



Parliamentary Procedure for Advisors: The Rules Made Easy

Dave Kelly
America's Student Leadership Trainersm
The International Student Leadership Trainersm

I. What is Parliamentary Procedure?

- A. Parliamentary procedure is the set of _____ we use to run meetings and _____.
- B. Allows everyone's voice to be heard and make _____ without confusion!
- C. It gets things done in an _____ fashion.
- D. At the heart is _____ rule.

II. Running Meetings

- A. Basic Agenda
 - 1. Call to _____ – Start of the meeting
 - 2. _____ – The number that must be present to hold a meeting *It is usually a majority of the voting members*
 - 3. Presentation of the _____ – Record of the previous meeting. The secretary reads (or passes out) a record of the last meeting, or it may have been distributed electronically or posted in a common place. Make any corrections or additions, then accept as presented or corrected. *(Minutes Template on pages 11-12)*
 - 4. _____ Reports – Officers report on their activities, concerns, needs, etc.
 - 5. _____ Reports – Committees report on their activities, concerns, needs, etc.
 - 6. _____ Business – Items left over from previous meetings
 - 7. _____ Business – New items for consideration
 - 8. _____ – Information for the benefit of the organization

- 9. _____ – End of the meeting
- 10. Two Frequently Asked Questions:
 - a) *Is it necessary to have a motion to move through the agenda, item to item?* _____. The agenda, as published, is a fact document for the meeting. The agenda does not need to be approved, either, as it is typically the responsibility for a certain officer to create.
 - b) *Can we add things to this meeting agenda?* _____, you can add things to make your meetings more fun and interesting, to celebrate birthdays, to have speakers or programs during the meeting, etc. You can make your meeting what you want it to be!

B. What Does Parliamentary Procedure Teach Us?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. Appropriate _____
- 4. Solving _____ in a way other than _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____ skills
- 7. _____ resolution
- 8. _____
- 9. Taking _____ graciously

C. Responsibilities of the Chair

- 1. _____ the meeting, effectively and fairly. The Chair is expected to remain impartial in debate and discussion.
- 2. Set and /or follow the published _____.
- 3. Call on _____ to participate, make motions, and speak.
- 4. Restate _____ after they are made.
- 5. Rule on parliamentary _____
- 6. _____ discussion and call for votes.

III. How do members get their say?

- A. They make motions and serve on and/or participate in committees! A motion is a proposal that _____ 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
3. member’s motion): “Second”
4. Debate motions (give opinions on the motion): “I think...”
5. Vote on motions (make a decision): “Aye/Nay/Abstain” (To abstain is to refrain from voting on a particular issue)

B. There are four general types of motions:

1. _____ **Motions** 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. _____ **Motions** 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! **Friendly** amendments are not proper motions (*See page 8 for more on “Friendly amendments”*). *Includes: motions to...postpone indefinitely; amend; postpone to a time and/or date certain; the previous question; table (See page 7 for “Addendum on Tabling”)*
3. **Privileged Motions** 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 (See pages 7-8 for more in section entitled “What’s the Point?”)*
4. **Incidental Motions** 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 pages 7-8 for more in section entitled “What’s the Point?”)

C. Some questions relating to motions:

1. **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.
2. **“Can we discuss it?”** Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full _____ on most motions. However, some subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions are not debatable.
3. **“Can it be amended or changed?”** Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion. Once an amendment to a motion is made and seconded, all discussion must relate only 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. **To propose an amendment, be recognized by the chair and then state your amendment:** *“I move to amend the motion or proposal to change/add/remove/replace/correct...”*
4. **“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.

D. How do I present my motion?

1. **Obtain the _____.** Be recognized by the chair.
2. **Make your motion.**
 - a) Speak clearly and concisely.
 - b) State your motion _____. Say, “I move that we do...” instead of “I move that we do not...”

- c) You may _____ 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 – Write a motion:

- 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.
- 5. **Expand on your motion.**
 - a) _____ is allowed to speak first.
 - 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. *(Does not apply to committee meetings unless the SGA documents or committee rules state a limitation on the number of times someone may speak.)*
- 6. **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 move to _____” or “I _____
the _____” 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. _____ 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. **Many SGAs do not allow the Chair to break a tie per the Constitution and/or Bylaws.** 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.
3. When does the Advisor(s) vote? Usually, _____!
4. 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 pages 7-8]*
5. A motion to _____ can be a 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 pages 7-8]*

Additional Information for Participating in Meetings

Abstention Votes: 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)

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 with a motion to “Take from the Table” which requires a second. This motion is debatable, although it is not amendable. It cannot be subsequently reconsidered.*
- 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.

