



A Quick Tour of Robert's Rules of Order by Dr. Majura Selekwa, NDSU FS Parliamentarian

Robert's Rules of Order provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - **the right of the deliberate majority to decide**. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. *Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.*

1. A member can only speak after obtaining the floor, i.e., right to speak, from the Presiding Officer
2. Other members should respect the person who has the floor by never interrupting, which may be construed as "limiting the speaking members' right to full participation."

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies *require all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action!* **Silence means consent!**

ORDER OF THE MEETING

Although the meeting agenda may already be set in advance, items on the agenda won't be discussed unless moved by a voting member. The presiding officer will introduce the agenda item to the floor and request members of the voting body to consider it for discussion. If members see it fit, then the following cycle of events will follow:

1. One member introduces a motion to address the presented agenda item
2. One or two members second the motion
3. The whole body discusses the motion
4. The whole body votes on the motion

OBTAINING THE FLOOR TO INTRODUCE A MOTION

If a member wants to make a motion, the following procedure must always be followed:

1. The member raises hand when no one else has the floor (this adds more order to the meeting)
2. The presiding officer recognizes the member by name
3. Member makes a motion known as a **Main Motion**. This motion
 - a. Introduces items to the membership for their consideration.
 - b. Cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor.
4. The motion must be seconded by another member before it can be considered.

Standing while another member has the floor is out of order! You must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!

After the Main Motion has been seconded, members can modify (amend) it. The mover also can modify it as he/she pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if the mover modifies his/her motion, the seconder can withdraw the second.

DEBATE ORDER

After the motion has been accepted for discussion, the presiding officer restates the motion and stresses that: *"It is moved and seconded that ... (restates the motion) Are there any questions ? "* At that time all members have the right to discuss the motion. The discussion includes support for the motion, amend it, oppose the motion or just kill the motion altogether. To have an orderly discussion, the following cycle of events must be followed:

1. The member raises hand when no one else has the floor (this adds more order to the meeting)
2. The presiding officer recognizes the member by name
3. The member rises to take the floor, and presents his/her opinion by addressing the presiding officer. *The debate must be confined to the merits of the motion by using courteous language and in good demeanor. Members should avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!* The members views can be expressed in form of:
 - a. Simple opinion where the member makes effort to add more facts to the prevailing Main Motion
 - b. Question where the member asks questions to get more facts about the prevailing Main Motion
 - c. Another motion where the member wants to affect the prevailing **Main Motion**. Four types of motions can be raised by members during the discussion as follows:
 - **Subsidiary Motions:** Assist the meeting in treating or disposing of the main motion. These include Amend, Postpone Indefinitely , Postpone, Table,
 - **Privileged Motions:** Bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business. These take precedence on all matters except the *Immediately Pending Question*, such as Amend, etc.
 - **Incidental Motions:** Provide a means of questioning procedure concerning the existing motions and must be considered before the motion.
 - **Motion to bring the matter Back:** Used in the attempt to "kill" a motion

During the debate:

1. Motions raised during the debate of the Main Motion have different levels of privileges and priorities as listed in the tables at the end of this document. Some have to be seconded while others do not need a second, and some require a vote and others don't.
2. The debate will always center on the "*immediately pending question*," i.e., the last question stated by the presiding officer! For instance **Main Motion, Resolution, Amendment, or Motion to Postpone**. The member moving the "*immediately pending question*" is entitled to preference to the floor!
3. No ***member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken*** to it once! The maker of the motion is exempt.
4. The ***maker of the motion has first right*** to the floor if he claims it properly.
5. Debate can be closed for voting only by **order of the assembly (*Motion to Move the Previous Question: requires 2/3 vote*)** or by the chair if **no one seeks the floor for further debate**.

