



---

# PSU – Altoona Parliamentary Procedure for Students

Dave Kelly | *America's Student Leadership Trainer<sup>SM</sup>*

---

## 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 legally. If a quorum is not present, topics may be discussed, but votes cannot be taken.)
- 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  
Often limited to a report from the treasurer, but others may report at this time.
- E. \_\_\_\_\_ Reports  
First come reports from standing (permanent) committees, then from special (temporary) committees.
- F. \_\_\_\_\_ Orders  
Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting. This could be related to a special purpose for this meeting, or for typical on-going business, such as recognition of clubs and organizations. This is what Robert's Rules would call "Comments for the Good of the Body" and "Open Forum for Students".
- 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, such as the NSU SGA, 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?”** 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?”** 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.

**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.
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 must say, “*It is moved and seconded that we...*”. After this happens, debate or voting can occur. Your motion is now “board property” and you cannot change it 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.**

- a) The chair asks, “*Are you ready for the question?*”
- b) If there is no more discussion or if a motion to stop debate is adopted, the vote is taken. If there is no objection to voting, then it is not necessary to “move the previous question” or for a member of the body to say, “I call the question.” ***In fact, Robert’s Rules does not recognize the term “calling the question.”*** However, if a member of the body wants to “move the previous question”, they may not \_\_\_\_\_ debate, must be recognized by the chair for their motion, and a \_\_\_\_\_ vote is required to end debate.
- c) 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 \_\_\_\_\_ by the chair is the first pending. The main motion is always the last voted on.

- 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.
- C. A motion to \_\_\_\_\_ is parliamentary strategy – it allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. It is useful in a case of a badly chosen main motion for which either a “yes” or “no” vote would have undesirable consequences. (Sources: Channing L. Bete Co., Inc. 200 State Road, South Deerfield, MA 01373 and [www.Wikipedia.org](http://www.Wikipedia.org))
- 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](http://www.RobertsRules.com))
- E. **Resolutions:** A common way for Student Government Associations 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 \_\_\_\_\_”. Occasionally, instructions or 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>**