**ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER**

**A quick look at Parliamentary Procedures**

ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

U.S. Army General Henry Martyn Robert penned his classic guide to running smooth, orderly, and fairly conducted meetings in 1896. He took the procedures used by the U.S. Congress and simplified them for application by ordinary organizations to run their meetings. On September 1, 2020 the 214-page 12th edition of his book was published and is recognized as the most authoritative guide on parliamentary procedures in the U.S.

The *Rules of Order* were developed to serve as a guide for conducting meetings and making decisions as a *group*. The purpose of the book is “to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member’s opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum amount of time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.”

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

Wikipedia defines Parliamentary Procedures as “a body of ethics, rules, and customs governing meetings and other operations of clubs, organizations, legislative bodies, and other deliberative assemblies.” The purpose for employing a set of procedures in running a meeting is to conduct business in an orderly manner, giving everyone an opportunity to participate and arriving at decisions in a fair and open way. If you cannot remember anything else, just remember that parliamentary procedures are based on common sense and courtesy.

FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

1. Deal with only one subject at a time.
2. Each proposition presented for consideration deserve a full and free debate.
3. All members have equal rights to participate.
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 organizational unit.

CONSISTENT WITH ROTARY’S FOUR-WAY TEST

‘is it fair to all’ is an underlying principle of Robert’s Rules of Order. The rules were setup to make the processing of business, fair to all present.

USE AN AGENDA

An agenda sets out the order of business so everyone knows what to expect or when it’s proper to bring up new business. The presiding officer should monitor the time. Respecting the guest speakers time is very important. Any unfinished business can be carried on during the next meeting or at a special meeting. Any major or controversial matter should be taken up at a special meeting.

MOTIONS

The proper way for an individual to propose that the group take a certain action is by “making a motion.” This is called the ‘main motion.’ Conversely, nothing goes to discussion without a motion being on the floor.

Characteristics of a main motion

* A main motion must contain only one idea
* It must be stated in the positive
* The body can only take up one main motion at a time
* Every motion must obtain a second before it can be discussed or amended

Process for handling a motion:

A member obtains the floor:

* A member seeks recognition from the presiding officer by raising his/her hand
* The member is recognized (by name) by the chair and is now able to speak

A motion is brought before the assembly

* The member makes a motion by saying “I move that we…..”
* Another member must “second” the motion. The chair may have to ask, ‘is there a second?’
  + A ‘second’ shows that more than one member is interested in discussing this matter
  + If there is no second, ‘the motion dies for lack of a second’
* The presiding officer repeats the motion to the group by saying “it has been moved and seconded that…….”
  + By stating the motion, the chair will verify that he/she has stated the motion verbatim and has not made any changes
  + This also gives the assembly a second hearing of the motion and greater clarity

Consideration of the motion

* The presiding officer calls for discussion of the motion, normally starting with the person who made the motion
* Discussion must be confined to the merits of the motion
* Anyone wishing to speak for or against the motion or ask a question about the motion must be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking
* Discussion on the motion should end when everyone has had an opportunity to express their opinions. If the discussion becomes endless, it can be ended by a motion to end debate and gets two-thirds of the votes from members present.

Putting the motion to a vote

* When the discussion has been exhausted, the presiding officer takes a vote.
* The presiding officer should ask, ‘are you ready for the question?’
* The presiding officer should say, ‘the question is on the adoption of the motion that …(repeat question)’
* Presiding office conduct vote
  + Voting can be done by voice, raising of hands or secret ballot.
* Announce the results of the votes. Announce “motion passes” or   
  “motion fails”

AMENDING A MOTION

The purpose of amending a motion is to modify it in a way that it would be more acceptable to the members, but not change the basic intent of the motion.

A member moves to amend the original motion by saying “I move to amend the motion by (adding, deleting)”. A second is required before any discussion on the amendment.

A motion can be amended by:

* Adding or inserting a word or phrase
* Subtracting or deleting a word or phrase
* Or a combination of the above

The ensuing discussion must be on the amendment only. The presiding officer should restate the motion as amended before starting discussion.

A motion may be amended more than one time.

Amendments are voted on in inverse order. The newest amendment, then the preceding amendment and so on until you reach the main motion.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ROBERT'S RULES CHART OF MOTIONS** | | | |  |  |
| **TO** | **You say** | **Interrupt** | **Second** | **Debatable** | **Amendable** | **Vote** |
|  |  | **Speaker** | **Needed** |  |  | **Needed** |
| Ajourn | "I move that we adjourn" | no | yes | no | no | majority |
| Recess | "I move that we recess until . . " | no | yes | no | yes | majority |
| Complain about noise, room temp., etc. | "Point of privilege" | yes | no | no | no | Chair |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | decides |
| Suspend further consideration of | "I move that we table it" | no | yes | no | no | majority |
| something |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| End debate | "I move the previous question" | no | yes | no | no | 2/3 |
| Postpone consideration of | "I move that we postpone this matter | no | yes | yes | yes | majority |
| something | until . . . ' |  |  |  |  |  |
| Amend a motion | "I move to amend this motion by . . ." | no | yes | yes | yes | majority |
| Introduce business (a main motion) | "I move that . . ." | no | yes | yes | yes | majority |
| The above listed motions and points are listed in established order of precedence. When any one of them is pending, | | | | |  |  |
| You may not introduce antoher that is listed below, but you may introduce another that is listed above it. | | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TO** | **You say** | **Interrupt** | **Second** | **Debatable** | **Amendable** | **Vote** |
|  |  | **Speaker** | **Needed** |  |  | **Needed** |
| Object to procedure or personal | "point of order" | yes | no | no | no | chair |
| affront |  |  |  |  |  | decides |
| Request information | "point of information" | yes | no | no | no | none |
| Ask for a physical count of the vote | "I call for the division of the house" | \*1 | no | no | no | none |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Object to considering some improper | "I object to the consideration of this | yes | no | no | no | 2/3 |
| matter | question" |  |  |  |  |  |
| Take up matter previously tabled | "I move we take from the table …." | yes | yes | no | no | majority |
| Reconsider something already | "I move we reconsider our action | yes | yes | \*2 | no | majority |
| disposed of | relative to …." |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider something out of order | "I move we suspend the rules and | no | yes | no | no | 2/3 |
|  | consider. . . " |  |  |  |  |  |
| Challenge a ruling by the chair | "I appeal the decision of the chair" | yes | yes | yes | no | majority |
| The motions, points, and proposals listed above have no established order of preference, any of them may be | | | | |  |  |
| introduced at anhy time except when meeting is considered one of the top three matters listed from the chart above. | | | | |  |  |
| \*1 must be done before another motion is introduced. \*2 only if the original motion was debatable. | | | |  |  |  |