

Basic Parliamentary Procedures: Conducting your Business Meeting

Parliamentary Procedure is a set of rules for conduct at meetings. It allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

Parliamentary Procedure has a long history. It originated in the early English Parliaments (discussions of public affairs). It came to America with the first settlers and became uniform in 1876, when Henry M. Robert published his manual on Parliamentary Law (*Robert's Rules of Order*).

Today *Robert's Rules of Order New Revised* is the basic handbook of parliamentary procedures used by most clubs, organizations and other groups.

IAHCSMM uses parliamentary procedures to conduct its meetings because they provide a time-tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. The procedures can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Knowing the basic rules of parliamentary procedures will help IAHCSMM Chapter Representatives to understand the proper procedures that are followed at association meetings and will serve as a guide when conducting business on the chapter level.

Order of Business

Organizations using a parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business at their meetings. A typical example is:

- I. **Call to Order.** The Chairperson says, "The meeting will please come to order."
- II. **Roll Call.** Member say "present" as their names are called.
- III. **Minutes.** The secretary reads a record of the last meeting or provides copies for members to read (possibly before the meeting begins).
- IV. **Officers' Report.** These are often limited to a report from the treasurer, but others may report at this time.
- V. **Committee Reports.** First are reports from "standing" or permanent committees; then reports from "ad hoc" (special) committees are presented.
- VI. **Special Orders.** Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting is discussed.
- VII. **Unfinished Business.** Business left over from previous meetings is reviewed.
- VIII. **New Business.** Introduction of new topics can be made.
- IX. **Announcements.** Informing the assembly of other subjects and events is appropriate at this point in the meeting.
- X. **Adjournment.** The meeting ends by a vote or by general consent.

Quorum

The number of members that must be present for business to be conducted legally is called a quorum. The actual number is usually stated in the Bylaws of the organization.

Motions

Members who wish to participate in meetings do so by making motions. A motion is a proposal that the assembly take a stand or action on some issue.

There are four parts to a motion:

- 1) **Present Motion** -- make a proposal, "I move.."
- 2) **Second Motion** -- express support for discussion of another member's motion, "I second the motion."
- 3) **Debate Motion** -- give opinions on the motion.
- 4) **Vote** on the Motion -- make a decision.

There are four types of motions:

- 1) **Main Motions:** Introduce subjects to the assembly for its consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions. Example: "I move that we purchase..".
- 2) **Subsidiary Motions:** Change or affect how the main motion is handled (voted on before the main motion). Example: "I move the question before the assembly be amended by striking out..".
- 3) **Privileged Motions:** Are most urgent... about special or important matters not related to pending business. Example: "I move that we adjourn...".
- 4) **Incidental Motions:** Are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions... must be considered before the other motion. Example: "I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of...".

Questions relating to motions:

Is it in order?

A motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous or against the Bylaws.

Can a speaker be interrupted?

Some motions are so important that the speaker may be interrupted to make them. The original speaker regains the floor after the interruption has been attended to.

Does a motion need a second?

Usually, yes. A second indicates that another member would like to consider a motion. It prevents spending time on a question which interests only one person.

Is a motion debatable?

Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full debate on most motions. Some privileged and incidental motions are not debatable.

Can a motion be amended?

Some motions can be altered by striking out or inserting (or both at once). Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion.

What vote is needed?

Most motions require only a majority vote, but motions concerning the rights of the assembly or its members need 2/3 vote to be adopted.

Can a motion be reconsidered?

Some motions can be re-debated and re-voted to give members a chance to change their minds. The move to reconsider must come from the winning side.

How to present a motion:

1) Obtain the floor.

- a) Wait until the last speaker is finished.
- b) Rise and address the chair. Say, "Mr. (or Madam) Chairperson" or Mr. (or Madam) President."
- c) Give your name. The chair will recognize you by repeating it.

2) Make the motion.

- a) Speak clearly and concisely.
- b) State you motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we...instead of "I move that we do not.."
- c) Avoid personalities and stay on the subject.

3) Wait for a second.

- a) Another member will say, "I second the motion."
- b) Alternatively, the chair will call for a second.
- c) If there is no second, your motion is lost.

4) Chair states motion.

The chairperson must say, "It is moved and seconded that we..."After this happens, debate or voting can occur. The motion is now "assembly property", and it can't change without consent of the members.

5) Expand on the motion.