VOTING PROCEDURE

When the debate is closed, the presiding officer will formally close the debate and declare that it is time to take a vote on the motion. The chair says: *The motion is ... (repeat the motion). Those are in favor, say 'Aye'*. (Pause for response.) *Those opposed, say 'Nay'*. (Pause for response.) *Those abstained please say 'Aye'*

Any acceptable voting procedure can be used: raising hands, secret ballot or verbally. At the end of the vote, **presiding officer must clearly announce the result of the vote** for example by saying “*The ayes have it, and the motion carries*” or “*The nays have it and the motion fails.*”

Voting rules:

1. All motions that seek to stop discussion of the main motion require 2/3 vote to pass
2. All motions that have to do with suspending an officer or a member of the assembly require a 2/3 vote to pass
3. All other motions require a simple majority vote, i.e., just more than half of the votes cast.
4. A tie vote is a lost vote, since it is not a majority

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES DURING DEBATE

Members can always express their opinion on the *immediately pending question* on the floor. To debate a motion (express opinion or raise a question) members will do this

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the President by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title/term you use)
3. Wait until the President recognizes you.
4. Take the floor and present your opinion on the motion. Debate must still be confined to the merits of the motion.

Again, all remarks must be directed to the presiding officer in a courteous in language and demeanor. During debate, members can make motions to affect the main motion as listed at the end of this document. Although any motion listed at the end of this document can be made by members, the most recurring motions are:

1. Temporarily suspend considering the *immediately pending question*,
2. Postpone discussion on the *immediately pending question* for a period of certain time,
3. Postpone discussion on the *immediately pending question* indefinitely,
4. Amend the *immediately pending question*,
5. Request additional information on the *immediately pending question*,
6. Give a closer study of the *immediately pending question*,
7. Avoid considering an improper *matter*,
8. End debate and amendments on the *immediately pending question*.

Suspending and Postponing Discussion

Although the motion to *temporarily suspend* considering an ongoing matter and motion to *postpone* discussion of an on-going matter sound to be similar, they have different objectives. Since these motions tend to be mixed up by many senators, it is hoped that the following clarification will help.

The motion to *temporarily suspend* does not alter the immediately pending question, instead to create room for something important to be handled before the immediately pending question can proceed. This happens for example, when the meeting expects to have a guest speaker to make announcements beneficial to the assembly, but he/she arrives after the meeting has started and is discussing some motion. At that time, the motion to temporarily suspend that on-going can be called to give room to that guest speaker. The suspension time must fall within the duration of the ongoing meeting, *it can't be suspended for the whole meeting to another meeting.*

On the other hand, the motion to *postpone* discussing the on-going motion stops the discussion until another meeting is called. This happens due either the current meeting not having sufficient information to proceed

with the motion or when the members still want to discuss the matter but the meeting time is running out. *Postponement stops the matter from discussion in the current meeting.* It should be noted that there two types of postponements: *postpone until* and *postpone indefinitely*

To temporarily suspend a motion:

When a member wishes to temporarily allow another important matter to be handled before the *immediately pending question* closes, he/she moves to lay the ongoing motion on table by following these steps:

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
3. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
4. Make your motion using **"I move to lay the motion to table..."**
5. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion requires a second, is **not debatable** and requires majority vote to pass.

To postpone a motion until another time:

When a member finds that there is no sufficient information to proceed debate on the motion, or the remaining meeting time is not sufficient to complete debate on that motion, he/she moves to lay the ongoing motion on table by following these steps:

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
3. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
4. Make your motion using **"I move to postpone discussion until ..."**
5. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion requires a second, is **debatable** and requires majority vote to pass

To kill a motion:

When a member finds that the motion is uncomfortable, he/she may take steps to "kill" it by calling for indefinite postponement. That means that the mover asks the assembly to stop discussing the motion and no vote on the motion should be called. However, the postponed motion can still be brought up again in another meeting in the same form or in a modified form. To kill the motion, the member moves to postpone the motion indefinitely by following these steps:

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
3. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
4. Make your motion using **"I move to postpone discussion indefinitely"**
5. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion requires a second, is **debatable** and requires majority vote to pass

To amend a motion:

When a member wishes to make changes to the immediately pending question, he/she moves to amend that question by following these steps:

6. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
7. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
8. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.

