



Parliamentary Procedure Made Easy for Student Leaders

Dave Kelly | *America's Student Leadership Trainersm*

I. History and Purpose

- A. Parliamentary procedure is the body of _____, _____, and _____ governing meetings and other operations of clubs, organizations, legislative bodies, and other deliberative assemblies.
- B. It allows everyone to be heard and to make _____ without confusion!
- C. At its heart is the rule of the _____ with respect for the _____. Organizations follow parliamentary procedure to _____ and reach group decisions—usually by _____—with the least possible friction.

II. How to apply Parliamentary Procedure

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed agenda.

Here's a typical example:

- A. _____
The chair says, *"This meeting will please come to order."*
- B. _____
The chair notes if a quorum is present. (A quorum is the number of members that must be present for business to be conducted officially.) If a quorum is not present, the meeting must be immediately adjourned. Topics may be discussed, but votes cannot be taken. It is typically a majority of the membership.
- C. _____
The secretary reads (or passes out) a record of the last meeting. Some organizations ask that the minutes be approved (using parliamentary procedure!). *See pages 10-11 for "Template for Meeting Minutes"*

- D. _____ Reports
Officers report on their responsibilities and activities, including budget updates and account balances.
- E. _____ Reports
First come reports from standing (permanent) committees, then from special (temporary) committees.
- F. _____ Orders (Think “Electives”)
Can includes traditional and customary items, important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting, or items such as public forums. Could be related to a special purpose for this meeting or for typical on-going business such as approval and/or induction of members.
- G. _____ Business
Business left over from previous meetings.
- H. _____ Business
Introduction of new topics.
- I. _____ Informing the assembly of other subjects and events.
- J. _____ The meeting ends by motion with an affirmative vote, by general consent, or by chair’s decision if time of adjournment was pre-arranged by vote or agenda.

III. How do members get their say?

A. They make motions!

A motion is a proposal that the _____ take a stand or take action on some issue. Members can:

1. Present motions (make a proposal): *“I move”*
2. Second motions (express support for discussion of another member’s motion): *“Second”*
3. Debate motions (give opinions on the motion): *“I think...”*
4. Vote on motions (make a decision): *“Aye/Nay/Abstain”*

B. There are four general types of motions:

1. _____ introduce subjects to the assembly for its consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions. For example, *“I move that we purchase...”*
2. _____ change or affect how the main motion is handled. (They are voted on before the main motion.) For example, *“I move to amend the motion by changing...”* This is where amendments to the motion come into play! _____ amendments are not proper motions. *Includes: motions to...postpone indefinitely; amend; postpone to a time and/or date certain; the previous question; table (See page 8 for “Addendum on Tabling”)*
3. _____ are most urgent. They concern special or important matters not related to pending business. For example, *“I move we adjourn...”* *Includes: call for the orders of the day (request to return to the published agenda); raise a question of privilege; recess; adjourn; fix a time to adjourn*
4. _____ are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. They must be considered before the other motion. For example, *“I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of...”* (Documents such as the constitution and by-laws may not be suspended) *Includes: point of order; point of information; point of parliamentary inquiry; suspension of the rules; request to withdraw or modify a motion (See page 9 for more in section entitled “What’s the Point?”)*

C. Some questions relating to motions:

1. **“Is it in order?”** Your motion must _____ to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous or against the bylaws.
2. **“Do I need a second?”** Usually, _____. A second indicates that another member would like to consider your motion. It prevents spending time on a question which interests only one person. For organizations with a committee structure, where the committees can move items for consideration, if at least _____ members of the larger body are on the committee, then a second is not necessary.
3. **“Is it debatable?” “Can we discuss it?”** Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full debate on most motions. However, some subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions are _____ debatable.
4. **“Can it be amended or changed?”** Some motions can be altered by striking out, inserting, or both at once. Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion. Once an amendment to a motion is made and seconded, all debate must relate to _____ the amendment itself. The amendment must be _____ on before returning to debate or a vote on the main motion. If approved, it becomes part of the main motion. If defeated, then you return to debate on the original motion as made, with any previous amendments included.
5. **“What vote is needed?”** Most require only a _____ vote, but motions concerning the rights of the assembly or its members need a 2/3 vote to be adopted.
6. **“Can it be reconsidered?”** Some motions can be debated again and _____ to give members a chance to change their minds. The motion to reconsider must come from the _____ side of the original vote.

