

Parliamentary Procedure

A Practical Primer

"Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty."

-Henry M. Robert

Purpose

- Balance the rights of:
 - the majority
 - the minority, especially a strong minority
 - individual members
 - absentees
 - all of these together
- Promote efficient and deliberative decision making
 - "It is difficult to find another branch of knowledge where a small amount of study produces such great results in increased efficiency in a country where the people rule, as in parliamentary law."

-Henry M. Robert

Context

- Parliamentary Law
 - Origins
 - Evolution
- Analogy to Law
 - Experiential, not decisional
 - Common Law
 - Restatement
 - Code
 - Enforcement
 - Internal & Self-Policed

Handling Motions

Brought Before the Assembly

- Member makes motion
- Another member seconds motion
- Chair states question on the motion

Considered by the Assembly

- Members debate/amend motion
- Chair puts the question
- Chair announces result

Making a Motion

- Main motion
- Form
 - "I move that . . ."
 - Use precisely the language that you propose should be adopted
 - Just make the motion; do not advocate its passage or explain its content . . . yet.

Second

- Purpose
 - To prevent the assembly from wasting time on something that only one person wants to discuss.
- The second:
 - is not an expression of support
 - is not a basis upon which to challenge decisions
 - need not be recorded in the minutes
- Committee motions

Stating the Question

- The chair hands the motion over to the assembly by stating that "the question is on the motion that . . ."

Debate

- Movant may speak first.
 - This is the time to advocate and explain.
- No member may speak a second time until every member wishing to speak has spoken at least once.
- Germaneness
- Ending Debate
 - No other speakers
 - Previous Question Ordered

Amendments

- Form
 - Add
 - Insert
 - Strike
 - Substitute
- Concept of the Immediately Pending Question
- Secondary permitted
 - Result: "amendment to the amendment"
 - Secondary amendments may not be amended

Putting the Question

- Types of Votes
 - Voice (*viva voce*)/Show of hands
 - Rising
 - Recorded
 - Secret Ballot
- Division
 - Any member can require that a voice vote be retaken as a rising vote by calling for "a division"
 - A call for division is in order from the time that the negative votes are cast until the announcement of the result is complete.

Unanimous Consent

- The Chair or a member may ask for unanimous consent to uncontroversial or routine business or questions.
 - UC may be used to circumvent:
 - Making of a motion
 - Stating the question and putting the motion
- Any member may object and require that the matter be taken up conventionally.

Protocol

- Recognition
 - Address the Chair
 - Obtain the floor
 - Yield the floor
- Members should always address themselves to the Chair
- Avoid any personal attacks

Quorum

- **Absolutely essential and inviolable!**
- In the absence of a quorum, the assembly cannot conduct business.
- Continued presence of a quorum is presumed.
- Subsequent absence of a quorum
 - Chair may state
 - Member may suggest by point of order

Types of Motions

- **Main**
 - **Original** – mechanism by which business is most commonly brought before the assembly
 - **Incidental** – roughly correspond to the subsidiary motions, but are not secondary
- **Subsidiary**
 - Assist in the handling of a main motion
- **Privileged**
 - Urgent, undebatable, and unrelated to the main motion
- **Incidental**
 - "relate, in different ways, to the pending business or to the business otherwise at hand."

Abridged Table of Rules Relating to Motions

ROPER (10th ed.), Charts, Tables, and List pp. 6-19

Motion	Class	In order when another has the floor	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required for Adoption
Adjourn, ordinary case in societies	P	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Amend a pending motion	S	No	Yes	If motion to be amended is debatable.	Yes	Majority
Amend an amendment of a pending motion	S	No	Yes	If motion to be amended is debatable.	No	Majority
Debate, to Limit or Extend Limits of, on a pending question	S	No	Yes	No	Yes	Two-thirds
Debate, to Limit or Extend Limits of, for the duration of a meeting	M	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Two-thirds
Division of the Assembly	I	Yes	No	No	No	1 member
Count of vote on Division, to order, if chair does not do so	I	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Point of Information	I	Yes	No	No	No	no vote
Lay on the Table	S	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Point of Order, Question of Order, or Calling a Member to Order	I	Yes	No	No	No	Ruling of the Chair
Parliamentary Inquiry	I	Yes	No	No	No	Response by the Chair
Postpone Indefinitely	S	No	Yes	Yes, and debate can go into main question	No	Majority
Postpone Definitely	S	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Previous Question	S	No	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
Take from the Table	B	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Yeas and nays (to order a recorded, roll-call vote)	I	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority

Abridged Table of Rules Relating to Motions
RONR (10th ed.), Charts, Tables, and List pp. 6-29

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