
Effective Meeting Management

The Brown Act and Robert's Rules of Order

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Student Senate for
California Community Colleges
General Assembly

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Brown Act 1953

Meeting:

A **meeting** is any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and place to hear, discuss, deliberate or take action on any matter within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.

- Any **discussion of business** outside a public meeting by a majority of the legislative body, is prohibited under the Brown Act
- A majority of the members are prohibited from using a **series of communications** of any kind.
- Must be **open and public**.
- Must allow **audio and video tape recordings** of meetings by the public and by the media, unless recording cannot be done without disruption of the meeting.
- **No secret ballots.**
- **May use teleconferencing** for receipt of public comment or testimony.
- **Closed Sessions** permitted under certain conditions.
- A legislative body can be the council or one of its **standing committees**.
- It is not the **Form**. It is the **Function**.

Agenda:

Meeting agendas must sufficiently describe the business to be conducted at the meeting.

- Any item of business may be discussed at a regular meeting so long as the item is on the **agenda**.
- Agenda must be posted **72 hours in advance**.
- Agendas must specify the **time and place** of the meeting.
- Agendas must be **posted** in a location that is freely accessible to the public and at any teleconference site.
- Must include a **brief description** of every item to be discussed, which generally need not exceed 20 words.
- **Closed Sessions** must be listed on the agenda. At the same meeting, the agency must report out the voting results after the closed session.
- Agenda must include a **time for public comment**, structured so that public comment is permitted before or during the body's consideration of a matter on the agenda.



Six Steps to Handling a Motion

A motion is a formal proposal by a member during a meeting that the assembly take certain action. The basic form of the motion is the Main Motion.

A Main Motion is brought before an assembly:

1. **Motion is moved:** While no motion is pending, a member rises and seeks recognition. Once she is recognized she has the exclusive right to be heard at that time. Member makes the motion, "I move that we allocate \$300 to repair the computers."
2. **Motion is seconded:** Someone seconds the motion without rising or needing to be recognized. The seconder is not claiming to agree with motion. The seconder is stating that the motion should be discussed and voted by the organization.
3. **Motion is stated:** The chair states the question, "It is moved and seconded to allocate \$300 to repair the computers."
As the chair turns to the maker of the motion, she states, "Are you ready for the question?"
The motion no longer belongs to the mover; it belongs to the assembly.

A Main Motion is considered by the assembly:

4. **Motion is debated:** All remarks by the members are directed to the chair, never to or about another member. Debate can be closed only by a 2/3 vote by the assembly.
5. **Motion is put:** The chair says,
"The motion is to allocate \$300 to repair the computers."
"All in favor of the motion indicate by saying, 'Aye'."
"All opposed to the motion indicate by saying, 'No'."
The wording of the motion when the question is put is the way it goes into effect.
A voice vote is the regular method when a majority vote is required for adoption.
A rising vote is the normal method when a 2/3 vote is required for adoption.
A 'show of hands' is intended for small assemblies or after an inconclusive voice vote.
6. **Vote is announced:** The chair makes the following 4 statements.
 - "The 'ayes' have it. Or, the 'Noes' have it."
 - "The motion is adopted. Or, the motion is lost."
 - The chair states the effect of the vote or orders its execution.
 - "The next item of business is ..."

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Purpose and Form for Each Motion

Purpose	The Motion and its Form
Proposal some action	Main Motion I move that we donate \$50 to preserve the habitat of the Clay Pigeon.
Improve a proposal	Amend I move to amend the motion by striking \$50 and inserting \$75.
Change the amount of time for discussion	Limit or Extend Debate I move to limit debate to 1 minute per speaker.
Stop discussion and vote now	Close Debate I call the previous question.
Delay a decision	Refer I move to refer the motion to the bylaws committee Postpone to a Certain Time I move to postpone the motion until after the break. Recess I move to recess for 5 minutes.
Kill a motion	Postpone Indefinitely I move to postpone the motion indefinitely.
Deal with an emergency	Lay on the Table I move to lay the motion on the table. Suspend the Rules I move to suspend the rules that prohibit us from taking up the new business now.
Obtain information	Parliamentary Inquiry Mr. Chair, if we adopt this motion can we rescind it tomorrow? Request Information Mr. Chair, can the treasurer tell us if we have enough money for this motion?
Challenge the ruling of the chair	Point of Order Point of Order. We cannot vote on this motion. There is already another motion on the floor. Appeal I appeal from the decision of the chair.
Assure the accuracy of the voice vote	Division Division. Division.
Close the meeting	Adjourn I move to adjourn.



Script for Handling a Motion

We join the regular monthly meeting during the 'New Business' part of the agenda.

[Seven speaking roles – CH, A, Z, B, C, D, E]

CH: Our first New Business is the procurement of computer equipment.

A: Madam Chair *[Rises and is recognized]*

I move “that the society shall purchase 5 laptops.”

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded “that the society shall purchase 5 laptops.”

Are you ready for the question?

A: and B: *[Simultaneously]* Madam Chair. *[(Both rise seeking recognition)]*

A: *[Is recognized and gives 2 sentences in support of her motion and then sits down.]*

B: Madam Chair *[Rises and is recognized]*

I move to amend the main motion by striking “5” and inserting “7”.

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded to amend the motion by striking “5” and inserting “7”.

If amended the motion would read, “that the society shall purchase 7 laptops.”

Are you ready for the question?

