

# Robert's Rules of Order in Brief (Newly Revised, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2000)

Reference Guide, Prepared by Speaker Michael Sass, August 2011

Edited by Speaker Nuwan Jayawickreme, February 2018

## Chapter II – The Conduct of Business in a Deliberative Assembly

- Quorum
  - Senate = Total Membership = 28. Quorum = 15.  $\frac{1}{2}$  = 14,  $\frac{3}{4}$  = 21
- Customs Observed by Members
  - When addressing the Chair, one must address him as 'Mr/s. Chairman,' or in the Senate's case, 'Mr/s. Speaker' (Which can be used in any place through this guide as opposed to Mr/s. Chairman.) In the third person, they are referred to as 'The Chair' (or like above, 'The Speaker.')
  - Members only address the Chair, or other members through the Chair.
- Customs observed by the Chair
  - Address himself as 'The Chair,' never 'I.'
  - Never address another member as 'you.'
- Obtaining and Assigning the Floor
  - The member rises and says 'Mr/s. Chairman.'
  - The Chair recognizes the member saying, "The Chair recognizes Title (In the Senate's Case = Senator) NAME"
  - If the member is not widely known to the Assembly, the member should state his name and title when rising.
- How a motion is brought to the Assembly
  - 1) A Senator makes a motion
  - 2) Another Senator seconds it
  - 3) The Chair states the question
    - The Chair is the only person who can put a question before the Assembly, and what The Chair says is what is voted on.
  - 4) The motion is voted on
    - If it passes, the motion carries
    - If it does not, the motion is lost (or rejected)
  - Making a motion – "Mr/s. Chairman, I move that (or to) ..."
  - Seconding a motion – "Mr/s. Chairman, I second the motion." or simply "Second."
    - The member need not stand.
    - No Second is needed in committees, resolutions from committees, or when nominating a member for an election

- Stating the Question
  - The Chair says, “It has been Moved and Seconded that (or to ...)” OR “It has been Moved and Seconded to adopt the following resolution. Resolved that ...” Is there any debate?
  - Consideration of a Main Motion
    - 1) Members debate the motion
    - 2) The Chair puts the question (to a vote)
    - 3) The Chair announces the results of the vote
- Debate
  - The maker of the motion has first priority.
  - Members can only speak twice on a motion (and no more than ten minutes) on the same day.
    - This can be prolonged with permission of the Assembly
    - Making a brief suggestion or asking a question does not count as a speech
  - If a member has spoken once on a motion, priority is given to one who has not yet spoken.
  - The Chair cannot enter into debate, but in committees The Chair can.
- Putting the Question
  - After debate seems to have ended, The Chair says, “Are you ready for the question?” If no one objects, The Chair states what exactly is to be voted on, and proceeds with the vote.
  - The vote on a motion is normally done by voice (Viva Voce, pronounced VIE-vuh VOE-see). It can also be done by rising, a show of hands, by ballot, or by a roll call vote.
- Verifying an Inconclusive Vote
  - At any time after a vote has taken place, a member can rise without recognition and say “Division!” or The Chair can do this themselves if they are in doubt of the vote.
  - Division, called Division of the Assembly, is the process of retaking a vote by a rising vote. A member can call for it from the time the negative votes are cast until the announcement of the result (and if it is prompt, until the question is stated on another question).
  - The member can demand one by calling out “Division!,” “I call for (demand) a Division,” or, “I doubt the result of the vote.” The vote can be counted on The Chair’s own initiative, or by vote of the Assembly.
- Unanimous (or General) Consent
  - In cases where there seems to be no opposition, The Chair can ask for general consent. It can be used to adopt motions without going through the formal

process. For example, passing the minutes, adjourning a meeting, or giving extra time to a member who has exhausted his 10 minutes.

- To ask for unanimous consent, The Chair asks, “If there is no (any) objection ...” “Seeing none, ...” if someone does object, which a member can by saying “I object,” then the action which The Chair wished to take must be treated like any other motion, (with a motion, second, debate, and a vote).

### **Chapter III – Description of Motions in All Classifications**

1. Main Motion – Brings Business before the Assembly
2. Subsidiary Motion – Changes the Main Motion
3. Privileged Motion – Does something but not in connection with the Main Motion
4. Incidental Motion – Does something to better handle the Main Motion
5. Motions that bring a question again before the Assembly – Undo or Change a Previous Motion.
  1. Take from the Table
  2. Rescind (Repeal or Annual). In the same aspect, to Amend Something Previously Adopted
  3. Discharge a Committee
  4. Reconsider
    - The middle three are all Secondary Motions. When a Secondary Motion is placed before the Assembly, it becomes the immediate pending question. The Secondary Motion therefore takes precedence over the Main Motion.