D. How do I present my motion?

1. **Obtain the** _____ .
 - a) Wait until the last speaker is finished.
 - b) Be recognized by the chair.
 - c) Give your name. The chair will recognize you by repeating it.
2. **Make your motion.**
 - a) Speak clearly and concisely.
 - b) State your motion _____. Say, “*I move that we...*” instead of “*I move that we do not...*”
 - c) You may _____ or discuss the content or topic of your motion until it has been made and seconded.
 - d) Avoid personalities and stay on the merits of the subject.

Your Turn:

3. **Wait for a** _____ .
 - a) Another member will say, “*I second the motion.*”
 - b) Or the chair will call for a second. (“*Do I hear a second?*”)
 - c) If there is no second, your motion will not be considered.
4. _____ states your motion. The chair should say, “*It is moved and seconded that we...*”. After this happens, debate or voting can occur. Your motion is now “**board property**” and cannot be changed without consent of the members.
5. **Expand on your motion.**
 - a) _____ is allowed to speak first.
_____ next, then open to the body.
 - b) Direct all comments to the _____.
 - c) Keep to the time limit for speaking.

-
- d) You may speak again _____ all other speakers are finished.
 - e) You may speak a _____ time by a motion to suspend the rules with a 2/3 vote.

6. Putting the question/taking a vote. There are four common ways to take a vote:

- a) By reaching a _____ limit to end debate
- b) By _____ consent
- c) By seeing no _____ discussion, the Chair calls for a vote
- d) By ending _____:
 - i. “ _____ ” the question”: requires there to be no objection to ending debate. If there is a single objection, debate must continue
 - ii. “ _____ the question” requires a second, there is no debate on the motion, and takes a 2/3 majority for approval
- e) After the vote, the chair announces the results.

E. A few more notes about motions:

- 1. Voting on a motion** occurs by voice, by show of hands, by roll call, by secret ballot, or by general consent. In larger bodies, a standing vote may be useful in determining the consensus of the group.
- 2. Voting by the Chair:** The Chair does not typically vote on matters before the assembly, except in the case of _____ or _____ a tie. If the Chair is considered a member of the body, as in the case of most campus organizations, then they vote just as any other member does in secret ballot situations, elections, etc.

IV. More about voting...

- A. A question (motion) is _____ when it has been stated by the chair but not yet voted on. The last motion stated by the chair is the first pending. This applies whether it is an amendment or a main motion.
- B. A motion to _____ is used to lay something aside temporarily to take care of a more urgent matter. There is always the option to “take from the table” any motion for reconsideration by the assembly. [See *Addendum on Tabling on page 8*]
- C. A motion to _____ can be parliamentary strategy – it allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. It can also be used to delay a decision until more information is obtained or allow time for public comments. Or any other reason why you may not want to vote immediately. See *Addendum on Tabling on page 8*
- D. **Do abstention votes count?** The phrase “abstention votes” is an oxymoron, an abstention being a refusal to vote. To abstain means to refrain from voting, and, as a consequence, there can be no such thing as an “abstention vote.” In the usual situation, where either a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required, abstentions have absolutely no effect on the outcome of the vote since what is required is either a majority or two thirds of the votes cast. On the other hand, if the vote required is a majority or two thirds of the members *present*, or a majority or two thirds of the entire membership, an abstention will have the same effect as a “no” vote. Even in such a case, however, an abstention is not a vote and is not counted as a vote. (Source: www.RobertsRules.com)
- E. **Resolutions:** A common way for clubs and organizations to take a stand on issues related to the campus, community, or in the public debate. The premise of the resolution and the facts are stated in one to several statements beginning with “_____”. After the case has been made, then the desire of the body is stated by concluding “_____ Be It _____”. Instructions/actions may be included in “Be It Further Resolved”.

