

# The A-B-C's of Parliamentary Procedure

Content attributed to the 1974 publication of the same name by  
the Channing Bete Company



Why is  
parliamentary  
procedure  
important?

*Because it's a time-tested method  
of conducting business at meetings  
and public gatherings.*

## Parliamentary Procedure Means:

- ◆ Democratic Rule
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ Protection of Rights
- ◆ A Fair Hearing For Everyone

It can be adapted to fit the needs of any  
organization.

So it's important that everyone know these  
**Basic Rules!**

Organizations using a parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed

## Agenda.

Here's a typical example:

1. **Call to Order** – The chair says, “The meeting will please come to order.
2. **Open Forum** – Not to exceed 15 minutes, 5 minutes maximum per speaker.
3. **Minutes** – Correction and adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting.
4. **Reports** – President’s Report and other Senate committee reports.
5. **Action Items** – Items must come from the discussion agenda of a previous meeting or be carried over from a previous action agenda.
6. **Consent Items** – Will be treated collectively as one action item. At the request of any member an item will be removed to allow for discussion.
7. **Discussion Items** – Following discussion, items may be moved to the action agenda of a subsequent meeting or carried over for further discussion. Discussion items not requiring action will be treated as information only.
8. **Adjournment**

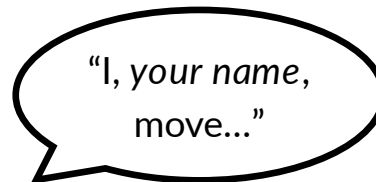


They make motions!

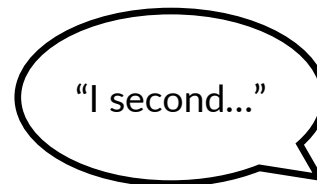
*A motion is a proposal that the assembly **Take a Stand** or **Take Action** on some issue.*

## Members can:

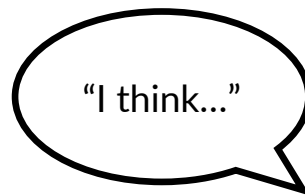
**Present Motions**  
(make a proposal)



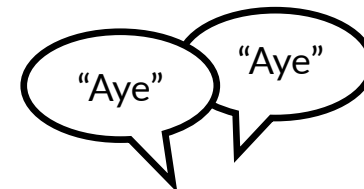
**Second Motions**  
(express support for discussion of another member's motion)



**Debate Motions**  
(give opinions on the motion)



**Vote on Motions**  
(make a decision)



## Some Questions Relating to Motions:

### Is it in order?

Your 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.

### Do I need a second?

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

### May I interrupt the speaker?

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.

### Is it debatable?

Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full debate on most motions. However, some motions are not debatable.

### Can it be amended?

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

### What vote is needed?

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

### Can it be reconsidered?

Some motions can be debated again and revoted to give members a chance to change their minds. The motion to reconsider must come from the winning side.

## How Do I Present My Motion?

*Here's what to do when it's your turn to speak:*

### 1. Obtain the Floor

- a. Raise hand and wait for the chair.
- b. The chair will recognize you by calling on you.

### 2. Make Your Motion

- a. State your name and speak clearly and concisely.
- b. State your 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. Or the chair will call for a second.
- c. If there is no second, your motion will not be considered.

### 4. Chair States Your Motion

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

### 5. Expand on Your Motion

- a. Mover is allowed to speak first.
- b. Direct all comments to the chair.
- c. Keep to the time limit for speaking.
- d. You may speak again after all other speakers are finished.
- 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 chair asks, "Are you ready for the question?"
- b. If there is no more discussion, or if a motion to stop debate is adopted, a vote is taken.
- c. The chair announces the results.

# Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

Here are some motions you might make, how to make them, and what to expect of the rules.

To do this:	You 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>"I move that we adjourn"</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Temporarily suspend consideration of an issue	<i>"I move to table the motion"</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No <sup>1</sup>
End debate & amendments	<i>"I move the previous question"</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes <sup>2</sup>
Postpone discussion for a certain time	<i>"I move to postpone the discussion until..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Give closer study of something	<i>"I move to refer the matter to committee"</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes <sup>3</sup>
Amend a motion	<i>"I move to amend the motion by..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes <sup>4</sup>	Yes	Majority	Yes
Move business	<i>"I move that..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes

The motions listed above are in order of precedence... Below there is no order...

Protest breach of rules of conduct	<i>"I rise to a point of order"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote <sup>5</sup>	No
Vote on a ruling of the chair	<i>"I appeal from the chair's decision"</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes
Suspend rules temporarily	<i>"I move to suspend the rules so that..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
Verify a voice vote by having members stand	<i>"I call for a division" or "Division!"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Request information	<i>"Point of information"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Take up a matter previously tabled	<i>"I move to take from the table..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Reconsider a hasty action	<i>"I move to reconsider the vote on..."</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>6</sup>	No	Majority	No

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Affirmative votes may not be reconsidered.

<sup>2</sup> Unless vote on question has begun

<sup>3</sup> Unless the committee has already taken up the subject

<sup>4</sup> Unless the motion to be amended is not debatable

<sup>5</sup> Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision

<sup>6</sup> Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.

The method of  
**Voting on a Motion**

*depends on the situation and on the laws of your organization*

**By Voice**

The chair asks those in favor to say “aye,” those opposed to say “no” and for any abstentions. A member may move for an exact count.

*For all action votes, each member’s vote must be recorded.*

**By Show of Hands**

Members raise their hands as sight verification of or as an alternative to a voice vote. It does not require a count. A member may move for an exact count.

**By Roll Call**

When a record of each person’s vote is needed and the vote is divided, each member answers “yes” or “no” or “present” (indicating the choice not to vote) as his or her name is called.

**By General Consent**

When a motion isn’t likely to be opposed, the chair says, “If there is no objection...” Members show agreement by their silence. If someone says, “I object,” the matter must be put to vote.

*Voting on **Action Items**: when voting on action items all votes must be recorded noting who was for, against, or abstained.*

More about  
**Voting...**

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.

Before a **discussion item** can be adopted it must be moved to an **action item** on the following meeting’s agenda where it will be considered for a vote.

An **action item** may be discussed before it is put to a vote.

**A Motion to Table**  
(lay on the table)

This motion is used to lay something aside temporarily to take care of a more urgent matter. There is always the option to “take from the table” any motion for reconsideration by the assembly

**A Motion to Postpone Indefinitely**

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

# Glossary

**Adjourn:** to end the meeting.

**Agenda:** business to be considered during 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 without a vote.

**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.

**Quorum:** number of members that must be present to conduct business legally. A quorum per the Academic Senate Bylaws is a simple majority of membership.

**Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised:** manual of procedure for nonlegislative 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

*Soo.....*

**Parliamentary procedure  
helps get things done!**

**But—*it only works if you use it right!***

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

***And most of all, be courteous!***