



Robert's Rules of Order – the Basics

(This is not a substitute for Robert's Rules of Order, but is meant as a supplement to the full set of rules.)

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting orderly meetings that accomplish goals fairly. Benefits of parliamentary procedure include the following:

- Justice and courtesy for all
- Maintenance of order
- Consideration of one item at a time
- All sides get heard
- Ability for each member to provide input
- Majority rule
- Protection of the rights of all members

Basic Principles

- A quorum must be present for business to be conducted
- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations
- No person can speak until recognized by the chair
- Personal remarks during debate are out of order
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time
- Members have a right to know what the immediately pending question is and to have it restated before a vote is taken (Full and free discussion of every main motion is a basic right).
- A majority decides a question
- The Chair should always remain impartial

Basic Definitions

Motion – A formal proposal made to bring a subject before an assembly for its consideration and action. Begins with “I move that...”

Second – A statement by a member who agrees that the motion made by another member be considered. Stated as “Second,” or “I second the motion.”

Amendment – Before the vote is taken on a motion, it may be amended by:

- Striking out words
- Inserting or adding words
- Striking out words and inserting others in their place
- Substituting one (1) paragraph or resolution for another

Quorum - the minimum number of members who must be present in order for the CLCA to conduct business. For general meetings-three board members and five voting members including board members. For board meetings-four directors.

Presiding officer/Chair – The individual who facilitates the meeting, usually the President. In the absence of the President, if the Vice President is not in attendance, the Secretary calls the meeting to order and conducts an election for a Chairman Pro Tem (a presiding officer for that meeting only).



Role of the Presiding officer

- To remain impartial during debate – the presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to debate the merits of a motion and may not chair the meeting again until after a vote has been taken on the motion has been disposed of
- To vote only to create or break a tie (or 2/3 for matters requiring a 2/3 vote) – exception: the presiding officer may vote on any vote by ballot
- To introduce business in proper order per the agenda
- To recognize speakers
- To determine if a motion is in order
- To keep discussion relevant to the pending motion
- To maintain order
- To put motions to a vote and announce results

General procedure for Handling a Main Motion

- A member must obtain the floor by being recognized by the chair
- Member makes a main motion
- A motion must be seconded by another member before it can be considered
- If the motion is in order, the chair will restate the motion and open debate
- The maker of a motion has the right to speak first in debate
- The main motion is debated along with any secondary motions that are debatable.
- Debate on Subsidiary, Privileged and Incidental motions (if debatable or amendable) take precedence over debate on the main motion and must be decided before debate on the main motion can continue.
- Debate is closed when:
 - Discussion has ended, and the chair closes it, or
 - A 2/3 vote closes debate (“call the previous question” or “call the question”)
- The chair restates the motion, and if necessary clarifies the consequences of affirmative and negative votes
- The chair calls for a vote by asking “All in favour?” Those in favour say “Aye.” Then asking “All opposed?” Those opposed will say “no”
- The chair announces the result

General rules of Debate

- No member may speak until recognized by the chair and must not disrupt assembly
- All discussion must be relevant to the immediately pending question
- No member can speak more than twice to each debatable motion. The second time takes place after everyone wishing to debate the motion has had an opportunity to speak once
- No member can speak more than three minutes or as decided by members.
- All remarks must be addressed to the chair – no cross debate is permitted
- Debate must address issues not personalities – no one is permitted to make personal attacks or question the motives of other speakers
- The presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to participate in debate and cannot reassume the chair until the pending main question is disposed of



- When possible, the chair should let the floor alternate between those speaking in support and those speaking in opposition to the motion
- Rules of debate can be changed by a 2/3 vote or general consent without objection

Example of Handling a Main Motion:

- Member addresses the chair
- Chair recognizes member.
- Member makes the motion. *I move that...*
- Another member seconds the motion (with or without recognition). *Second [or] I second the motion.*
- The chair states the motion and opens debate. *It is moved and seconded that... Is there any debate? Or Are you ready for the question?*
- Chair recognizes members wishing to speak.
- After debate concludes. Chair restates the motion and puts the question to a vote. *The question is on the motion to... Those in favour of the motion say "aye." Those opposed say "no."*
- Chair announces the result of the vote and what action will be taken. *The "ayes" have it, and the motion is adopted. We will [stating action to be taken].*
- The chair continues with the next business in order.

Common methods of taking a vote:

General consent: *"If there is no objection, we will..." (Pause) "Since there is no objection, we will..."*

Voice vote: *"As many as are in favour, say "aye." As many opposed, say "no." The "ayes/noes" have it and the motion is adopted/lost."*

Methods of Amending

By striking out: *"I move to amend the motion by striking out the word "(state the word)"*

By inserting: *"I move to amend the motion by inserting the word '(state the word)' after the word '(state the word)' and before the period."*

By striking out and inserting: *"I move to amend the motion by striking out the word '(state the word)' and inserting the word '(state the word).'"*

Helpful terminology

- Recommendations, bylaws, rules, resolutions, budgets, and audits are adopted.
- Reports are filed.
- Resignations are accepted.
- Bills and minutes are approved.
- If corrections were made to the minutes, the minutes are then approved as corrected.
- Treasurer's statement is neither approved nor adopted; but after questions are answered regarding any item as reported, it is placed on file for audit as stipulated in the bylaws.
- Motions are put in writing and recorded as "adopted" or "lost."

Above All:

- Speak clearly and concisely
- Be courteous, respect and obey the rules of debate