

## Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

“Protecting the rights of the minority while insuring the will of the majority”

*Please note: This document is designed to only be an introduction to the very basics of parliamentary procedures. It does not address every situation that can occur in the many types of meetings held and does not account for all of the bylaws of various organizations. Please see Robert's Rules of Order and your own association's bylaws for more details.*

**What is parliamentary procedure?** It is a set of rules for conducting business at meetings and public gatherings.

**Why is parliamentary procedure important?** It allows everyone to be heard and make decisions without confusion.

**Parliamentary procedure means:** 1. Democratic rule. 2. Flexibility. 3. Protection of rights. 4. A fair hearing for everyone.

**How do members get their say?** They make motions. A motion is a proposal that the assembly takes a stand or takes action on some issue. Members have the right to: 1. Present motions. 2. Second motions. 3. Debate motions. 4. Vote on motions.

**The five general types of motions are:**

1. **MAIN MOTIONS** – These introduce subjects for consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary, incidental motions. For example: “I move that we purchase...”
2. **SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS** (i.e. amendments) - These change or effect how the main motion is handled. (They are voted on before the main motion.) For example: “I move to amend the motion by striking out...”
3. **PRIVILEGED MOTIONS** - These concern special or important matters not related to pending business. In general they are considered before other types of motions. For example: “I move we adjourn...”
4. **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS** - These 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 ...”
5. **MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY** - These enable certain items to be reconsidered. In general they are brought up when no business is pending. For example: “I move to reconsider...”

**How do I present a motion?** 1. Obtain the floor. 2. You make the motion. 3. Another member seconds the motion. 4. The chair states the motion. 5. The chair calls for discussion on the motion (the maker of the motion has the right to speak first). 7. The chair calls the question (the voting) on the motion.

**Some questions relating to motions:** 1. Is it in order? 2. May I interrupt the speaker? 3. Does it need a second? 4. Is it debatable? 5. Can it be amended? 6. What vote is needed (majority or 2/3)? 7. Can it be reconsidered?

**Common methods of voting on a motion:** 1. Voice, 2. Rising, 3. Show of hands, 4. Ballot, 5. Roll Call, 6. General consent, and other ways depending on situations and your bylaws.

**Final important notes on voting:** A question (motion) is pending when it has been stated by the chair but not voted on yet. The last motion stated by the chair is the first pending. The main motion is always the last voted on.

## Motions you might make, how to make them, and what to expect of the rules

Order of Pref.	TO DO THIS	YOU SAY THIS	MAY YOU INTERRUPT THE SPEAKER?	DO YOU NEED A SECOND?	IS IT DEBATABLE?	CAN IT BE AMENDED?	WHAT VOTE IS NEEDED?	CAN IT BE RECONSIDERED?
1	Adjourn the meeting	"I move to adjourn"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
2	Call an intermission	"I move to recess for..."	No	Yes	No *1	Yes	Majority	No
3	Complain about heat, noise, etc.	"I rise to a question of privilege"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
4	Temporarily suspend consideration of a matter	"I move to lay the motion on the table"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No *2
5	End debate and amendments	"I move the previous question"	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes *3
6	Postpone discussion for a certain time	"I move to postpone the discussion until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
7	Give closer study of something	"I move to refer the matter to committee"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes *4
8	Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by ..."	No	Yes	Yes *5	Yes	Majority	Yes
9	Introduce business	"I move that ..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
None	Protest breach of rules or conduct	"I rise to a point of order"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote *6	No
None	Vote on a ruling of the chair	"I appeal the chair's decision"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes
None	Suspend rules temporarily	"I move to suspend the rules so that..."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
None	Avoid considering an improper matter	"I object to consideration of this motion"	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 *7	Yes *2
None	Verify a voice vote by having members stand	"I call for a division" or "Division!"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
None	Request information	"Point of information"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
None	Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move to take from the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
None	Reconsider a hasty action	"I move to reconsider the vote on..."	Yes *8	Yes	Yes *9	No	Majority	No

Notes: \*1. Unless moved when no question is pending; \*2. Affirmative votes may not be reconsidered; \*3. Unless vote on question has begun; \*4. Unless the committee has already taken up the matter. \*5. Unless the motion to amend is not debatable. \*6. Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision. \*7. A 2/3 vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of the main motion. \*8. Only if the speaker has the floor but has not actually begun to speak. \*9. Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.