

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

A full copy of Robert's Rules of Orders can be ordered online or checked out of the library. But these are the basic elements of Robert's Rules:

- I. **Make a Motion.** To introduce a new piece of business or propose a decision or action, a motion must be made by a group member ("I move that..."). A second motion must then also be made (raise your hand and say, "I second it."). After limited discussion the group then votes on the motion. A majority vote is required for the motion to pass (or quorum as specified in your bylaws).
- II. **To Postpone an Item Indefinitely.** This tactic is used to kill a motion. When passed the motion cannot be reintroduced at that meeting. It may be brought up again at a later date. This is made as a motion ("I move to postpone indefinitely..."). A second is required. A majority vote is required to postpone the motion under consideration.
- III. **To Amend a Motion.** This is the process used to change a motion under consideration. Perhaps you like the idea proposed but not exactly as offered. Raise your hand and make the following motion: "I move to amend the motion on the floor." This also requires a second. After the motion to amend is seconded, a majority vote is needed to decide whether the amendment is accepted. Then a vote is taken on the amended motion. In some organizations, a "friendly amendment" is made. If the person who made the original motion agrees with the suggested changes, the amended motion may be voted on without a separate vote to approve the amendment.
- IV. **To Commit a Motion.** This action is used to place a motion in committee. It requires a second. A majority vote must rule to carry it. At the next meeting the committee is required to prepare a report on the motion committed. If an appropriate committee exists, the motion goes to that committee. If not, a new committee is established.
- V. **To Call for the Question.** To end a debate immediately, the question is called (say "I call for the question") and the action needs a second. A vote is held immediately (no further questioning is allowed). A two-thirds vote is required for passage. If it is passed, the motion on the floor is voted on immediately.
- VI. **To Table a Discussion.** To table a discussion is to lay aside the business at hand in such a manner that it will be considered later in the meeting or at another time ("I make a motion to table this discussion until the next meeting. In the meantime, we will get more information so we can better discuss the issue.") A second is needed and a majority vote required to table the item under discussion.
- VII. **To Adjourn a Meeting.** A motion is made to end the meeting. A second motion is required. A majority vote is then required for the meeting to be adjourned (ended)

NOTE: If more than one motion is proposed, the most recent motion takes precedence over the ones preceding it. For example, if #6, a motion to table the discussion, is proposed, it must be voted on before #3, a motion to amend, can be decided.

In smaller meetings, like a committee or board meeting, often only four motions are used:

- To Introduce (Motion)
- To Change a Motion (Amend)
- To Adopt (Accept a Report Without Discussion)
- To Adjourn (End the Meeting)

Remember, these procedures are designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and to share ideas in an orderly manner. Parliamentary procedure should not be used to prevent discussion of important issues.

Board and committee chairpersons and other leaders may want to acquire training in meeting facilitation and in using parliamentary procedure. Additional information on meeting processes, working with many types of people, and using Robert's Rules is available from community resources such as the League of Women Voters, United Way, Lions Club, etc. Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance, by O. Garfield Jones, is an excellent guide for neighborhood association chairs to familiarize themselves with this information.