Friendly Amendments

Friendly amendments are not proper motions. Once a motion is made, it belongs to the whole body. Therefore, for a substantive change, the proper amending process should be followed. If the requested change is corrective in nature, such as a day and date for an event not matching up (Tuesday, the 23rd, for example where Wednesday is actually the 23rd), the Chair could request that the body allow the change by unanimous consent.

More Techniques in Parliamentary Procedure*:

- A. Division of the Question:** This is often used when the majority of the body supports one part of the motion and wants to get that part passed, even while the other parts may be rejected. Robert's Rules says, "little formality is involved. It is arranged by **unanimous consent**", It requires no second, no debate, and no vote.
- B. Withdraw a motion:** A request from the maker of the motion who would like permission from the body to withdraw the motion after it has been seconded. At this point, the motion is the **province of the body**. A motion to withdraw requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a majority vote.
- C. Amend Something Previously Adopted:** This motion is used to change the wording of a motion previously adopted that has not been executed or implemented, yet. You may modify the motion even if some portions have already been implemented such as line items in a budget.
- D. Rescind a Motion:** Negates a motion that was passed at a previous meeting. To make this motion, a member of the body says, "I move that we rescind [whatever the action was, Bill or Resolution number, etc.]" It must be seconded and is debatable. There are **two vote majorities to consider:** 1) If the item was on the published agenda, the motion to rescind requires only a majority vote. 2) If there was no prior notice of the item, such as appearing on the agenda, then a 2/3 majority vote is required. It is too late to rescind a motion that has been implemented or action has been taken. However, any portion not implemented can be rescinded, such as line items in a budget.
- E. Reconsideration:** This is used when someone on the prevailing side changes their mind about a motion after the vote has been announced. It requires a second, but the seconder does not have to be from the prevailing side. A motion to reconsider may not be amended and may be debated if the original motion was debatable. For example, if someone wishes to reconsider a Main Motion, it would be debatable. Reconsideration of motion to end debate ("moving the previous question) would not be debatable.

- F. Special Rules:** These are rules that supersede the governing instrument such as *Robert's Rules of Order*. These may be adopted or amended by a 2/3 majority vote. Example items may be the number of times someone is allowed to speak on a motion, the format of the agenda, whether motions must be submitted in writing, etc. They could be listed in a separate document of Policies and Procedures.
- G. Standing Rules:** These are housekeeping rules or rules of decorum. These would include when and where meetings are held, room set-up, duties of committees, dress code, stipends, and other such items. These may be adopted or changed by a majority vote. They could be listed in a separate document of Policies and Procedures.
- H. Amending the Rules:** If it is a Special Rule, it requires a 2/3 vote, if it is a Standing Rule, a majority vote is required. An example would be to suspend the rules on the length of time a motion can be debated. **Your constitution and/or bylaws may never be suspended.**

**Some of the material in this section is adapted from "Robert's Rules for Kids and Big Kids: A Guide to Teaching Children of All Ages the Basics of Parliamentary Procedure", 2nd edition, by Martha J. Haun, PhD., PRP, and Ted Weisgal*

NOTE: Robert's Rules is less strict on smaller boards and/or committees. In boards of less than 12 and committees, Robert's Rules allows:

- 1) Informal discussion on a topic without a motion having been made and approval on any decisions made in such a discussion by unanimous consent without a motion having been made
- 2) Motions to be considered without a second
- 3) Unlimited discussion opportunities by participants, with no time limit
- 4) The Chair, if a member of the committee, may debate and discuss motions and proposals and vote on the matters in the committee

My guidance to SGAs is to follow the rules for motions, seconds, debate, discussion, and voting covered in the main presentation when they meet as the governing body, regardless of size. Flexibility in committees allows free-flowing discussion, creativity and new ideas

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 (select 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]

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 forand/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]

This template is also available at <https://bit.ly/2XQZo68>