### **Chapter IV – Meeting and Session**

- Terms
  - Recess – A Short Intermission or break. The meeting does not end, and members are free to move about and talk, but are expected to remain nearby.
  - Standing at Ease – The Chair, without objection, can call for it. It is a brief pause in the meeting, not an interruption, and members are expected to remain in their places but some talking may occur.
  - Adjournment – Terminates the meeting

### **Chapter V – The Main Motion**

- Member: “I move that (or to) ...”

### **Chapter VI – Subsidiary Motion**

1. Postpone Indefinitely – Adoption kills the main motion
  - Member: “I move to postpone the motion indefinitely” OR “I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely.”

2. Amend – Adoption modifies the main motion. Must always be germane.
  1. Two degrees of amendment – primary and secondary. A primary amendment is the first amendment offered. A secondary amendment, which amends the first amendment, cannot be amended further.
    - The Preamble of a resolution can only be amended after the resolving clauses have
    - Types of Amendments
      1. To Insert, or to Add,
        - i. Words
        - ii. Paragraphs
          - Once words or paragraphs are added, they cannot be taken away (struck out) except with a motion to reconsider the amendment
      2. Strike Out
        - i. Words
        - ii. Paragraphs
      3. Strike Out and Insert
        - i. Strike Out and Insert (applying to words)
        - ii. Substitute (applying to Paragraphs)
    - Friendly Amendments
      - i. There is no such thing. Phrases like “A Friendly Amendment” should not be used. Instead, the member should offer it like any other amendment.
    - Form
      - i. Member: “I move to (insert the words, or paragraph ...) (or strike out the words, or paragraph ...) (or strike out the words ... and insert the words ...) (or substitute ...)
3. Refer to a Committee – Sends a pending motion to a committee (or creates one in the process) so the committee can make it into a better condition for the Assembly to consider
  - Member: “I move to refer the motion to the ... committee.” OR “I move to recommit the motion.” OR “I move to refer to a committee... (of X members) (appointed by The Chair/elected by open nominations etc...)
4. Postpone to a Certain Time (Postpone Defiantly, or Postpone) – Action on a pending motion can be put off until a definite day, time, place, or after a certain event
  - Member: “I move to postpone the motion to (or until) ...” OR “I move that the question be postponed to (or until) ...”
5. Previous Question – Immediately closes debate. No subsidiary motions are allowed after this, except to Lay on the Table
  - Member: “I move (or call for, or demand) the previous question.”

- i. If many motions are pending and a member says, “I move the previous question on all pending motions,” and it is voted on and passes, the motions are handled in the descending order of precedence.
6. Lay on the Table – Puts the pending motion off to an indefinite time until it is taken up before the Assembly again
  - Member: “I move to lay the motion on the table.” OR “I move that the resolution be laid on the table.”

### **Chapter VII – Privileged Motion**

1. Recess – Short intermission in the Assembly’s proceedings
  - Member: “I move that the meeting recess until (or for) ... (or until called to order by the Chair)”
  - The Chair: (After it has been seconded, and voted in the affirmative) “The ayes have it, the meeting will recess for (or until) ...” [Rapping the gavel once, if desired.
2. Adjourn – Means to close a meeting
  - Member: “I move to adjourn.” OR “I move that the meeting [now] adjourn.”

### **Chapter VIII – Incidental Motion**

1. Appeal – Two members (one motioning it, another seconding it) can appeal a decision of The Chair. Members have no right to criticize the rulings of The Chair unless they appeal the decision.
2. Division of a Question – When a motion contains several parts, and each can stand on its own (easily separated), a division would separate the motion and each piece would be voted on as if it were a distinct question
  - Member: “Mr. Chairman, I move to divide the resolution into ... (or, resolution so as to consider separately the question of ...”
3. Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim – A report or long motion consisting of several resolutions or paragraphs etc... that are not totally separate questions can be considered separately, without the division of the question.
  - Member: “Mr. Chairman, I move that the resolution (or the platform etc ...) be considered by paragraph (or seriatim).”
4. Division of the Assembly – If a member doubts a voice vote or a show of hands, the member can call for a Division, requiring the vote to be taken by rising.
  - Member: “Division!,” OR “I call for (demand) a Division,” OR “I doubt the result of the vote.”
  - The Chair: “A division has been called for (or demanded).”
5. Requests and Inquires – In connection with business in a meeting, members may wish to obtain information or to do or have something done that requires permission of the Assembly.

