
Effective Meeting Management

Robert's Rules of Order

Lorenzo R. Cuesta

Professional Registered Parliamentarian



Mt. Shasta Area Council Conference

May 20, 2011
Corning, CA



Rules of Debate

1. A deliberative association discusses the merits of a pending question.
2. Every member has the right to speak on a motion for 10 minutes (twice).
3. Nothing can be debated until it has been formally moved.
4. Only members who are recognized by the chair may move a motion.
5. The main motion must be seconded and then stated by the chair.
6. Debate begins when the chair says, "Are you ready for the question?"
7. The mover of the motion has first priority to speak.
8. Right to debate is not transferable to other members.
9. Debate is on the motion, and not on the character of other members.
10. All remarks must be directed to the chair.
11. A member may not speak adversely about motions previously adopted.
12. A mover may not speak against his own motion, but may vote against it.
13. Cross conversations by members when another member is speaking are prohibited.
14. A member must obtain permission from the members before reading anything other than short phrases.
15. Chair must relinquish his handling of a motion before to participating in the debate. He may not return until the issue is no longer under debate.
16. Debate will be alternated between those in favor and those opposed.
17. If debate is prolonged, the chair should ask the next speaker if he has something different to add. If he has not, go to the next speaker and ask him the same question.

Improper Motions

1. Motions that conflict with corporate charter, constitution, bylaws, statutes.
2. Motions that present the same question previously decided at the same session.
3. Motions that present a question that is currently within the control of the association (referred, tabled, postponed)
4. Motions that are outside the object of the association bylaws.
5. Motions that use language that reflects upon the character of another member.



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 ..."

Lorenzo R. Cuesta
Professional Registered Parliamentarian



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 ...

Lorenzo R. Cuesta
Professional Registered Parliamentarian



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