

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

MOTIONS

Main Motion

A main motion introduces a new item of business. Until this is disposed of, no other *main* motion may be considered, as there can be only one *main* motion pending at a time. The making of a motion comes first, and then discussion follows.

The steps relating to the handling of a main motion are:

1. The motion is introduced.
2. Any member may second the motion if needed by calling out, "I second the motion (Committee motions do not require a second.)"
3. The Chair states the motion by repeating it.
4. The Chair then asks for discussion giving the maker of the motion the first opportunity to speak.
5. Thereafter, insofar as possible, the chair alternates between those in favor and those against.)
6. A member may, during the discussion and when recognized by the Chair, introduce a subsidiary incidental, privileged, or certain other motions.
7. The discussion at all times must relate to the immediately pending question.
8. After the discussion, or as it appears appropriate, the Chair asks, "Are you ready for the question?"
9. The Chair repeats the question (motion) and calls for the affirmative vote, then calls for the negative vote.
10. The Chair announces the result of the vote. If the vote is on any motion made subsequent to the main motion, the discussion is directed to the next ranking motion until there has been a decision concerning the main motion.

Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions are those that modify or delay action on the main motion. Such motions are in order while the main motion, or a motion of lower rank, is still pending (in the debatable stage,) and must be voted on before the main motions. Subsidiary motions have a definite order of precedence from the lowest to the highest. The lowest in rank yields to motions that are higher in rank. If several subsidiary motions are pending at one time, the vote is taken first on the motion with the highest rank, then on the motion next lower in rank, etc.

There are seven subsidiary motions as follows (listed from lowest to highest ranking):

1. **Postpone Indefinitely**

The purpose is to reject, or kill, the main motion. The form is, "I move to postpone indefinitely the motion that –." It required a second, is debatable, cannot be amended, and requires a majority vote. The affirmative vote only can be reconsidered.

2. Amend

Amend is used to change the wording of a motion. The form is, "I move to amend the motion by –." It requires a second, is debatable, can be amended, requires a majority vote and can be reconsidered. The ways to amend are: insert, strike out, strike out and insert, add, substitute.

An amendment to the main motion is called a primary amendment: An amendment to the primary amendment is called a secondary amendment. Only these two degrees or amendments are permitted. A primary amendment must relate to the main motion. A secondary amendment must relate to the primary amendment. Only one primary amendment at a time, or one secondary amendment at a time, can be pending. As soon as the amendments are disposed of by vote, another of the same class is in order.

3. Refer to Committee

The purpose of this motion is to get more information, or to get the main motion into more satisfactory form. The form is, "I move that the motions be referred to the _____ Committee," or, "I move to refer the motion _____ to a committee of _____ (number) appointed by the President to investigate) _____ and to report back at the next meeting." It requires a second, is debatable, can be amended, requires a majority vote, and cannot be reconsidered after the committee has taken up the subject.

4. Postpone Definitely

This motion is used to delay action on the pending question until a definite time, to provide more time for the members to consider the issue. The form is, "I move that the question be postponed to _____." The time to which the question is postponed must be within the tenure of the current board. It requires a second, is debatable, can be amended, requires a majority vote, and can be reconsidered.

5. Limit or Extend Debate

It is sometimes desirable to limit or extend the time a question may be discussed. The purpose of this motion is to change the adopted rules of debate. The form is, "I move that the debate on the pending motion be limited to – or "be extended to–." This motion can be applied to one or more pending motions. It requires a second, cannot be debated, can be amended, requires a two-thirds vote, and can be reconsidered.

6. Previous Question

The object of this motion is to close debate at once. The form is, "I move the previous question." This motion requires a second, is not debatable, cannot be amended, requires a two-thirds vote, cannot be reconsidered after a vote has been taken under it.

If adopted, discussion and amendments are halted, and the vote is taken immediately on the pending motion or on ALL pending motions if so stated by the mover.

7. Lay on the Table

The object of this motion is to delay action temporarily; usually in order to attend to more urgent business. The form is, "I move to lay the question on the table." It requires a majority vote, and cannot be reconsidered.

Certain Other Motions

1. Take From the Table

This motion is used to bring a tabled question back before the assembly: The form is, "I move to take from the table the question _____." It requires a second, is not debatable, cannot be amended, requires a majority vote and cannot be reconsidered.

