



Basics of Parliamentary Procedure

The following basics of Parliamentary Procedure are not comprehensive, but are designed to help a team prepare for conducting a club business meeting.

Purpose of Parliamentary Procedure:

- Rules of Order are intended to facilitate working together and accomplishing purpose – not inhibit it.
- The spirit of fairness and good faith is paramount
- Only one matter is addressed at a time.
- Only one person can speak at a time.
- No one can speak for a second time until all who wish have spoken for the first time.
- All members have the right to understand any question presented during a meeting, and to understand the effect of their decision.
- Everybody's vote counts.
- The majority vote decides the issue.
- The rights of the minority are protected at all times.

Parliamentary Procedure Vocabulary:

Motion is a formal proposal made in a deliberative assembly.

Main Motion, the basis of all parliamentary procedure, provides method of bringing business before the assembly for consideration and action, can be considered only if no other business is pending.

Privileged Motions are such that, while having no relation to the pending motion, are of such urgency or importance that they are entitled to immediate consideration: relate to members, and to the organization, rather than to particular items of business.

Subsidiary Motions are those that may be applied to another motion for the purpose of modifying it, delaying action on it, or disposing of it.

Incidental Motions are related to the parliamentary situation in such a way that it must be decided before business can proceed.

Forms of Voting

A **voice vote** is most commonly used.

A **rising vote** is the normal method of voting on motions requiring a two-thirds vote for adoption. It is also used to verify a voice vote or showing of hands.

Show of Hands is an alternative to a voice vote and is usually used in small groups.

General Consent is a vote of silent agreement without a single objection.

A **Ballot** or **Roll Call** vote can be ordered by a majority. Rulings of the chair can be appealed.

Vote counting: Votes required to pass business may either be a simple majority of half of the present members plus one or a two thirds majority of the members present.

Obtaining and Handling a Main Motion

When no one else has the floor, a member typically rises if it is a large group and addresses the chair: "Mr. Chairman/Madam President." ¹The member pauses (before stating his or her motion) to be recognized by the chair.

¹It should be noted that **chairman** and **president** are gender-neutral words. Therefore, referring to the presiding officer as **Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairman** or **Madam President/Mr. President** is acceptable. In the author's opinion it is also less cumbersome than using chairperson or chairwoman as the case may be.

How a Motion is Brought Before an Assembly

Once recognized by the chair, a member makes the motion: "I move that or to..." and sits down.

Another member of the group may choose to second the motion. "I second the motion" or "I second it." The chair will then state the motion: "It is moved and seconded that ..."

(Before a motion has been stated by the chair, it can be withdrawn or modified by the maker. After being stated by the chair, it can be withdrawn or modified only by general consent or a majority vote of the body.)

Consideration of the Motion

Once a motion has been properly presented, members of the group can debate the motion. Before speaking in debate, the member must be recognized by the chair and all remarks must be addressed to the chair. The maker of the motion has the first right to the floor if it is properly claimed.

Debate must be confined to the merits of the motion and can only be closed by order of the group (two-thirds vote) or by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate.

Once debate is closed, the chair asks: "Is the group ready for the question?" If no one claims the floor, the chair will proceed to take a vote by stating the motion ... and asking who are in favor by saying "Aye." Those opposed, say "No." The chair then will announce the result of the vote ... "motion adopted or motion defeated."

Ranking Motions

- **Privileged Motions** are such that, while having no relation to the pending question, are of such urgency, or important that they are entitled to immediate consideration; relate to members, and to the organization, rather than to particular items of business.
- **Subsidiary Motions** are those that may be applied to another motion for the purpose of modifying it, delaying action on it, or disposing of it.
- **Main Motion** is the basis of all parliamentary procedure -- provides method of bringing business before the assembly for consideration and action. Can only be introduced if no other business is pending.
- **Incidental Motions** are those (1) which arise out of a pending situation; (2) which arise on a question that has just been pending; or (3) that relate to the business of the assembly. Incidental motions usually apply to the method of transacting business rather than to the business itself. They have no rank among themselves because they are in order whenever they are incidental to the business of the assembly. Listed below are some of them which are most commonly used.

