



## Robert's Rules of Order: Running and Participating in Meetings

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

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### I. Running Meetings

#### A. Basic Agenda

1. Call to \_\_\_\_\_ – Start of the meeting
2. \_\_\_\_\_ – The number that must be present to hold a meeting (*MSU SGA Legislature is two-thirds of the representatives*)
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 8-9*)
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

#### B. Responsibilities of the Chair

1. \_\_\_\_\_ the meeting, effectively and fairly.
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.

## II. How do you get your say?

- A. You make motions and serve on and/or participate in committees! 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
  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 6-7 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*
  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...”*

3. **“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 proposal. For MSU SGA, start with  
*BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
 STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF  
 MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY INCORPORATED,  
 THAT...***

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- 3. **Wait for** \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - 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 statutes 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. “\_\_\_\_\_” the question”: requires unanimous consent to ending debate. If there is a single objection, debate must continue
    - ii. “\_\_\_\_\_ the question” or “I move to end debate” 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.

### Activity

- 1) Get into groups as instructed.
- 2) Each member of the group will serve as Chair on a rotating basis and each member will take turns making their proposal to the group.
- 3) Select the first person to be Chair by group consensus or someone volunteering.
- 4) The Chair will call the meeting to order: “I call this meeting to order. We will move immediately into new business and proposals from the members. I call on (person immediately to your left) for their proposal.”
- 5) Person immediately to the left of the chair reads their proposal and then says, “I

move adoption of this proposal.”

- 6) Chair asks “Is there a second?” Wait for a second, then say, “The motion has been made and seconded, the maker of the motion may now speak to their proposal.”
- 7) Proceed with discussion on the proposal with the Chair calling on the members to speak. **For the purpose of this activity, the Chair may not speak on the proposal.** Amendments to the proposal are allowed. Continue until there is no further discussion. Then the Chair says, “Seeing no further discussion, we will move to a vote. All in favor raise your hand (count the hands). All opposed raise their hands (count the hands).” If the majority of votes is yes, then say, “The motion passes.” If the majority of votes is no, then say, “The motion fails.” If there is a tie, the Chair votes to break the tie, either in favor or against. **None of the votes taken today are binding on the MSU SGA.**
- 8) The person who made the proposal is now the Chair and the activity continues in the same manner until everyone has been the Chair and everyone has made their proposal. When you have gone completely around the group, please let the facilitator know that you are done.

### **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](http://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 ExecutiveSession. 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 23<sup>rd</sup>, for example where Wednesday is actually the 23<sup>rd</sup>), the Chair could request that the body allow the change by unanimous consent.

**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]

**Special Orders**

[Any special items designated for consideration and this meeting or on-going business suchas 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 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 inthe 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>