- a) Parliamentary Inquiry – A question directed to The Chair to obtain information on a matter of parliamentary law or the rules of the organization bearing on the business at hand. It is not subject to an appeal as it is an opinion.
  - b) Point of Information – A request directed to The Chair (or through him to another member) for information relevant to the business at hand
    1. All are in order if another has the floor and it requires immediate attention
    2. A Parliamentary Inquiry and a Point of Information do not require a second. The others do not require a second, except when formally moved by the maker of the request.
    3. All are not debatable
    4. All are not amendable
    5. No vote is taken in Parliamentary Inquiry and a Point of information.
    6. A Parliamentary Inquiry and a Point of information cannot be reconsidered
  - Forms
    - i. Parliamentary Inquiry
      1. Member: “Mr/s. Chairman, I rise to a parliamentary inquiry.”
      2. The Chair: “The member will state the inquiry.”
    - ii. Point of Information
      1. Member: “Mr/s. Chairman, I rise to a point of information.”
      2. The Chair: “The member will state the point.”
      - If the Member A wants to ask Member B (who is speaking) a question.
        - a. Member A: “Mr/s. Chairman, will the member yield for a question?”
- OR
- Member A: “Mr/s. Chairman, I would like to ask the member a question.”

### **Chapter IX – Motions That Bring a Question Before the Assembly**

1. Take From the Table – Take up a question that was tabled at the same meeting or at a previous meeting
  - Member: “I move to take form the table the resolution relating to ... and (if applicable) its amendment.”

### **Chapter XI – Quorum; Order of Business and Related Concepts**

1. Quorum – The number of voting members who must be present in order that business can be legally transacted

- “The quorum should be as large a number of members as can reasonably be depended on to be present at any meeting, except in very bad weather or other exceptionally unfavorable conditions.”
2. Usual Order of Business in Ordinary Society
    1. Reading and Approval of the Minutes
      - i. The Chair says “The Secretary will read the minutes.” The Secretary does so standing.
      - ii. If the minutes are sent to members in advanced, the reading of the minutes may be waived.
      - iii. In any event, The Chair asks, “Are there any correction to the minutes?” If there are, it is usually easiest to handle them by unanimous consent.
      - iv. It is easiest to approve the minutes by unanimous consent, but a formal motion is not out of order. The Chair says, “If there are no objections, the minutes stand approved (as corrected).”
    2. Report of Officers and Standing Committees
      - i. Recommendations arising out of an officer’s report or a committee report should be taken up immediately after the report is finished.
      - ii. Recommendations from an officer’s report should be motioned by another member. It is not so in the case of a committee’s report; the reporting committee chairman can make the necessary motion.

## **Chapter XII – Assignment of the Floor; Debate**

1. When a member rises when the floor can be granted only for limited purposes, and The Chair is in doubt that the member knows this, they may ask, “For what purpose does the member (or the gentleman or the lady) rise?”
2. The Chair, citing neutrality, should not enter into debate. To participate in debate, he must relinquish the chair to, the vice-president, the ranking vice-president who has not spoken on the question, or if the other two are not available, to a member designated by The Chair with Assembly approval. If it does not pass unanimous consent, then The Chair’s pick is treated as a nomination.
3. In debate and assignment to the floor, some special rules apply.
  - The maker of the motion is allowed to go first
  - A member who has not already spoken is entitled to go before someone who already has
  - The Chair should try to alternate between those who support the motion and those who do not.

## **Chapter XIII - Voting**

1. Every member has a right to abstain from voting. A member must abstain from voting if the member has a direct personal or pecuniary interest not common to other members. A

member need not abstain from voting for oneself in an election, or when other members are included in the motion.

2. Regular Methods of Voting
  - By Voice (viva voce (pronounced: viva vo-c) – normal method
  - By Rising – used for verifying, and where a two-thirds vote is needed
  - By Show of Hands
3. Votes are usually not counted, unless the result is in doubt. The Chair, on his own accord, can have the vote counted, or a member can move so.
4. Other Voting Methods
  - By Ballot – Can be ordered by majority of the Assembly
    - i. The Chair appoints tellers (and a chairman) to distribute, collect, and count the ballots, and report their findings
    - ii. The way to fold the ballots should be announced in advance
    - iii. The polls can close by a two-thirds vote, but it is best for The Chair to close them. He says, “Have all voted who wish to do so? [Pause] If no one else wishes to vote, the polls are closed.” (Thus in effect it is done by unanimous consent)
    - iv. When the ballots have been collected and counted, the chairman addresses The Chair, and hands the result to The Chair without declaring the result, which is done by The Chair.