Sample of a student government resolution:

“Whereas Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., worked tirelessly on behalf of Civil Rights in the United States, and

Whereas the United States Congress is considering the creation of a holiday in honor of Dr. King,

Be it Therefore Resolved that the Oshkosh Student Association does hereby endorse the creation of a holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and

Be It Further Resolved that copies of this resolution be sent by the Secretary of OSA to the White House, the Governor of the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation, and the State Representatives for the City of Oshkosh and surrounding counties

Addendum on Tabling:

1) A motion to “lay on the table” is used when the body must deal with something more urgent. Once that matter had been handled, the original motion is brought back from the table.

2) A motion to “postpone to a certain time” is used to delay action to a date certain and/or to refer the motion to person, committee, or body for research, etc.

3) A motion to “postpone indefinitely” has the effect of disposing of a motion without a direct vote.

4) For a motion with several amendments, should the body wish to delay action on the item, the best approach is for the maker of the motion to withdraw their motion. The body must vote to allow this, it takes a majority vote.

“What’s the Point?”

Points are specific actions that seek clarification, information, or a ruling on the behavior or actions of a member of the assembly. Points that students may encounter:

1) Order: If a member of the body feels that the rules of procedure or the assembly’s governing documents have not been properly applied and/or followed, they may request a ruling by the chair by calling for a “Point of Order” *even to the point of interrupting someone who is speaking.*

2) Inquiry: A question directed to the chair of the meeting on a matter of parliamentary law or rules of the organization. It is the chair’s responsibility to respond to an inquiry for the purpose of helping the member understand appropriate motions or actions they may be able to take on the matter at hand. While a “point of inquiry” *is allowed to interrupt a speaker*, the Chair may choose to allow the speaker to finish their debate if the subject of the inquiry is not of an urgent nature.

3) Information: A request by a member of the body to the Chair or through the Chair to another member for information or clarification related to the business or motion at hand, but not of a parliamentary nature. *May interrupt the speaker.*

4) Privilege: Relate either to the Assembly or an individual member. For the Assembly it could relate to its organization or existence, comfort or disturbance of the members (heat, cold, noise, etc.), conduct of the officers, members, employees, or visitors, or a motion to go into Executive Session. For an individual, it could relate to items such as their record of attendance in the minutes, questions of character, or their need to depart from the meeting itself. *Should not interrupt the speaker* but can request their privilege without being recognized by the Chair. The Chair would then call on the member to hear the privilege request.

Template for Meeting Minutes

Minutes for the _____
(name of club or organization)
Date _____

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at _____ [Time]

Attendance

[List all members in attendance first, then the advisor, then any guests and visitors]
[At end, note:] A quorum of the number of members required to conduct business was
_____ was not _____ present (check one)

Reading of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were presented by _____.
Changes/corrections are [list name of person making correction]

Motion to adopt the minutes as presented/corrected:

Seconded:

Vote: Aye _____ Nay _____ Abstain _____

[or indicate if approved by voice vote]

Officer Reports

[Indicate which officers/advisors reported and a brief summary of what they reported on]

Committee Reports

[Indicate which committees reported and a brief summary of what they reported on]

Special Orders

[Any special items designated for consideration and this meeting or on-going business such as the recognition of clubs and organizations]

Old Business

[Present by topic and any action taken. A summary of discussion could be included, however, this is not to be a transcript of what was said or a recitation of who spoke for and/or against a topic]

[Use this format for recording motions] Motion: It was moved by
_____ that [state motion here]. It was seconded by
_____. Discussion.

[Record any amendments to the motion and any calls for the Previous Question, with makers and seconders]

Vote: Aye _____ Nay _____ Abstain _____

_____ [or indicate if approved by voice vote]

New Business

[Use same format as Old Business]

Announcements

[List any announcements made]

Adjournment

[Indicate if adjourned by the Chair or if a motion was made, seconded, and voted on. Show who made motion and second]

The meeting was adjourned at _____ [Time]

Notes

Insert any other meeting categories or agenda items as appropriate for your club/organization in the order in which they happened during the meeting. The minutes are to be a summary and record of what happened, not a transcript. Use highlights when summarizing discussion or reports and attach copies of any written reports or exhibits]

Template also available for download/printing at: <https://bit.ly/2XQZo68>