

Making Motions Work for You

The Majority Rules, But Why Let Them?



Lorenzo R Cuesta
Professional Registered Parliamentarian
<http://www.roberts-rules.com>
parliam@roberts-rules.com



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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** we allocate \$300 to repair the computers.*”
2. **Motion is seconded:** Someone without needing to be recognized, seconds the motion. 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 made 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 ...*”

**Beware the Brown Act requirements*



Script A: Handling a Motion

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

[Nine speaking roles – CH, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, Z]

CH: The first item under New Business is the purchase of the council's printer system.

[Step 1]

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

I move that the council purchases a printer system at a cost not to exceed \$1,500.

[Step 2]

Z: Second

[Step 3]

CH: It is moved and seconded that the council purchase a printer system at a cost not to exceed \$1,500.

[Step 4]

Are you ready for the question? *[Or, - Is there any debate? Are you ready to vote?]*

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

A: I have distributed several documents illustrating the specifications and benefits of the best printer model under \$1,500. That is the one I suggest we purchase.

B: Madam Chair. Shouldn't we buy a new screen instead? Why can't we replace the microphone system instead? I know, let's buy an iPad for each officer, instead.

CH: Thank you for your comments. Are you ready for the question?

A: *[Is recognized and begins to speak for the second time.]*

C: Madam Chair, Point of Order.

CH: What is your Point of Order?

C: Member A has already spoken once and there are others seeking to speak. Member A should not be recognized again yet.

CH: Your point is well taken. Member A will please sit down.

Script A Page 1



[Illustration of Ranking of Motions]

E: Madam Chair, [recognized] I move to amend by striking "\$1,500" and inserting "\$2,000".

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded to amend by striking "\$1,500" and inserting "\$2,000". Is there any discussion?

F: Madam Chair, [recognized] I move to refer the motion to the Finance Committee.

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded to refer the motion to the Finance Committee. Is there any discussion?

G: Madam Chair, [recognized] I move to postpone the motion until after lunch.

Z: Second

CH: It is moved and seconded to postpone the motion until after lunch. Is there any discussion.

CH: All in favor of postponing the motion until after lunch indicate by saying, 'Aye'. [Few]

Those opposed say, 'No' . [Everyone]

CH: Motion fails.

CH: The question before you now is the motion to refer the main motion to the Finance Committee. Is there any discussion?

CH: All in favor of referring the motion to the Finance Committee, say 'Aye'. [Few]

Those opposed say, 'No' . [Everyone]

CH: Motion fails.

CH: The question before you now is the motion to amend by striking '\$1,500' and inserting '\$2,000'. Is there any discussion?

CH: All in favor of amending the motion indicate by saying, 'Aye'. [Few]

Those opposed say, 'No' . [Everyone]

CH: Motion fails.

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CH: The question before you now is the main motion. Is there any discussion?

D: Madam Chair, Request for Information.

CH: What is your question Member D?

D: Do we have the right to spend up to \$1,500 on a printer system?

CH: The council has already been authorized to spend a certain amount of money on business equipment as long as it is for the benefit of the student body.

Are you ready for the question?

[Step 5]

CH: The question before you is, shall the council purchase a printer system at a cost not to exceed \$1,500?

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

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

[Step 6]

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

Z: Division. Division.

Ch: Division has been call for.

We need to retake the vote, but by rising.

All in favor of the motion indicate by rising. [*Most do so.*]

All opposed to the motion indicate by rising. [*Few do so.*]

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

The council will purchase a printer system at a cost not to exceed \$1,500.

The next item under New Business is ...



Origins of a Main Motion

I MOVE (This is the only correct wording for proposing a motion)

I MOTION (This wording is never acceptable)

Examples of when a Main Motion is in order if the topic has been properly posted in accordance with the Brown Act.

1. **Business item on the agenda:**

Under New Business:

The board will discuss, and potentially vote, on a request for \$200 from the Outdoors Club.

Proper wording of the resulting motion:

I move that the Outdoors Club's request for \$200 be approved.

I move that the board award \$200 to the Outdoors Club as requested.

2. **Business item on the agenda:**

Standing Committee Report:

The Senate will discuss, and potentially vote, on the Technology and Operations Department's proposal to survey students on their website preferences.

Proper wording of the resulting motion:

I move that the Senate approve the Technology and Operations Department's proposed survey to determine students' website preferences.