9. Make your motion using **“I move to amend the motion ...”**
10. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion requires a second, is debatable and requires majority vote to pass

Amendments can be called anytime during the debate. **Amendments must be debated, be amended again and again if necessary, and finally voted for to be accepted. If the amendment motion passes, it overrides the main motion, and if it fails, then the main motion continues.**

To request additional information on the matter:

When a member thinks the immediately pending question lacks details to warrant immediate discussion, he/she moves to request additional information from relevant parties by following these steps:

1. Raise/stand up your hand and say **“Point of Information”**.
2. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
3. Go ahead and ask your question

This motion does not need a second, is not debatable and requires no vote to pass

To send matter to a committee:

When a member thinks the immediately pending questions needs more time and resources to address, he/she moves to send matter to a committee by following these steps:

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
3. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
4. Make your motion using **“I move to move to refer a matter to committee ...”**
5. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion needs a second is debatable and requires majority vote to pass

To avoid considering an improper matter:

When a member thinks the immediately pending matter is not proper for the meeting, he/she moves to stop the discussion by following these steps:

1. Raise/stand up your hand and say **“I object to consideration of this matter”**.
2. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
3. Go ahead and raise your concerns your question

This motion does not need a second and is undebatable but it requires 2/3 vote to pass

To end debate and amendments to start voting:

When a member thinks the debate has taken too long and no new ideas are coming out of the discussion, he/she may move to end the debate on the matter and start voting by following these steps:

1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
2. Rise and address the presiding officer by saying, "Mr. (or Ms.) President" (or whatever title used)
3. Wait until the presiding officer recognizes you.
4. Make your motion using **“I move to previous question”**
5. Wait for someone to second your motion. Another member can second your motion or the presiding officer will call for a second. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

This motion requires a second, must be debated and requires 2/3 vote to pass

A SUMMARY OF COMMON MOTIONS

1. **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
2. **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
3. **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
4. **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
5. **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
6. **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
7. **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
8. **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble cannot be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.
9. **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
10. **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
11. **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
12. **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
13. **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
14. **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
15. **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
16. **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
17. **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table
18. **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
19. **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
20. **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "**Close Debate**" if preferred
21. **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "**Committee of the Whole**" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
22. **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
23. **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified

Parliamentary Procedure At A Glance - *your guide of what to say and when to say it...*

TO DO THIS:	YOU SAY THIS	May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is needed?	Can it be reconsidered?
Adjourn Meeting	"I move to adjourn."	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
Call an Intermission	"I move to recess for..."	NO	YES	NO	YES	Majority	NO
Complain about heat, noise, etc.	"I rise to a question of privilege."	YES	NO	NO	NO	No Vote	NO
Temporarily suspend considering an issue	"I move to lay the motion on the table."	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
End debate and amendments	"I move the previous question."	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
Postpone discussion for a certain time	"I move to postpone discussion until..."	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES
Give closer study of something	"I move to refer the matter to committee."	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES
Amend a Motion	"I move to amend the motion by..."	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES
Introduce Business	"I move that..."	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES

THE MOTIONS LISTED ABOVE ARE IN ORDER OF PRECEDANCE... BELOW, THERE IS NO ORDER...

Protest breach of conduct or rules	"I rise to a point of order."	YES	NO	NO	NO	No Vote	NO
Vote on a ruling of the chair	"I appeal from the chair's decision."	YES	YES	YES	NO	Majority	YES
Suspend rules temporarily	"I move to suspend the rules so that..."	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
Avoid considering an improper matter	"I object to consideration of this motion."	YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3	YES 2
Verify a voice vote by having members stand	"I call for a division," or "Division!"	YES	NO	NO	NO	No Vote	NO
Request Information	"Point of information..."	YES	NO	NO	NO	No Vote	NO
Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move to take from the table..."	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
Reconsider a hasty action	"I move to reconsider vote on..."	YES	YES	YES	NO	Majority	NO