B: and C: *[Simultaneously]* Madam Chair. *[Both rise seeking recognition]*

B: *[Is recognized and gives 2 sentences in support of her amendment and then sits down.]*

C: Madam Chair *[Rises and is recognized]*

I move to postpone the motion indefinitely.

CH: The motion is not in order at this time. Is there any further discussion?

C: OK, then, I move to postpone the motion because we need more information, and I am tired of always having to carry my heavy laptop to every meeting



CH: (*Interrupting Ms. C*) You are discussing your motion before it is on the floor. We do not even have a second, yet.

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded that the motion be postponed until the next meeting.

Are you ready for the question? [*Silence*]

CH: The question before you is to postpone the motion until the next meeting.

All in favor of the motion indicate by saying, 'Aye'. [*Silence*]

All opposed to the motion indicate by saying, 'No'. [*All say, 'No'.*]

The 'Noes' have it. The motion is lost.

The motion will not be postponed.

The question before you is the amendment to strike "5" and insert "7".

Are you ready for the question?

D: Madam Chair [*Rises and is recognized*]

I move that we refer the motion to the Aquisitions Review Committee with instructions to report next month.

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded that the motion be referred to the Aquisitions Review Committee with instructions to report next month.

Are you ready for the question? [*Silence*]

CH: All in favor of the motion to refer indicate by saying, 'Aye'.

[*Entire right side of the room says, 'Aye'.*]

All opposed to the motion to refer indicate by saying, 'No'.

[*Entire left side of the room says, 'No'.*]

The 'Ayes' have it. The motion is adopted.

Z: Division. Division.

CH: Division of the assembly has been called.

All in favor of the motion please rise. [*Entire right side of the room rises. No count is taken.*]

Thank you. Please be seated.



All opposed to the motion please rise. *[Entire left side of the room rises. No count is taken.]*
Thank you. Please be seated.
The 'Noes' have it. The motion is lost.
The motion will not be referred.

CH: The motion before you is the amendment to strike "5" and insert "7".
Are you ready for the question? *[Silence]*
All in favor of the motion indicate by saying, 'Aye'. *[Everyone says, 'Aye'.]*
All opposed to the motion indicate by saying, 'No'. *[Silence]*
The 'Ayes' have it. The amendment is adopted.
The motion now reads, "that the society purchase 7 laptops."

Are you ready for the question?
E: Madam Chair *[Rises and is recognized]*
I move the previous question.
Z: Second

CH: The previous question has been demanded.
As many as are in favor of closing debate and ordering the previous question, please rise.
[All rise] Thank you. Please be seated. *[No count is taken.]*
As many as are opposed to closing debate and ordering the previous question, please rise.
[No one rises] Thank you. *[No count is taken.]*
There are 2/3s in the affirmative. The motion is adopted.
The previous question is ordered.

CH: The motion before you is "that the society shall purchase 7 laptops."
All in favor of the motion indicate by saying, 'Aye'. *[Everyone says, 'Aye'.]*
All opposed to the motion indicate by saying, 'No'. *[Silence]*
The 'Ayes' have it. The motion is adopted.
The Procurement Committee is instructed to purchase 7 laptops.
The next item on the agenda is ...



Handle a Motion (A script created by students entirely.)

Eight students will handle a motion. One will create and move the Main Motion. Each of the other 7 students will be assigned to create and then move a specific Subsidiary or Incidental Motion. Students are advised to use the wording of the motions as specified on page 2, and to beware of the hierarchy of motions on page 7 of this handout.

1. Move the Main Motion:

Introduce a motion affecting the number of parking spaces currently being planned by the school.

2. Amend the Main Motion:

- a. Add content at the end or Insert content somewhere in the Main Motion.
- b. Strike content from the Main Motion.
- c. Strike content and Inset content in its place in the Main Motion.

3. Amend the Amendment to the Main Motion:

Same as above but limit yourself to what was originally amended.

4. Raise a Point of Order (Appeal?):

Specify something from the bylaws that prohibits a specified part of the action that the motion is intending to do.

5. Make a Parliamentary Inquiry:

Ask what motion would be in order to set this motion aside until the next meeting.

6. Move the motion to Postpone Indefinitely:

Try to kill this motion completely and without the assembly voting on the motion itself.

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Ranking of Selected Motions

	Interrupt	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote
PRIVILEGED MOTIONS					
13. Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn		S		A	M
12. Adjourn		S			M
11. Take a Recess		S		A	M
10. Raise a Question of Privilege	I				C
9. Call for the Orders of the Day	I				C**
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS					
8. Lay on the Table		S			M
7. Previous Question		S			2/3
6. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate		S		A	2/3
5. Postpone to a Certain Time		S	D	A	M**
4. Commit (Refer)		S	D	A	M
3. Amend		S	D**	A	M
2. Postpone Indefinitely		S	D		M
1. MAIN MOTION		S	D	A	M
INCIDENTAL MOTIONS (No Ranking)					
Appeal	I	S	D		M
Division of Assembly	I				**
Point of Order	I				C**
Point of Information					C
Suspend the Orders of the Day		S			2/3
BRING AGAIN BEFORE ASSEMBLY					
Rescind/Amend Something Prev Adopted		S	D	A	**
Reconsider		S	D**		M
Discharge a Committee		S	D**	A	**
Take from the Table		S			M

** See RONR
C Chair Decides
I Can Interrupt

S Requires a Second
A May be Amended
M or 2/3 Vote Required to Adopt