Standard Descriptive Characteristics (see current edition of Robert's Rule of Order, Newly Revised)



MOTION NAMES, CLASS ¹ AND PURPOSES	INTERRUPT SPEAKER?	SECOND NEEDED?	DEBATABLE?	AMENDABLE?	VOTE NEEDED?
CLASS: Privileged Motions (Deals with special matters of immediate or overriding importance to the business of the assembly)					
Recess (Provides a brief break)	No	Yes	No	Yes ²	Majority
Raise a Question of Privilege (Asks an urgent question regarding rights and privileges of the assembly)	Yes	No	No	No	No vote. Chair rules
CLASS: Subsidiary Motions (Aids the assembly in handling or disposing of a main motion)					
Previous Question (Closes debate and goes directly to a vote and prevents the making of subsidiary motions listed on this table)	No	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
Postpone Definitely (Puts off further consideration of the main motion to a later time, not beyond the next regular scheduled meeting if within a quarterly interval)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority (Two-Thirds if made a Special Order)
Commit or Refer (Refers the motion to a committee)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend (Proposes to change a motion)	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Majority
Postpone Indefinitely (Rejects or kills the main motion)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
CLASS: Main Motions (Introduces new business to the assembly)					
Main Motions (Introduce new business to the assembly)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
CLASS: Incidental Motions (Related to the pending business and must be decided immediately)					
Parliamentary Inquiry (Allows a member to ask a question related to parliamentary)	Yes	No	No	No	No vote. Chair answers

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law or the rules of the organization)					
Division of the Assembly [Requires a standing (rising) vote]	Yes	No	No	No	No vote. Demand
Point of Order (Requests that the rules be enforced)	Yes	No	No	No	No vote. Chair usually rules4

1. *Motions that bring a question again before the assembly are not required for this event.*
2. *Amendable with respect to the length of the recess*
3. *Debatable if applied to a debatable motion*
4. *Assembly decides by a majority vote if the chair does not want to make a ruling.*



Guidelines for Parliamentary Procedure Errors

The table below shows the recommended guidelines that judges will use for parliamentary procedure errors. If a parliamentary procedure error is made and a point of order is called at the time of the infraction and promptly ruled on by the chair correctly, points should not be deducted. “Members” are the team members other than the chair.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE ERRORS	Severity of Point Deduction
VIOLATIONS RELATED TO USING A MOTION IMPROPERLY	
Postpone Indefinitely (when qualified. e.g., a time is given)	****
Parliamentary Inquiry (when used to ask another member a question)	***
Raise a Question of Privilege (when used to ask a question of another member or ask a question related to parliamentary procedure)	***
VIOLATIONS RELATED TO THE CHAIR	
Improper use of the gavel	*
Referring to him/herself in the first person (e.g., “I”)	*
Failing to announce results of vote	*
Not obtaining a second before stating or putting the motion	**
Not calling for a negative vote	**
Failing to call for debate on a debatable motion	**
Ignoring a member requesting the floor	**
Taking a hand vote after a Division of the Assembly has been called	**
Taking a voice vote on a motion that requires a two-thirds vote	**
Failing to take a vote on a motion	***
Taking an incorrect vote (e.g., majority when two-thirds required or vice versa)	***
Stating a personal opinion	****
Not giving preference in recognition to maker of motion if he/she has not debated	**
Not giving preference in recognition to member who has not debated	**
Not alternating debate between those opposed and those in favor of a motion (if known)	*



PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE ERRORS	Severity of Point Deduction
Neglecting to notify members to be seated after taking a standing (rising) vote	*
Arbitrarily stopping debate	**
Not completing all steps in the announcement of the vote.	**
VIOLATIONS RELATED TO AMENDMENTS	
Adding words to middle (instead of end) of motions	*
Striking words that result in incomplete wording for main motion	*
Inserting “not” to make the motion a negatively worded motion	*
Making an amendment that is not germane	**
Amending a non-amendable motion	****
Making a third-degree (tertiary) amendment	****
VIOLATIONS RELATED TO MOTIONS	
Chair not restating the motion as it was moved by a member	*
Member incorrectly stating a motion (e.g., “I motion that...”, using incorrect postpone, etc.)	*
Chair restating motion before it receives a second	**
Taking up a motion out of the order of precedence	****
Member makes an assigned motion in the wrong class (e.g., the assigned privileged motion to Recess is made when no question is pending. It is therefore classified as an incidental main motion)	****
Member calling out “Question” from his/her seat to stop debate	***
Member not including special committee size and method of appointing members when making the motion to Commit or Refer	***
VIOLATIONS RELATED TO DEBATE BY MEMBERS	
Not getting recognized before debating (discussing) a motion	*
Not addressing debate through the chair	*
Addressing other members by name	*
Debating more than two (2) times on a single motion	**



PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE ERRORS	Severity of Point Deduction
Debating against a motion they moved	**
Debating a non-debatable motion	****
Debate not germane	***
Debating a motion after it is adopted (e.g., debating an amendment after it is adopted while the main motion it is applied to is immediately pending)	***

Note: star ranking system = least amount of deduction to **** = greatest amount of deduction*