3. **Business item on the agenda:**

Special Committee Report:

The Senate will discuss, and potentially vote, on the Homecoming Special Committee's dance recommendations.

Proper wording of the resulting motion:

I move that CAEB adopt the Homecoming Special Committee's dance recommendations as detailed on the attached report.

DRILL:

Propose a Main Motion based on the

1. Agenda
2. Report from a Standing Committee
3. Report from a Special Committee



Amendments

1° Amendment (Form 1) – Insert or Add

1. Original Main Motion

I move that membership not be restricted on the basis of race, religion, etc.

2. What you really wanted was ...

I want to include 'age.'

3. You need to move to amend

I move to amend by inserting "age" after the word "religion."

4. If the amendment is adopted the main motion will read

I move that membership not be restricted on the basis of race, religion, **age**, etc.

DRILL: Primary Amendment (Form 1)

A: (After being recognized by the chair) **I move that ...**

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and ..

Are you ready for the question?

B: Madam Chair, I move **to amend** the motion by inserting ...

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and seconded to amend by inserting ...

Are you ready for the question?

[Assume some debate]

CH: The motion before you is to amend by inserting ...

All in favor ...

All opposed ...

The have it.

The motion to amend by inserting ... is ...

We are back to the main motion (as amended).

Are you ready for the question?



Amendments

1° Amendment (Form 2) – Strike

1. Original Main Motion

I move that membership not be restricted on the basis of race, age, genetic information, etc.

2. What you really wanted was ...

I don't want 'genetic information' included.

3. You need to move to amend

I move to amend by striking "genetic information" after the word "age."

4. If the amendment is adopted the main motion will read

I move that membership not be restricted on the basis of race, age, etc..

DRILL: Primary Amendment (Form 2)

A: (After being recognized by the chair) **I move that ...**

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and ..

Are you ready for the question?

B: Madam Chair, I move **to amend** the motion by striking ...

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and seconded to amend by striking ...

Are you ready for the question?

[Assume some debate]

CH: The motion before you is to amend by striking ...

All in favor ...

All opposed ...

The have it.

The motion to amend by striking ... is ...

We are back to the main motion (as amended).

Are you ready for the question?



Amendments

1° Amendment (Form 3) – Strike and Insert

1. Original Main Motion

I move that a majority be defined as **50% plus 1**.

2. What you really wanted was ...

I do not want the Hollywood version. I want the Mathematical version.

3. You need to move to amend

I move to amend by striking “**50% plus 1**” and inserting “**greater than half.**”

4. If the amendment is adopted the main motion will read

I move that a majority be defined as **greater than half**.

DRILL: Primary Amendment (Form 3)

A: (After being recognized by the chair) **I move that ...**

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and ..

Are you ready for the question?

B: Madam Chair, I move **to amend** the motion by striking ... and inserting ...

Z: ...

CH: It is moved and seconded to amend by striking ... and inserting

Are you ready for the question?

[Assume some debate]

CH: The motion before you is to amend by striking ... and inserting ...

All in favor ...

All opposed ...

The have it.

The motion to amend by striking ... and inserting ... is ...

We are back to the main motion (as amended).

Are you ready for the question?



Postpone a Main Motion vs. the Lay it on the Table

Reason to Postpone a Main Motion:

1. Sometimes a Main Motion can best be considered at a later and more convenient time,
2. Or, debate has proven that there is good reason to delay a decision on the Main Motion.

But 'Postpone' to WHEN?

1. Until the next meeting;

Correct wording: *I move to postpone the pending motion.*

2. Until a specific hour during the current meeting;

Current wording: *I move to postpone the pending motion until 2:00 pm.*

3. Until after a specific portion of the current agenda.

Correct wording: *I move to postpone the pending motion until after we hear the Treasurer's Report (or until after lunch; or until after the recess.)*

DRILL:

1. Member A will make a Main Motion.
2. Member B will move to Postpone this motion to one of the 3 time options listed above.

Reasons to Lay a Motion on the Table:

Sometimes during the handling of a Main Motion, there is an unexpected need to **temporarily interrupt business** so as to handle some other business immediately.

Correct wording: *I move that the current motion be Laid on the Table.*

Never worded as follows: *I move to table.* (LAY is a verb. TABLE is not a verb).

But 'Lay on the Table' until WHEN?

