

The Basics of Robert's Rules of Order

A. General Order of Meetings (Agenda)

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Officers Reports
5. Unfinished (Old) Business
6. New Business
7. Adjournment

B. Procedure to Make a Motion

1. Member raises hand and stands after recognition from the presiding officer.
2. The member gives their name and states the motion. e.g. "I move that we _____."
3. Member may give a brief explanation for introducing the motion.
4. Another member must second the motion to continue.
5. Presiding officer calls for discussion on this motion.

Note: The member who introduced the motion has the right to speak first. Members wishing to discuss the motion raise their hands and wait for recognition from the presiding officer before speaking, enabling everyone to share their opinions. Usually, a member may not speak to the motion a second time until everyone else has had a chance to address it.

6. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the motion.
7. Presiding officer states results of vote and resulting action.

Note: Members may "call the question" to end discussion on the motion if discussion seems to be dragging on or becoming redundant; however, it is NOT acceptable to call the question in order to prevent someone from expressing their opinion or while someone is speaking. If a member calls the question, a second and a 2/3 majority vote are required (no discussion) to close discussion and proceed to voting on the motion.

C. Procedure to Amend a Motion

During discussion, it may become apparent that an amendment (modification) to the original motion is necessary. Anyone may request to amend the original motion, but the proposed amendment must be related to the subject of the main motion.

1. Member raises hand and stands after recognition from the presiding officer.
2. Member states the amendment (e.g. striking and/or adding words/phrases).
3. Amendment must be seconded.
4. Presiding officer calls for discussion on the amendment.
5. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the amendment, and announces result.

Note: If the amendment passes, the motion on the floor is now the amended motion. If the amendment fails, the original motion remains on the floor.

D. Referral to Committee

During discussion, it may become apparent that further information is needed prior to voting on a motion and/or further work is necessary to reword a motion, in which case, the motion may be referred to a committee. If the motion passes, the committee, if not existing, should be appointed immediately or as soon as possible. The committee should report findings at the next meeting, unless specified otherwise.

1. A member makes a motion to refer the motion to committee.
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

E. Tabling a Motion

Tabling a motion lays aside an item of business temporarily in order to attend other business. A tabled motion cannot be taken from the table until another item of business has been transacted since the tabling. If the tabled motion is not removed from the table by the end of the next meeting, the motion ceases to exist.

1. A member makes a motion to table the motion.
2. Motion must be seconded (No discussion).
3. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

F. Removing a Motion from the Table

A member may move to remove a motion from the table during the Unfinished Business part of the meeting once all agenda Unfinished Business items are addressed.

1. A member makes a motion to remove a motion from the table.
2. Motion must be seconded.

At this point, the motion has been removed from the table and discussion of the motion proceeds as if the motion had never been tabled in the first place.

3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

G. Motion to Postpone

A member may move to delay action (voting) on a motion to a certain time, usually the next meeting. A postponed motion is considered unfinished business and automatically comes up for further consideration at the next meeting (or designated date).

1. A member makes a motion to postpone the motion to another date (usually the next meeting).
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
4. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken

This Is Too Formal for Our PAC Meetings!

Too much informality can make an annual meeting of your members confusing and unruly. As well, too much formality can make a small meeting longer and more cumbersome than it needs to be. Choosing and using the right process for your PAC meetings is worth the effort.

These modifications to Robert's Rules may be appropriate for the level of formality of your PAC meetings.

1. Members are not required to obtain the floor and can make motions or speak while seated
2. Motions need not be seconded (see comment below)
3. The number of times a member can speak to a question is not limited
4. Motions to close or limit debate are generally not used
5. The chair can usually make motions and vote on all questions (check your bylaws for how this will work in your PAC)

However, if your PAC is considering issues of great importance or controversy, you can always make your proceedings more formal to suit the occasion. Below are a few hints for how to decide when your PAC may want to use a bit more formal meeting style.

When to Make a Motion

Any time your council wants to *do* something, the action should be approved by motion. If the council wants to *change* the course of something already underway, the change should be sanctioned by motion. And, if your council wants to *spend* money, the expenditure *must* be approved by motion.

There are many kinds of motions. Remember two things:

- Motions move your group forward—they give you the go ahead to take action.
- Motions allow for debate and consideration of all sides of an issue. Because motions require the group to focus on one issue at a time, disagreement can be resolved by motion.

General Consent

For the flow of a meeting, a motion is not always necessary. Many matters can be resolved through general consent, or unanimous consent. Under this method, the presiding officer asks, "Is there any objection to ...?" For example, "Is there any objection to ending discussion?" If no one objects, discussion is closed. If a member objects, the matter should be resolved with a motion and vote.

General consent allows your PAC to move quickly through uncontroversial issues so that you can devote more time to ones that require thorough discussion and debate. You can also adopt reports and motions, approve minutes, and end debate this way.

Accepting Information Reports

Don't vote on every report. Committee reports are often for information only. In such instances, no motion is necessary following a report. In fact, a motion to adopt or accept a report is seldom wise except when it is to be published in the name of your association (the motion then formalizes the general acceptance of the content of the report). Committee reports typically need debate and a vote only if the report ends with a specific recommendation for action.

Similarly, treasurers' reports seldom require action. When a treasurer is simply reporting the cash on hand or receipts minus disbursements, no action is necessary, and the report should be filed for reference. An annual or year-end treasurer's report can be referred to your auditor, and the auditor's report is what your PAC should eventually consider and adopt.

Does a Motion Need a Second?

Having someone second a motion means that there are at least two people who agree with the motion (the person who made the motion and the person who seconded). The presence of a second in a formal setting simply determines whether or not an issue will go forward into discussion. But don't get hung up on seconds. In small PAC meetings, seconds may not be required at all. If it is apparent that the PAC wants to discuss and vote on an issue, the second is not needed.

Amending Motions

To avoid long debates over slight changes in motions, some organizations use a "friendly amendment" process. If the person who made the original motion agrees with the suggested changes, the amended motion may be voted on without a separate vote to approve the amendment.