

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

Eight Steps in Processing a Main Motion

Step 1: Member rises and addresses the chair when nothing is pending. “Mr. President.” Or “Madame President.”

Step 2: Chair recognizes member by nodding at the member or stating his name. “Mr. Williams.”

Step 3: Member states his/her motion. “I move that we have a canned food drive.”

Step 4: Another member seconds the motion (without recognition). “Second.”

Step 5: Chair states the motion and places it before the assembly for discussion. “It is moved and seconded that we have a canned food drive. Is there any discussion?”

Step 6: Members have the right to get recognition and debate the motion. During debate subsidiary motions (i.e. amendments) may be introduced to help the assembly make a final decision.

Step 7: When discussion is finished the Chair puts the question to a vote. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that we have a canned food drive. Those in favor, say AYE.” (Pause.) “Those opposed, say NO.” (Pause.)

Step 8: Chair announces the results of the vote. “The AYES (NOES) have it; the motion is adopted (lost); we will (not) have a canned food drive; the next business in order is ...”

Methods of Voting

- **Unanimous Consent** – no member objects to a proposal that meets with general approval; a vote of silent agreement.
- **Voice Vote** – regular method of voting on any motion that does not require more than a majority vote; most common form of voting.
- **Rising Vote** – method used when a two-thirds vote is required for adoption; is also used when a member calls for a division of the assembly.
- **Show of Hands or Voting Cards** – an alternative method for a rising vote.
- **Counted Vote** – can be ordered by the chair when it appears a voice vote is unclear and it can be ordered by a majority vote of the assembly.
- **Ballot or Roll Call Vote** – can be ordered by a majority vote of the assembly and is required if specified in bylaws.

The 13 Ranking Motions – motions lower on the list cannot be made if anything higher is pending.

1. Fix the time to which to adjourn: This motion is used to set the time for another meeting to continue business of the session. It does not adjourn the present meeting or set a time for its adjournment.

2. Adjourn: This is a motion to close the meeting.

3. Recess: A short interruption which does not close the meeting. After recess, business resumes at exactly the point where it was interrupted

4. Raise a question of privilege: This device permits a request or a motion relating to the rights of either the assembly or an individual to interrupt business and, because of its urgency, be brought up for possible immediate consideration.

5. Call for the order of the day: By the use of this motion, a single member can require the assembly to follow the order of business or agenda, or to take up a special order that is now due to come up, unless two-thirds of the assembly wish to do otherwise.

6. Lay on the table: This motion is used to place the pending motion aside when something of an urgent nature arises and needs the immediate attention of the assembly.

7. Previous question: This is simply a motion to end debate, allow no further subsidiary motions on the pending motion, and take a vote. It must be seconded, no debate is allowed, and a 2/3 vote is needed to close debate.

8. Limit or extend limits of debate: This motion can reduce or increase the number and length of speeches permitted or limit the length of debate on a specific question.

9. Postpone definitely: Should be used if the body needs more time to make a decision or if there is a time for consideration of the question that would be more convenient. The postponement cannot be beyond the next session in a group that meets regularly.

10. Commit or refer to a committee: This motion sends the main motion to a committee for further examination and refinement before the body votes on it.

11. Amend: The intent of this motion is to modify the pending motion before it is voted on.

12. Postpone indefinitely: This motion, in effect, kills the main motion for the duration of the meeting without having to take a vote on it.

13. Main motion: a formal proposal for consideration and action.

The Three Ways to Amend

1. To insert or to add (a word, consecutive words, or a paragraph).

Phrasing:

“I move to amend the motion by inserting the word ‘consecutive’ before the word ‘terms.’”

“I move to add the words ‘at a cost not to exceed \$100.’”

“I move to amend by adding the following paragraph...”

2. To strike out (a word, consecutive words, or a paragraph).

Phrasing:

“I move to amend by striking out the word ‘every.’”

“I move to amend by striking out the words ‘during the second semester.’”

“I move to strike out the third paragraph.”

3. To strike out and insert (words) or to substitute (paragraph or entire main motion).

Phrasing:

“I move to strike out the word ‘monthly’ and insert the word ‘annually.’”

“I move to substitute for the pending main motion the following...”

The Order of Business

- Reading and approval of minutes – approves the record of actions taken at previous meeting.
- Reports of officers and standing committees – considers actions as recommended by an officer or committee. Any correspondence received should be read if not distributed prior to the meeting. A financial report is made at every meeting.
- Reports of special committees – considers actions as recommended by a group formed for a particular purpose.
- Special orders – considers items that were made special orders for this meeting or items required to be taken up at this meeting by provision in the bylaws.
- Unfinished business and general orders – considers items not reached when the last meeting adjourned or items postponed to this meeting.
- New business – considers actions proposed by members.

Debate

Decorum in Debate

- In order to debate a question, a member must rise and address the presiding officer by his/her title, and be assigned the floor.
- Always address remarks to the chair, never using a member's name where it is possible to describe him otherwise.
- The correctness of a statement of facts may be denied, but the motives of a member are not questioned.
- Discourteous language is never used.

Rules of Debate

- The maker of a debatable motion is always entitled to the floor first, as soon as the chair states the question on the motion. When a motion is made by order of a committee, the reporting member of the committee should be recognized first.
- As much as possible, debate should alternate between pro and con.
- Confine debate to the question under consideration.
- Ask permission of the assembly before reading any document.
- Do not waste time with frivolous arguments or repetitions.
- The member who introduces a question is allowed to close the debate, provided he/she has not already exhausted his time.
- Time cannot be yielded to another speaker or saved for later use.

Number and Length of Speeches

- Unless permission is given by the assembly, no member shall speak
 - ... longer than ten minutes at a time,
 - ... more than twice on the same question on the same day,
 - ... a second time until every one has spoken who desires to do so.
- At any meeting the limits of debate may be changed by a two-thirds vote.
- If a member who has the floor allows another member to make an explanation, the time is charged to the one who has the floor.
- Consider adopting a special rule of order limiting speakers to 2 to 3 minutes at a time.