the call, and debate continues as normal.</i>	“I call the question.”	No	No	Yes	No	No vote required, decision of chair
<b>Postpone consideration of something.</b>	“I move we postpone this matter until ...”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>Have something studied further.</b> <i>This motion removes an issue from the table and places it with either a standing committee or an ad hoc committee. The committee is charged with researching the issue and presenting a course of action and/or decision for the board at an agreed upon future meeting.</i>	“I move we refer this matter to committee.”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

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<b>Limit Debate.</b> <i>Either before or during debate, the length of time allocated for discussion can be limited. Normally debate is unlimited to ensure minority opinion and dissention.</i>	“I move to limit debate/discussion to ... (time limit).” or “I move to amend the limit to be set at... ”	No	No	No	Yes	2/3 Vote
<b>Amend a motion.</b> <i>During debate upon a main motion, components or technicalities might need to be fixed or adjusted. During debate upon a main motion, an amendment may be presented to make necessary changes. An amendment cannot alter the intent of the main motion.</i>	“I move that this motion be amended by ...”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>Friendly amend a motion.</b> <i>Although this motion is not part of formal parliamentary procedure, it is common practice that an amendment that augments or clarifies a motion, and is presented before debate begins. Friendly amendments do not require seconds and are not debatable; however, the maker of the motion and the second must accept friendly amendments. NOTE: Friendly amendments can interrupt the process because they must be presented prior to the beginning of general debate.</i>	“I move to friendly amend that the motion states/reads... ”	No	No	No	Yes	Majority
<b>Withdraw motion.</b> <i>The maker of a motion can chose to pull a main motion from the table for any reason, although normally new information or justification may be requested by the chair for reasons of explanation.</i>	“I move to withdraw the motion.”	No	No	No	No	Majority
<b>Introduce business.</b> <i>What are you asking the board to approve or consider? Most orders of business are presented to the board in the form of a motion, for example, to allocate funds for an event or purchase.</i>	“I move that ...”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

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<b>Object to procedure or to personal affront.</b> <i>If parliamentary procedure is not being followed, any member of the board may interrupt a speaker or the process and present a correct course of action according to parliamentary procedure.</i>	“Point of Order.”	Yes	No	No	No	No vote required, decision of chair
<b>Point of Parliamentary Inquiry.</b> <i>Similar to Point of Order, except that the member is unsure of the correct course of action. This is an appeal to the chair or the parliamentarian to ensure that parliamentary procedure is being properly followed.</i>	“Point of parliamentary inquiry, are we following parliamentary procedure?”	Yes	No	No	No	No vote required, decision of chair
<b>Request information /clarification.</b> <i>To clarify the process or add clarity to a motion, a member may interrupt a speaker to address the issues of confusion.</i>	“Point of information or clarification; ...”	Yes, if urgent	No	No	No	No vote required, decision of chair
<b>Ask for a vote by count to verify voice vote.</b>	“I call for a division of the house.”	No <sup>3</sup>	No	No	No	No vote required unless objection arises <sup>4</sup>
<b>Object to considering an undiplomatic or improper matter.</b>	“I object to the consideration of this matter.”	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 Vote
<b>Take up a matter previously tabled.</b>	“I move we take from the table ...”	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
<b>Reconsider something already disposed of.</b>	“I move we now (or later) reconsider our action relative to ...”	Yes	Yes	Yes, if original motion is debatable	No	Majority
<b>Consider something out of its scheduled order or an unusual motion.</b> <i>The chair often requests it when the parliamentary procedure has gotten out of control. A voting member must present it.</i>	“I move that we suspend the rules and/to ...”	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote
<b>Vote on a ruling by the chair.</b> <i>If it seems as if the chair has made a mistake or</i>	“I appeal the chair’s	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2/3 negative vote that the board

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<i>if a particular member perceives that they are being ignored or their motions not being recognized, a voting member can move to appeal the chair's decision.</i>	decision.”					agrees the chair made a mistake.
<b>Point of Personal Privilege.</b> <i>This excuses an individual member from the board, and does not count against quorum. The chair holds authority to grant or not grant this special motion.</i>	“Point of personal privilege.”	Yes	No	No	No	No vote required, decision of chair

1. The first twelve motions or points are listed in established order of precedence. When any of them is pending, you may not introduce another that is listed below it, but you may introduce another that is listed above it.

The next ten motions, points, and proposals have no established order of precedence. Any of them may be introduced at any time except when the meeting is considering one of the top three matters (motion to adjourn, motion to recess, point of privilege).

2. In this case, any resulting motion is debatable.
3. Division must be called for before another motion is started.
4. Then majority is required.

Sources:

The National Order of Omega <http://www.orderofomega.org/pdf/organ.pdf> which had given credit to the Student Organization Development Center at the University of Michigan.

University of LaVerne, Leadership Education And Development 2001, Brian A Morgan Armstrong, “Parliamentary Procedure” <http://www.ulaverne.edu/lead/pdf/r2.pdf>