

Summary/Simplified Robert's Rules of Order
PROCEDURES FOR A FAIR LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

MAIN POINTS:

- Everyone has a right to speak once, before anyone may speak a second time. You may only speak when recognized by the Chair and only “through” the Chair.- Obtain the floor by raising your hand. You cannot be recognized while another member is speaking.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times.
- Only urgent matters (see chart below) may interrupt a speaker.
- Only one subject at a time may be discussed.

HOW TO PROCEED:

1. If you want to bring up a new idea or proposal, raise your hand and be recognized by the Chair. Then present your motion. You must have a seconder, for the motion to go to the floor for debate or to be considered. Debate on a motion or resolution cannot begin until it has been seconded and is stated by the Chair, who will ask “are you ready for the question?” If no one “rises” to make a point, engage in discussion pro or con, or modify the motion, then the chair calls for the vote. Before the motion (question) is stated by the Chair, members may suggest modification of the motion by amendment.

2. If you want to change some of the wording of a motion under debate, be recognized by the Chair and then move to amend by:

- a. Adding words
- b. Striking words or
- c. Striking and inserting words

3. If you like the idea of the motion under debate but you want to reword it substantially, you may move to substitute your motion for the original. If the originator of the motion agrees that your proposal is a “friendly amendment”, and no one objects, it could supersede the original. Alternatively, if it is seconded, debate can proceed. Eventually the senators will vote on which they prefer.

4. If you feel that the subject under debate needs more study or investigation, then move to refer it to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee and the committee to which you’d like the charge referred. You may also move to instruct the committee, usually to come up with suitable wording to accomplish the will of the Senate.

5. If you want more time to study the proposal under debate, you may move to postpone debate until a definite time or date.

6. If you are tired of the current debate, you may move to limit debate to a set period of time or a set number of speakers. This requires a 2/3 vote.

7. If you’ve heard enough debate and if no one else has the floor, you may move to close debate. This requires a second and then a 2/3 vote to pass. Or you may “move the previous question”, which cuts off debate and requires the senate to vote on the pending question only. This also requires a 2/3 vote.

8. **If you want to postpone a motion until some later time, you may move to table the motion.** The motion may be taken from the table later, after at least 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting of the senate, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3 vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.
9. **If you want to take a short break, move to recess for a set period of time.**
10. **If you want to end the meeting, move to adjourn.**
11. **If you are unsure that the Chair has correctly announced the results of a vote, you may, without being recognized, call for a “Division of the House”,** at which point a standing vote must be taken.
12. **If you are confused about a procedure and want clarification, without waiting to be recognized, call for “Point of Information” or “Point of Parliamentary Inquiry”.** This interrupts debate, and the Chair must ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.
13. **If you think the chair has made a procedural error, without waiting to be recognized, call a “point of order.”** The chair will listen to your point and then rule. If you disagree, you may “appeal the chair’s decision.” If seconded, the Senate will vote whether to uphold the ruling by simple majority.
14. **If you have changed your mind about a vote taken earlier in the meeting for which you were on the “winning” side, you can move to reconsider.** If a majority agrees, the motion comes back to the floor as if the vote had not happened.
15. **If you want to change a senate action that was voted on at a previous meeting, you may move to rescind the motion.** If you have given the senate previous written notice that you intend to move to rescind, a simple majority is required. If you have not provided written notice previously, you must have a 2/3 majority to rescind.
16. **If you want to kill a motion which was introduced by another person,** you must, before any debate on the motion has occurred, state “I object to consideration.” You do not need to be recognized by the Chair to do this. Your motion requires no second and is not debatable. It requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

SPEAKERS MAY BE INTERRUPTED ONLY FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. **POINT OF INFORMATION,** to obtain information about business;
2. **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY,** to obtain information about the rules or to ask about the correct motion to accomplish a desired result;
3. **QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE** if you cannot hear, a safety issue arises or you are uncomfortable, it’s noisy, etc... but only if necessary;
4. **POINT OF ORDER,** if you see a breach of the rules or improper decorum in speaking; the point of order must be raised immediately after the error is made;
5. **APPEAL OF A CHAIR’S RULING,** if you disagree with the Chair’s ruling.

IF YOU WANT TO INFLUENCE WHAT THE SENATE DISCUSSES:

1. **Make a MOTION if you want to discuss something specific;**
2. **If you want to change a motion under discussion, AMEND THE MOTION under discussion;**
3. **If you want to discuss the topic at another time, move to POSTPONE discussion to a particular date or LAY IT ON THE TABLE;**
4. **If you think the senators are ready to vote, MOVE THE PREVIOUS QUESTION.**

Parliamentary Procedure Motions Chart					
Adjourn	S			M	
Recess	S		A	M	
Table	S			M	
Close Debate	S			2/3	R
Limit Debate	S		A	2/3	R
Postpone to a Later Time	S	D	A	M	R
Refer to A Committee	S	D	A	M	R
Amend a Motion	S	D	A	M	R
Amendment to an Amendment	S	D		M	R
Postpone Indefinitely	S	D	A	M	R
Main Motion	S	D	A	M	R
S=Must be Seconded; D=Debatable; A=Amendable; M= Requires a Simple Majority Vote; 2/3= Requires a 2/3 Vote; R=May be Reconsidered or Rescinded					
OTHER TERMS AND DEFINITIONS					
ORDERS OF THE DAY	Agenda. A deviation requires suspension of the rules				
MAIN MOTION	Brings new business (the next agenda item) before the Senate				
DIVIDE THE QUESTION	Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (each must be able to stand on its own)				
CONSIDER BY PARAGRAPH	Adoption of a proposal is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended. After all are considered, any paragraph may be further amended. Preambles cannot be considered until debate on the body of the proposal has ended.				
AMEND	Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs or substituting entire paragraphs or resolutions				

WITHDRAW/MODIFY MOTION	Applies after a question is stated. A mover may accept an amendment without obtaining the floor.
COMMIT/REFER/RECOMMIT TO COMMITTEE.	State the committee to receive the question or resolution. If none with jurisdiction exists, specify the size of committee desired and the means of selecting members.
EXTEND DEBATE	Can apply only to the immediately-pending questions and for a specific time or period of time.
LIMIT DEBATE	Closes debate at a specific time or limits debate to a specific period of time
TAKE FROM THE TABLE	State the item to take from the table and resume consideration of an item previously laid on the table.
INFORMAL CONSIDERATION	You must move that the Senate go into a “Committee of the Whole” and conduct informal discussion as if in committee. The “committee” may limit the number or length of speeches or close debate by 2/3 vote. Votes are formal.

Sources: Robert, Henry M. Robert’s Rules of Order Revised (10th Edition) Public Domain.
Kennedy, Beverly “Quick Reference” <http://www.robertsrules.org> 9/26/2004;
<http://www.cwru.edu/orga/gradsenate/rules/handbook.html> 9/26/2004.
California State Association of Parliamentarians. Survival Tips on Roberts Rules (<http://www.roberts-rules.com/par101.htm>)9/26/2004.