2. Reconsider

The purpose of this motion is to bring a question already acted upon before the assembly again so that the vote may be changed. The form is, "I move to reconsider the vote on _____." It requires a second, is debatable when the motion to be reconsidered is debatable, cannot be amended, requires a majority vote, and cannot be reconsidered. This motion must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. *It must* be made the same day, or next succeeding business day; as the vote to be reconsidered was taken.

3. Rescind

When an assembly wishes to annul action previously taken and it is too late to reconsider the vote, use the motion rescind. Any member may make this motion. There is no time limit (provided no subsequent action or implementation has occurred). The form is, "I move to rescind the action on the motion _____." It requires a second, is debatable, can be amended, and requires a two-thirds vote (or a majority vote if notice of rescinding was given at the previous meeting). An affirmative vote (to rescind) cannot be reconsidered.

Incidental Motions

Incidental motions are pertinent to, take precedence of, and must be decided before the pending question. Some also originate out of business that has just been pending. Some of the incidental motions are:

1. Point of Order

Is used to call attention to a breach of the rules, does not require a second, can even interrupt a speaker. A point of order must be made at the time the breach occurs. The form is, "I raise to a point of order." The Chair asks that the point be stated and the member replies. The Chair decides the point.

2. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair

An appeal can be made from any decision of the Chair but only at the time the ruling is made. A second is required. The form is, "I appeal from the decision of the Chair." The Chair states the point at issue. An appeal is debatable when the pending question is debatable. The Chair puts the question as, "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" A majority vote or a tie vote sustains the Chair. There is no appeal from the decision of the assembly.

3. Division of a Question

The motion to divide a question can be applied only to main motions and amendments. If a motion has several parts, each one capable of standing alone if the others are taken away, it can be divided into two or more parts. Then each part is voted on separately. The exact method of dividing must be specified in the motion. The form is, "I move that the question be divided into _____." The motion to divide is not debatable, may be amended, requires a majority vote, and cannot be reconsidered.

4. Division of the Assembly

After the Chair has announced the result of a vote (taken by voice or show of hands), a member who does not agree may, without obtaining the floor, say, "I call for a division." The Chair then takes the vote again, asking the affirmative and then the negative to stand. This does not require a second, cannot be debated or amended or reconsidered. A majority vote is required to order the vote to be counted or taken by ballot.

Parliamentary Inquiry

When a member wants to inquire about a motion to use, wants information about the law or a motion, the member says, "I rise to a parliamentary inquiry." The Chair answers the inquiry. The inquiry should be pertinent to the pending business.

5. Requests for Information

A request for information must be pertinent to the pending business. "I rise for information." If information is desired of the speaker instead of the Chair, the form is, "I would like to ask the speaker a question." All remarks, questions asked, and answers given, should be addressed through the chair, as members cannot directly address each other in assembly. If the speaker consents to answer, the time consumed is taken out of the speaker's time. A request for information must be stated in the form of a question. It cannot be used as a means of debate. It may also be used to make a point of information, but *must always be put in the form of a question.*

Privileged Motions

Privileged motions, although not related to the pending question, are motions that need special attention and take precedence over the other motions.

The category most likely to be needed is **Raise a Question of Privilege**. Questions of privilege concern the rights and privileges of the assembly or of members such as: a report being read that cannot be heard; a speaker who cannot be heard; discomfort of members with respect to heating, lighting, ventilation, seating, noise, disturbances, etc.; the conduct of any individual present; accuracy of published reports.

The form is "I rise to a question of privilege affecting the assembly," or "I rise to a question of personal privilege." It does not require a second, is not debatable, cannot be amended, and is decided by the Chair. (The decision can be appealed and then a majority vote is required. The appeal is not debatable, cannot be reconsidered.)

If a question of privilege requires immediate attention such as, a speaker cannot be heard), the member may interrupt the speaker. If the question does not require immediate attention,, the member cannot interrupt the speaker.

Use of General Consent

To expedite business, the presiding officer may sometimes use the procedure of "general consent" –in cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business matters, on questions of little importance, where discussion has indicated little or no opposition to the issue.

"Under these conditions, the method of general consent can be used either to adopt a motion without steps of stating the question and putting the motion to a formal vote, or it can be used to take action without even the formality of a motion." Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised

The Chair asks: "Is there any objection to _____?" Then, if there is no objection, the chair announces the result by saying: "There being no objection, _____ will be done" or "_____ is approved by general consent."

If *one* member objects to the action's being taken in this manner, the vote must be put in the usual formal way as a single objection defeats a request for general consent.

"No member should hesitate to object if he/she feels it is desirable to do so, but should not object merely for dilatory purposes." Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised