



# Simple Parliamentary Procedure

*Guidelines for Better Business Meetings*

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**H**ave you ever been to an out-of-control meeting? A meeting where two or three items were discussed at once? A meeting where you never had a chance to express your views? A meeting where a vote was never taken and, in the end, the president made the final decision? Chances are, you and several other members left the meeting feeling as if nothing was accomplished.

Meetings don't have to be that way. An orderly, well conducted meeting, on a community, county, area, or state basis, should be the goal of every officer and member. In order for a presiding officer to conduct a good business meeting, the entire membership should be informed of parliamentary procedure. Parliamentary procedure helps the officers and members follow a logical order in conducting a meeting.

Each member should consider the five principles of parliamentary law:

- Courtesy and justice to all.
- Consider only one thing at a time.
- The majority rules.
- The minority must be heard.
- The purpose is to facilitate action.

## Parliamentary Courtesies

Courtesies are expected of all members.

1. Stand when addressing the president, as in making a motion, discussing a question before the house, or making a committee report.
2. Address the president as "Madam Chairman" or "Madam President."
3. Sit down promptly when finished talking.
4. Do not speak during the business meeting except when addressing the chair and then only after having been properly recognized.
5. Never talk or whisper to another member during the meeting.
6. Never stand to get recognition from the president when another member has the floor.
7. Confine discussion to the question before the group.
8. Refer to an officer by her official title, to members by "the member who spoke last" or otherwise designate members, but not by their names.
9. Willingly accept the decision of the majority.
10. Be punctual for club meetings.

## Reminders for the Presiding Officer

1. Correct procedure should always be your goal.
2. If dealing with motions or amendments, always state the exact wording. Ask the secretary to read it if you forget how it was phrased.
3. Discussion is not in order until the motion has been stated by the chair.
4. The chair does not enter discussion while presiding. As a member of the assembly, the chair is entitled to his or her vote.
5. Always indicate clearly how a vote is to be taken. Never call for "the usual sign."
6. Always call for the negative vote, saying, "Those opposed say 'no.'"
7. Adoption of an amendment does not mean adoption of the main motion. Remember to state the main motion as amended.
8. It is better to say: "The motion is out of order" than "The member is out of order."

## Order of Business

An order of business or agenda is simply a plan for conducting the business of the group in a logical, organized manner. An agenda helps a meeting go smoother and faster, and lessens the possibility of items of business being overlooked or forgotten. Every meeting should have an agenda. A typical agenda or order of business is discussed below.

## Agenda

1. *Call to Order.* The president calls the meeting to order after he has determined a quorum is present. The president says, "The meeting will come to order."
2. *Opening Ceremonies.* Religious, patriotic, or other opening ceremonies prescribed by the organization, including a roll call if customary, are held at this time. Religious ceremonies, such as an invocation, precede other activities. The roll call should be the last part of the opening ceremonies.

*See page 9 for parliamentary terms to know.*

*Note:* Program may be inserted here (See #9).

3. *Reading of the Minutes.* The chair asks the secretary to read the minutes. Following the reading the chair asks, "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" The chair responds, "The minutes are approved as read," or "as corrected."

4. *Reports of Officers and Standing Committees.* The chair recognizes officers who have reports. The secretary is asked to read correspondence. The treasurer is asked to give the treasurer's report. Any other elected officers who may have reports are called upon. If the chair is uncertain about a report, the chair may ask, "Does the historian have a report?"

Standing committees are called on for reports in the order they are listed in the by-laws. Motions arising out of these reports should be handled immediately.

5. *Reports of Special Committees.* Any special committees who are to report should be called on in the order in which they were appointed.

6. *Unfinished Business.* When the minutes show that the decision on some item of business was postponed to the present meeting or that a question from a previous meeting is pending, it should be listed on the agenda under unfinished business. The chair should not ask, "Is there any unfinished business?" but simply proceed through the items listed. An idea discussed informally at the previous meeting and agreed to be brought up at the next meeting should be included under new business.

7. *New Business.* After unfinished business is taken care of the chair asks, "Is there any new business?" At this point members may introduce new items of business. As long as members are claiming the floor to introduce business, the chair may not deprive them of their rights by hurrying through the proceedings.

8. *Announcements.* When all new business has been handled and no member wishes to bring further items to the group for consideration, the chair proceeds to announcements. However, urgent announcements may be made by the chair at any point during the meeting.

9. *Program.* The program is usually presented before the meeting is adjourned since the group may want to take action as a result of the information provided. It is acceptable to have the program at the beginning of the meeting. To move the program to an unscheduled portion of the agenda, the chair simply says, "If there are no objections, we will have our program at this time."

## How to Present and Dispose of a Motion

A motion is the method by which business is brought before an assembly. Motions may grow out of reports or other communication. Often a committee report, letter, or memorandum will introduce information the assembly wishes to take action on. The procedure used in handling a motion is described by the following series of steps.

### Step 1: Obtaining the Floor

Before a motion can be made, the member of the assembly first must obtain the floor; that is, the member must be recognized by the chair as having the exclusive right to be heard. The chair must recognize any member who seeks to obtain the floor and is entitled to it. To be recognized, the member rises when no one else has the floor and addresses the presiding officer by the proper title, such as Mr. President, Madam President, or Madam Chairman. The chair normally recognizes the member by announcing the person's name or title or by saying, "The chair recognizes the member to my right." In a small group or where it is obvious only one person is seeking the floor, the chair may recognize that person by nodding to him. Once the member is recognized and has the floor, no one else may interrupt.

### Step 2: Making a Motion

A member makes a motion by simply stating, "I move that ...." As soon as the member has stated the motion he is seated. The member will have the right to speak first in debate, if he wishes, after the chair has stated the question. If the motion has not been heard it can be repeated by the maker, the chair, or the secretary. (Motion classifications are discussed later.)

### Step 3: Seconding a Motion

After a motion has been made another member seconds the motion by saying "I second the motion," or "Second." The member seconding a motion does not have to rise or obtain the floor. A second to a motion indicates that another member wishes the question to be considered by the assembly; it does not necessarily mean that he is in favor of the motion. If no one seconds a motion immediately upon its being made, the chair normally asks, "Is there a second to the motion?"

Once the motion is seconded the chair understands that there are at least two members of the assembly who wish to consider this question and he states the ques-

tion, thus placing it before the assembly. The motion now belongs to the group and the maker may no longer withdraw the motion without the assembly's consent. If there is no second, the motion is not before the assembly and the chair moves on to the next item of business. Motions made by direction of a board or committee do not need a second since they are made by a majority vote within the committee and are desired by more than one member of the group.

### **Step 4: Debating the Motion**

Immediately after the chair states the motion he should ask, "Is there any discussion?" or "Are you ready for the question?" The person making the motion has the right to speak first and should be allowed to do so. The maker of the motion is not required to speak. However, if he chooses to do so he must speak in favor of the motion. During the discussion each member has the right to speak twice on the same question. No members may speak the second time as long as another member who has not spoken on the question desires the floor. Speakers must limit their remarks to the pending question. They should address the chair; speak in a courteous tone, avoid personalities, and under no circumstances attack or question the motives of another person. The question, not the person, is the subject of debate. The presiding officer cannot close debate as long as any member wishes to discuss the question.

### **Step 5: Putting the Question (calling for a vote)**

When it appears that debate has ended, the presiding officer asks, "Are you ready for the question?" or "Is there further discussion?" If no one rises to obtain the floor the chair again states the motion and calls for the vote. "As many as are in favor, say 'aye.' Those opposed, 'no.'" The vote is usually taken by voice vote, but may be a standing vote or by show of hands. The chair always asks for the negative vote, even when the affirmative appears unanimous. The maker of the motion is not allowed to speak against the motion but may vote against it.

### **Step 6: Announcing the Results**

The chair announces the result of the vote immediately, including:

1. Which side has won. Example: "The ayes have it."
2. The result of the voting. Example: "The motion carries."
3. The action that must result. Example: "The club will ...."

## **Classification of Motions**

Motions are classified into four types depending upon their purpose.

1. Main motions are used to introduce a main item or question of business to the group. Only one main motion may be before the group at a time. It must be disposed of before another item may be considered. There are other procedural motions which may be considered, but only one main motion may be considered at a time.

2. Subsidiary motions will modify, defer, remove, or dispose of the main motion. Subsidiary motions take precedence over main motions; they must be handled first. They include motions to:

- lay an item of business on the table,
- close debate,
- limit or extend debate,
- postpone to a fixed time,
- refer to committee, and
- amend or postpone indefinitely.

3. Privilege motions relate to order and the rights and welfare of the members. They rank higher than subsidiary motions or main motions. They include motions to:

- call for the orders of the day,
- adjourn,
- recess,
- raise a question of privilege, and
- set the time to adjourn.

4. Incidental motions relate to procedures. Incidental motions have no rank and are considered before the motions from which they stem. Incidental motions include those that:

- appeal a ruling of the chair,
- suspend the rules,
- rise to a point of order,
- withdraw motions,
- reconsider,
- rescind, and
- take from the table.

The table on pages 10 and 11 lists the types of motions and the procedure for handling each.

# Minutes

The minutes of the organization become the permanent record of the group's actions. The minutes are a record of facts, not opinion. They are a record of what happened and not the thoughts or feelings of members or officers. The secretary is responsible for recording and keeping the minutes of all meetings. They should be written clearly, in a manner that leaves no room to question actions taken by the assembly. An absent member should be able to read the minutes and have a clear understanding of the business transacted at the meeting. All names should be clearly recorded, such as Nancy Jones not Ms. Jones.

The following guidelines for writing minutes suggest a format which will aid the secretary in preparing the minutes of each meeting.

## Guidelines for Writing Minutes

1. Include in the first paragraph:
  - the kind of meeting (regular, special, annual, etc.),
  - the name of the group,
  - the date, time, and place of the meeting,
  - whether or not the president and secretary were present and, in their absence, the name of their substitute(s), and
  - the disposition of the minutes of the last meeting.

### Example

The regular meeting of the Summerville Extension Homemakers' club was held on September 3, 1985, at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Jane Smith, 444 Main Street, Summerville, KY. The president being the chair and the secretary being present, Mary Jones presented the devotion for the evening. Following the roll call of members, the minutes of the last meeting were approved as read.

2. The body should include a separate paragraph for each subject matter and should show:
  - A. All main motions or motions to bring a main question before the assembly, the exception being motions which were withdrawn. When recording a motion, include:
    - the exact wording of the motion as adopted or otherwise disposed of,
    - the disposition of the motion, including temporary disposition, and any primary or secondary amendments and all adhering secondary amendments that were pending, and

- usually, the name of the person making the motion in all important motions.
- B. All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, and reasons given by the chair for the ruling.

### Example

The treasurer reported a disbursement of \$15.75 to the Summerville Florist for the annual meeting centerpiece, leaving a balance of \$168.15 as of September 2, 1985.

The scholarship committee report was received and placed on file.

The special committee that was appointed to investigate the possibility of the club contributing to the "Community Pantry" reported. Joan Thomason, the chairman, moved that each club member bring canned or packaged food items to the October, November, and December meetings to be contributed to the community project. After debate, the motion was adopted.

Lori Brown moved that the club pay the \$5.00 registration fee and the luncheon costs for both the club president and vice president who will be attending the State Homemakers' Leadership Workshop in Lexington, KY, November 10-12. The motion was seconded and carried.

The president announced the next meeting would be October 5 at Liz Trotter's home, 615 Appleton Way at 7:00 p.m.

The president introduced the program, "Weight Reduction with a Balanced Diet" presented by June Chaney and Barbara Dillon.

### 3. Closing

- A. The last paragraph of the minutes should contain the hour of adjournment.
- B. The minutes should be signed by the secretary or the person who took the minutes.

### Example

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

 Secretary  
Helen Madison



## Treasurer's Report

At each meeting of the organization, the chair may ask for a report from the treasurer. This report may be a statement of the balance on hand or the balance minus outstanding obligations. This report requires no action by the group.

However, the treasurer is required to make a full financial statement once a year and in some cases more often. An annual report always should be audited. If an annual report has not been audited prior to the meeting, the chair will say, "The financial report will be referred to the auditing committee."

When the amount of money is quite large, it is advisable to use independent accountants. This can be expensive and should be budgeted. In many organizations the financial statements are audited by two or more of its members. This committee is usually appointed in advance of the annual meeting and the financial statement is prepared early to assist the committee in completing their work.

When the auditor's report consists of an endorsement of the treasurer's financial report by stating that it has been found to be correct, the treasurer can simply read this statement at the end of the report. If needed, the chairman of the auditing committee can present a detailed report at this time. The chair then asks the members if they want to adopt the auditor's report. The adoption of this report simply relieves the treasurer of responsibility for the period covered in the report, except in case of fraud.

If the auditor finds the treasurer's books incorrect, the assembly may approve the auditor's report and consider the incorrect handling of funds as an item under new business. Or, the assembly may choose not to approve the auditor's report and may ask for a new auditor.

The form and content of the financial report will depend on the size of the organization, frequency of reporting, the nature of the activities, etc. The financial report is made to provide information to the members. A report of details and separate payments that make it difficult to understand should be avoided.

## Elections of Officers

The bylaws of the group usually specify the procedure for the election of officers of the organization. However, if this is not the case for your group, the following procedures may be used.

### Nominations

Nominations can be secured in several ways. The two most common are nominations from the floor and nominations by committee.

### Procedure for floor nominations

For nominations from the floor, the chair declares the floor open for nominations and any member may nominate another member. The chair does not have to recognize the member for a nomination to be made. The member simply stands and says, "Madam Chairman, I nominate Susie Martin." No second is required for a nomination. Unless an objection is made, a member may nominate more than one person for an office, as long as there are not other members wishing to nominate someone. The same person can be nominated for more than one office. If elected to more than one office, the member may choose the office he prefers. If the member is absent the group will decide by vote and then elect a person to fill the other office.

#### Chair/President:

*"Nominations are now in order for the office of president."*

#### Member:

*"I nominate Ms. A."*

#### Chair/President:

*"Ms. A is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of president?"*

The chair proceeds in this manner through all offices in the order the offices are listed in the by-laws, until nominations have been made for each office.

### Procedure for committee nominations

If a nominating committee is used, it should be elected by the members of the organization or the executive board. The president should not appoint this committee, nor be an ex-officio member of the committee. In most organizations the bylaws will provide guidelines for an election using a nominating committee. Any member of a nominating committee also may become a nominee for an office. Normally members of the committee will contact each person they wish to nominate to ensure that the candidate will accept the position if elected.

The reporting procedure to be used by the nominating committee is usually specified in the bylaws. Often it is prior to the meeting where the election is to take place. It always should be formally presented at a regular meeting even if the membership has had prior notification.

**Chair/President:**

*“Will the chairman present the report of the nominating committee?”*

**Chairman of nominating committee:**

*“Madam President, the nominating committee submits the following nominations: For president, Mrs. A; for vice president, Mrs. B; and for secretary-treasurer, Mrs. C.”  
(continue for all vacancies)*

**Chair/President:**

*“Mrs. A has been nominated for president. Are there any further nominations for president?”*

(If there is a nomination from the floor the chair repeats the name of the nominee.)

*“Mrs. D has been nominated for president. Are there any further nominations?”*

**Chair/President:**

*“Mrs. B has been nominated for vice president.” Are there any further nominations for vice president?”*

(The chair proceeds in this manner through all offices.)

*“Are there any further nominations for any of the offices?  
[pause] Hearing none. The chair declares the nominations closed.”*

## Voting

As with nominations, most organizations will have a prescribed method, or an established custom, in the bylaws for voting. Election by ballot generally is used by organizations, however, the viva voce also is appropriate when the election is largely uncontested and when the bylaws do not require a ballot vote.

### Election by Ballot

If no voting takes place before all nominations are closed, one ballot may be used. When nominations are known prior to the meeting, ballots may be prepared in advance. Space should be left on the ballot for writing in additional nominations for each office.

The chair appoints tellers to distribute, collect, and count the ballots. The number of tellers varies depending on the size of the voting assembly. It is the tellers' responsibility to see that no member casts more than one ballot. This voting procedure also should be fixed by rule or custom. When everyone seems to have voted, the

chair asks, “Have all voted who wish to do so?” If there is no response, the chair says, “If no one else wishes to vote, [pause], the chair declares the polls closed.” The tellers collect the ballots and begin counting the votes, usually in another room.

In recording the ballots, tellers should be instructed to:

- not include blank ballots or blanks on a ballot in determining the total number of votes cast,
- accept ballots which may contain small technical errors such as a misspelled name,
- declare illegal two or more ballots folded together,
- declare illegal sections of ballots where the member votes for more than one candidate for an office and no clear choice can be determined, and
- declare illegal unintelligible ballots. If the number of unintelligible ballots will affect the outcome of the election, the chair of the tellers should report this to the chair who will ask the assembly to decide how these ballots should be recorded.

All illegal ballots should be counted in determining the total number of votes cast for figuring the majority. However, no candidate benefits with a vote from an illegal ballot. (The same applies to motions.)

Following the counting, the chairman of the tellers prepares a report which contains:

- the number of votes cast,
- the number required for a majority,
- the number received by each nominee, and
- the number of illegal votes.

The chairman of the tellers addresses the chair, reads the report, and hands it to the chair. The chair reviews the written report and declares the winners. If one or more of the candidates does not receive a majority of votes, the chair/president announces, “No election,” and directs that new ballots be distributed for the office where no candidate was elected. The procedure is repeated until one candidate is elected. No name is removed from the ballot unless so directed in the bylaws.

### Election by Viva Voce

This method is generally used where the bylaws do not require voting by ballot and a candidate is unopposed. However, it also may be used when there is more than one candidate for an office by using the following procedure:

**Chair/President:**

*“Those in favor of Mrs. A for president, say ‘aye.’ Those opposed ‘no.’”*

If a majority vote for Mrs. A... *“The ayes have it and Mrs. A is elected president.”*

If the noes have a majority... *“The noes have it and Mrs. A is not elected president. Those in favor of Mrs. B [the next nominee] say ‘aye.’ Those opposed ‘no.’”*

When a candidate receives a majority she is declared the winner and no other candidates are voted on. The chair moves on to the next office for which an election is being held.

When using this procedure, the members wishing to vote for a later candidate must vote against those preceding him or her. This is considered to give an unfair advantage to those voted on earlier in the procedure.

## Conclusions

Every member of the organization should know the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. The presiding officer will find it helpful to learn more rules than are used. Practice will ensure smooth meetings and fairness to all. The use of parliamentary procedure in all meetings will help the group transact business efficiently, protect the group from leaders who dictate policies, and protect the rights of each individual in the group.

Remember, if you are overly strict with rules and procedures, members may be afraid to speak up. Parliamentary rules, like all other rules, should be applied with common sense.



# Parliamentary Terms to Know

Before parliamentary procedure can be effective, members must be familiar with frequently used terms.

**Adjourn** - to end a meeting.

**Amend** - changing a main motion by striking out, inserting, adding to, or substituting.

**Chair** - the presiding officer; "addressing the chair" means speaking to the president or chairman.

**Debate** - the parliamentary name given to the discussion of a motion.

**Division of the House** - voting by standing and counting.

**Ex Officio** - by virtue of the office. A member of the committee by virtue of being president may vote unless specified otherwise in bylaws.

**Floor** - the privilege of speaking before the assembly.

**Majority** - one more than half of the number voting. If 10 ballots are counted, six would be a majority.

**Minutes** - official record of business transacted in a meeting.

**Motion** - a formal proposal for action by the group.

**Question** - the item of business before the assembly for vote.

**Quorum** - the number or proportion of members required to be present for business to be transacted.

**Resolution** - a form of main motion which may or may not have a preamble describing the reasons for the proposal.

**Second** - motions are seconded by a member of the assembly; an action which indicates interest of at least a second member in bringing the question before the group.

**Table** - a motion "to table" allows the assembly to put aside the pending question temporarily when something more urgent has arisen.

**Viva Voce** - (vī-va-vō-cē) by word of mouth, spoken, oral.

## Types of Motions

Motion	Second Required	Amendable	Debatable	Vote Required to Pass	Purpose of Motion
<b>Privileged</b>					
Fix the Time at Which to Adjourn	yes	yes	no	majority	To set the time, and sometimes place, of another meeting to continue the business of the session.
Adjourn	yes	no	no <sup>2</sup>	majority	A way to close the meeting.
Recess	yes	yes	no <sup>2</sup>	majority	A short intermission in the meeting.
Question of Privilege	no	no	no	none	A means of allowing a request or main motion relating to the rights and privileges of the members which is of immediate urgency, while other business is pending.
Call for the Orders of the Day	no	no	no	none	A means of requiring the assembly to conform to its agenda.
<b>Subsidiary</b>					
Lay on the Table	yes	no	no	majority	Allows an assembly to temporarily lay aside a pending question when something of immediate urgency arises.
Previous Question	yes	no	no	two-thirds	A motion used to bring an assembly to immediate vote on one or more pending questions.
Limit or Extend Debate	yes	yes	no	two-thirds	The means by which an assembly can exercise control over debate on a question.
Postpone to a Certain Time	yes	yes	yes	majority	Delays action on a motion for a definite time or until after an event.
Refer	yes	yes	yes	majority	Generally used to send a pending question to a committee.
Amend	yes	yes <sup>1</sup>	yes <sup>1</sup>	majority	Modifies the wording of a pending motion before it is acted upon.

Postpone Indefinitely	yes	no		yes		majority	Means the assembly declines to take a position on the main motion. It effectively kills it.
<b>Main</b>							
Main Motion	yes	yes		yes		majority	Brings business before the assembly.
<b>Incidental</b>							
Point of Order	no	no		no		no vote	When a member "rises to a point of order" he indicates a question in the procedure being followed and asks the chair to make a ruling to enforce the regular rules.
Appeal	yes	no		yes <sup>3</sup>		majority <sup>4</sup>	When two members question the ruling of the chair, one moves to appeal and the other responds to it by seconding the motion. The assembly then makes the final decision on the question.
Suspend the Rules	yes	no		no		two-thirds	This allows a body to do something not allowed by one of its regular rules.
Division of the Assembly	no	no		no		no vote	A call for a division of the assembly requires the vote to be taken again, only by a standing count rather than voice.
Take from the Table	yes	no		no		majority	This will present again to the assembly a motion that has been previously laid on the table.
Rescind	yes	yes		yes		majority with notice (2/3 without notice)	Used to change action previously ordered, this motion can strike out or cancel a main motion, rule, by-law, resolution, section, or paragraph.
Reconsider	yes	no		yes (if applied to a debatable question)		majority	A way to bring back for further consideration a motion already voted on. This permits correction of hasty or ill-advised actions.

<sup>1</sup> Only the first amendment to a motion is amendable and an amendment is debatable only if the original motion is debatable.

<sup>2</sup> Not debatable when another motion is pending. If no other motion is pending, it is treated as a main motion.

<sup>3</sup> Not debatable when it (a) relates to a transgression of the rules of speaking, (b) relates to the priority of business, or (c) is made while the immediately pending question is undebatable.

<sup>4</sup> Majority or tie vote sustains the ruling of the chair.

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