Since this interruption is urgent and unplanned, the interruption will last only as long as it takes to handle the interrupting business. Never is a specific time or duration included in the motion to Lay on the Table. *"Table for 10 minutes"* is wrong in so many, many ways.

DRILL: (during the handling of a properly posted business item)

1. A policeman enters the room and stares at the presiding officer.
2. A guest speaker has been waiting to address the board and must return to his office.
3. A board member needs to leave the meeting, but has an important announcement to make to the board before he/she leaves.



Refer a Main Motion to a Committee

Any Main Motion can be handled directly by the board, unless the bylaws require that a specific committee must first review the motion and offer a recommendation.

Or, after some deliberation, the board could send the pending question to a committee with specific instructions.

A Standing Committee

1. Lasts for the entire duration of the term of the board president.
2. Is populated at the start of the president's term with a specific number of members, specific individuals, and a specific chair.
3. Is described in the bylaws with responsibility for specific year round tasks.
4. Senate: Legislative Affairs Dept., Public Relations Dept., Technology and Operations Dept., and Finance Dept.
5. CAEB: Equity and Diversity Dept., Public Relations Dept., Technology and Operations Dept., and Finance Dept.

A Special (Ad Hoc) Committee

1. Is not described in the bylaws.
2. Is created as it is needed and disbands once it performs its assigned task.
3. Must have its size, number of members, and chair established when the motion is adopted.

Required elements of the Motion to Refer:

The subsidiary motion to Commit or to Refer requires several elements at the time that the motion is moved and adopted.:

Refer to a Standing Committee	Refer to a Special (Ad Hoc) Committee
1. Instructions on the task 2. Date of when to report back 3. Which existing Standing Committee	1. Instructions on the task 2. Date of when to report back 3. Number of Committee members 4. Names of Committee members 5. Name of Committee Chair

DRILL:

1. Member A will make a Main Motion.
2. Member B will move to Refer it as described below.

Refer the Main Motion to a

1. Standing Committee
2. Special Committee
3. Ad Hoc Committee



Suspend the Rules (not 'Suspend the Orders of the Day')

When an assembly wishes to do something it cannot do without violating its regular rules, it can adopt to '**Suspend the Rules**' that interfere with the proposed action. This motion cannot be debated or amended, however it does have other restrictions.

- I. A Standing Rule may be suspended with a majority vote.
- II. Rules of Order (Robert's) may be suspended with a 2/3 vote (except FPPL).
- III. The following may not be suspended even with unanimous consent.
 - A. Bylaws or Constitution unless they provide for their own suspension.
 - B. Federal, State, or local laws
 - C. Fundamental Principles of Parliamentary Law (FPPL):
 1. Rule that allows only one question at a time
 2. Rule that allows only members to vote
 3. Rule that prohibits absentee or cumulative voting
 4. Rule that protects absentees or basic rights of individuals
 - a. Rule requiring presence of a quorum
 - b. Rule requiring a notice
 - c. Rule protecting the right to attend meeting, make motion, speak in debate, and vote

DRILL:

"I move to suspend the rules that interfere with listening to the committee's report."

For each of the following,

1. Move a motion to **suspend the rules that prohibit** the action;
2. State if the rule can be suspended; and
3. State what the necessary vote for adoption would be.

You want to **suspend the rules that prohibit** the following actions. Make the motion:

- a. To allow delegates to sit wherever they wish
- b. To allow a speaker to debate an additional 2 minutes
- c. To allow smoking in the assembly room
- d. To allow voting by mail
- e. To allow election of officers by a show of hands
- f. To take up 2 motions at one time
- g. To allow the voting in the absence of a quorum
- h. To allow members at the convention without their required name tags
- i. To dispense with the listening to the Treasurer's Report
- j. To not require a resolution in writing at the convention

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Purpose and Form for Each Motion (Beware of Order of Precedence)	
Purpose	The Motion and its Form
Propose some action	Main Motion I move to 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 (Not Suspend the Orders of the Day) 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 for 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.

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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**
Request for Information	I				C
Suspend the Rules (that prohibit)		S			2/3
BRING AGAIN BEFORE ASSEMBLY					
Rescind/Amend Something Prev Adopted		S	D**	A	**
Reconsider the Vote		S	D		M
Discharge a Committee		S	D**	A	**
Take from the Table		S			M

** See Robert's Rules
C Chair Decides
I Can Interrupt

S
A, D
M or 2/3

Requires a Second
May be Amended, Debated
Vote Required to Adopt