- a) Mover is allowed to speak first.
- b) Direct all comments to chairperson.
- c) Keep to the time limit for speaking (sometimes stated in the Bylaws).
- d) After all other speakers are finished, the person who made the motion can speak again.
- e) You may speak a third time by a motion to suspend the rules with a 2/3 vote.

6) Putting the question.

- a) The Chairperson asks, "Are you ready for the question?"
- b) If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
- c) Alternatively, the motion for previous question may be adopted.

7) Vote on a motion:

- a) By Voice. The chairperson asks those in favor to say "aye" and those opposed to say "no". (For majority votes only.) A member may move for an exact count.
- b) By show of hands. Members raise their hands as sight verification of or alternative to a voice vote. It does not require a count. A member may move for exact count.
- c) By roll call. Each member answers "Yes" or "no" as his or her name is called when a record of each person's vote is needed.

- d) By ballot. Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This is done when secrecy is desired.
- e) By general consent. When a motion isn't likely to be opposed, the chairperson says, "If there is no objection..." Members show agreement by their silence. If someone says, "object," the matter must be put to a vote.

A question (motion) is **pending** when it has been stated by the chair but not yet voted on. The last motion stated by the chair is the first pending. The main motion is always the last voted on.

A **motion to table** is often used in an attempt to "kill" a motion. There is always the option to "take from the table" any motion for reconsideration by the assembly.

A **motion to postpone indefinitely** is a parliamentary strategy. This allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against it. It is useful in case of a badly chosen main motion for which either "yes" or "no" vote would have undesirable consequences.

Closing Note

Parliamentary procedure is the best way to get things done in meetings. It only works if it is done correctly!

- ✓ **Make motions that are in order.**
- ✓ **Obtain the floor properly.**
- ✓ **Speak clearly and concisely.**
- ✓ **Obey the rules of debate.**
- ✓ **BE COURTEOUS.**

Glossary

Adjourn: To end a meeting.

Amend: To change a motion.

Committee: A group of members chosen for a certain task.

Debate: Discussion about a motion.

General Consent: Accepting a motion.

In order: Relevant to the business at hand.

Majority: More than one-half of the members.

Motion: A proposal that the assembly take a stand or take action on some issue.

Order of Business: Business to be considered during a meeting.

Quorum: Number of members that must be present to conduct business legally.

Robert Rule's of Order Newly Revised: Manual of procedures for non-legislative assemblies.

Second: A verbal signal from a member that he or she wishes to consider a motion just made.

Voting: Means by which motions are accepted or rejected by the assembly.

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

In order of precedence:

TO DO THIS:	YOU MAY SAY THIS:	May you Interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is needed?	Can it be reconsidered?
Adjourn meeting.	"I move that we adjourn."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Call an intermission.	"I move that we recess for..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
Complain about heat, noise, etc.	"I rise to a question of privilege."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No usually
Suspend further consideration of an issue	"I move to table the motion."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
End debate and amendments	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No ¹
Postpone discussion for a certain time	"I move to postpone the discussion until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Give closer study of something.	"I move to refer the matter to committee."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes ²
Amend a motion.	"I move to amend the motion by..."	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Majority	Yes
Introduce business.	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes

1,2,3 – See notes on last page.

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

No Order:

TO DO THIS:	YOU MAY SAY THIS:	May you Interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is needed?	Can it be reconsidered?
Protest breach of rules of conduct.	"I rise to a point of order."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote ⁴	No
Vote on a ruling of the chair.	"I appeal the chair's decision."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority ⁵	Yes
Suspend rules temporarily.	"I move to suspend the rules so that..."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
Avoid considering an improper matter.	"I object to consideration of this motion."	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 ⁶	⁷
Verify a voice vote by having members stand.	"I call for a division" or "Division!"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Request information.	"Point of information."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Take up a matter previously tabled.	"I move to take from the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Reconsider a hasty action.	"I move to reconsider the vote on..."	Yes	Yes	⁸	No	Majority	No

4,5,6,7,8 – See notes on next page.

NOTES:

1. Unless vote on question is not yet taken.
2. Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.
3. Only if the motion to be amended is debatable.
4. Except in doubtful cases.
5. A majority vote in negative needed to reverse ruling of chair.
6. A 2/3 vote in negative needed to prevent consideration of main motion.
7. Only if the main question or motion was not, in fact, considered.
8. Only if motion to be reconsidered is debatable.