## **Chapter XV – Officers; Minutes and Officer’s Reports**

1. Minutes – Contains what was done at a meeting, not what was said
  - a. Not needed:
    - i. Seconders of a motion
    - ii. Text of Officers’ or Committee Reports
      1. Only if of great importance can the Assembly order it “entered into the minutes.” Instead, the minutes should just show that a report was given, and include any recommendations.
    - iii. Respectfully Submitted
  2. When approved, the Secretary should write “Approved,” initial and date them.

## **Chapter XVI – Boards and Committees**

1. Committees
  - a. Methods of Appointment – If there is no prescribed method in the by-laws or rules, the members of the Assembly can decide the method by unanimous consent or by majority vote at the time the committee is appointed. In a special committee, the method of appointment can be specified in the motion to create the special committee.
    - i. By Ballot



- ii. From the Floor with a viva-voce election
    - iii. From The Chair – Who names who he wishes to be chairman first.  
Whether these are nominations or appointments
    - iv. By adoption of a motion – usually in special committees
  - b. Can have power beyond the Assembly’s purview.
  - c. Can have members who are not members of the Assembly. These members though do not count in a quorum, or determining a quorum. This also applies when The Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees.
- 2. Conduct of Business
  - a. The Chairman can enter into debate, and has full voting powers.
- 3. Report of a Committee
  - a. Is given by the Chairman of the committee. But this does not have to be so, as another member can be the reporting member. If the Chairman of the committee is the Chairman of the Assembly, he should not give the report but another should.
  - b. If there is a resolution and some on the committee voted against it, the opposition can give a minority report if they wished.
  - c. Recommendations
    - i. If resolutions follow the report of a committee, the reporting committee member (if it is not The Chair of the Assembly) makes the necessary motion to implement the recommendations. No second is required (if it is a committee of more than one), as it made on behalf of the committee.
    - ii. Should always be in writing, and if it is of significant importance, signed by all concurring members. If concurring members sign, there is no need for the chairman to be singled out, or put, Respectfully Submitting. But, the concurring members can authorize only the chairman to sign. If this were to happen, the word chairman would appear after his name.
  - d. Form
    - i. The ...Committee (or, The committee which was appointed to recommend ...) reports ... . The committee therefore recommends the following Resolution, .... Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, I move the adoption of (or, to adopt) the resolution just read.

# *Robert's Rules of Order*



## **Undebatable Motions**

- Previous question (close debate)
- Lay on the table
- Take from the table
- Recess (as a privileged motion)
- Adjourn
- Point of order
- Division of the assembly
- Division of the question

## **Motions That Take a Two-Thirds Vote**

In general, a two-thirds vote is required for any motion that takes rights away from members

- Previous Question (close debate)
- Close Nominations or Close the Polls

# Henry Martyn Robert

- Born in South Carolina
  - May 2, 1837
- An 1857 graduate of West Point as an Army Engineer
- 1874 – 1875 wrote his rules
- Became Chief of Engineers in 1901
- Retired from the Army in 1901 as a Brigadier General
- Died in New York
  - May 11, 1923



## How Did it Start?

- In Post-Civil War San Francisco, he was asked to preside over a Church meeting but did not know how. He conducted the meeting anyway (we don't know what was said) and was embarrassed by it. So he decided to do something about it and after studying many books on the subject, wrote his own book on parliamentary rules.
  - It was based off of the rules used by the House of Representatives (Originally drafted by Thomas Jefferson) and on English parliamentary procedure.

# Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart

Based on Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take break	I move to recess for ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<b>YOU SAY:</b>	<b>INTERRUPT?</b>	<b>2ND?</b>	<b>DEBATE?</b>	<b>AMEND?</b>	<b>VOTE?</b>
Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None
Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Demand a rising vote	I move for a rising vote	Yes	No	No	No	None
Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	None
Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<b>YOU SAY:</b>	<b>INTERRUPT?</b>	<b>2ND?</b>	<b>DEBATE?</b>	<b>AMEND?</b>	<b>VOTE?</b>
Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Cancel previous action	I move to rescind ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or Majority with notice
Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider ...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority