

Robert's Rules – A Brief Guide for Surviving Board Meetings

Typical Order of Business

1. Call to Order
2. Roll call (if customary)
3. Read and approve minutes of last meeting
4. Reports of officers, boards, and standing committees
5. Reports of special committees (if announced and committee is prepared to report)
6. Special orders (if announced and only as needed)
7. Old business
8. New business
9. Announcements
10. Program (if program or speaker is planned for)
11. Adjourn

Parliamentary Procedure

- Provides written rules for the orderly transaction of business in meetings
- Describes the duties of officers in meetings
- Facilitates the smooth functioning of the assembly and provides a firm basis for resolving questions of procedure that may arise (especially in groups larger than 12)
- Is based on a careful balancing of rights of the majority, minority, individual members, absentees, and all of these together

Unanimous Consent – “If there is no objection . . .”

This very helpful phrase can speed up the transaction of business, making your meetings much more efficient. Not every action needs to go through the six steps of a motion. The chairperson states “If there is no objection, (we will adopt a motion to do such and such).” When no objection is heard, the chairperson states “Since there is no objection, (such and such motion) is adopted.” If someone objects, or if there is need for discussion, follow the Six Steps to Every Motion (see below).

Use Unanimous Consent When:

- correcting or approving minutes
- withdrawing a motion before the vote is taken
- suspending a rule on a matter clearly not controversial
- allowing a speaker a few more minutes than the prescribed time
- allowing a guest speaker to speak in an order contrary to the approved agenda
- dividing a complex motion into logical parts for discussion, amendments, and voting purposes
- to close polls after asking if there are any more votes
- to elect a lone nominee by acclamation

Six Steps to Every Motion

1. Member stands, is recognized by chairperson, and makes a motion. (*Don't start discussing it yet.*)
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. Without rewording, the chairperson restates the motion to the group.
4. The members debate the motion. (*Keep it relevant, brief, and in control emotionally.*)
5. Chairperson calls for votes in favor, then for votes against the motion. (*Call for an action to indicate their vote, such as: All in favor say "aye," or "raise your hand."*)
6. Chairperson announces the result of the voting. (*Say, "The motion is adopted or the motion failed."*)

There are exceptions to the six step process: *They do not need a second and do not need to be recognized. No one can amend or debate your motion.*

Privileged motions, which do not relate to a pending motion but take precedence due to immediate importance, including:

- Question of privilege – when a member of the audience cannot hear or see the proceedings, but has a feasible solution, he can interrupt the meeting and have the problem corrected. (*No second is needed.*)
- Call for orders of the day – when an item is scheduled but the agenda is proceeding slowly, you can “call for the orders of the day” and deal with the item at its scheduled time.

Incidental motions, which do not relate directly to the substance of the pending motion, but relate to the method of transacting the business of the motion. These must be dealt with immediately.

- Point of Order – if you notice someone disobeying Robert's Rules, you state “Point of order” and explain your point. The chairperson rules on your point and you keep everyone in line.
- Point of Information – you have the right at any time to stop business and have someone explain the process and consequences of the debate or voting under consideration.
- Division of Assembly – if you doubt whether the chairperson can determine the result of a voice vote, you can have the vote taken by having voters stand and be recounted.
- Object to Consideration – you may kill a motion that is sensitive or embarrassing before it is discussed by getting two-thirds of the assembly to agree with you to kill the motion *before it is discussed*. (*This motion requires two-thirds vote but cannot be debated or amended.*)