

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE MADE SIMPLE

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~~[John Rogers]~~

# Purpose of parliamentary procedure

1. Allow the majority to decide...and...allow minority opinions to be heard.
2. Make meetings efficient.
3. “Common sense is the essence of parliamentary rules; fairplay is their guiding principle; reasonable discussion followed by prompt actions is what they are devised to achieve.”

# Types of motions

**Main motion:** The main idea the body is working on.

**Subsidiary motions:** A motion that modifies, delays, or disposes of the main motion.

**Privileged motions:** Motions not related to the main motion, but urgent for the body to consider.

**Incidental motions:** Motions relating to the manner in which the body conducts business.

**Reconsideration:** Brings a motion back for further consideration.

# Subsidiary motions

- Previous question – Close debate.
- Postpone to a time certain.
- Refer to committee.
- Amend.
- Postpone indefinitely.

# Privileged motions

- Adjourn.
- Recess.
- Question of privilege.

# Incidental motions.

- Parliamentary inquiry - Point of order.
- Appeal.
- Suspend the rules.
- Withdraw a motion.
- Divide the question.

8.3 Order of Precedence of Motions. The following motions shall have priority in the order indicated:

- |     |                                  |                 |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1.  | Adjourn (when privileged)        | See notes 1 & 2 |
| 2.  | Take a recess (when privileged)  | See notes 1 & 3 |
| 3.  | Raise a question of privilege    |                 |
| 4.  | Lay on the table                 |                 |
| 5.  | Previous question                | See note 5      |
| 6.  | Limit or extend limits of debate | See notes 3 & 5 |
| 7.  | Postpone to a certain time       | See note 3      |
| 8.  | Commit or refer                  | See note 3      |
| 9.  | Amend                            | See notes 3 & 4 |
| 10. | Postpone indefinitely            |                 |
| 11. | Main motion                      | See note 3      |

Note 1: The first two motions are not always privileged. To adjourn shall lose its privileged character and be a main motion if in any way qualified. To take a recess shall be privileged only when other business is pending.

Note 2: A motion to adjourn is not in order: 1) When repeated without intervening business or discussion; 2) when made as an interruption of a member while speaking; 3) while a vote is being taken.

Note 3: Can be amended - others cannot be amended.

Note 4: A motion to amend shall be undebatable when the question to be amended is undebatable.

Note 5: Two-thirds vote of members present required.

# Previous question - Close debate

- Stops debate and orders an immediate vote.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - 2/3 vote.



# Postpone to time certain

- Holds over an item to another meeting.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Debatable.
  - Amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Refer to committee

- Sends the item to a committee.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Debatable. (Only on issue of whether it should be referred.)
  - Amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Amend

- Amends the main motion. A contrary motion is out of order. Can also amend a privileged, incidental, or subsidiary motion if it is amendable. Amendments are always voted on before the motion to which it applies.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Debatable.
  - Amendable. (Only one amendment to an amendment allowed. The second amendment is voted on before the first amendment.)
  - Majority vote.

# Postpone indefinitely

- Kills the main motion. Can only be applied to the main motion.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Adjourn

A request to close the meeting.

- May not be made when another has the floor.
- Requires a second.
- Not debatable.
- Not amendable.
- Majority vote.

# Recess

- A request to take an intermission.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Question of privilege

- A request for a ruling on the rights of the body or any of its members. (For examples, to move to another room, or for one person to be excused.)
  - May be made when another has the floor.
  - Does not require a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Amendable.
  - Decided by the president.

# Incidental motions

- Motions relating to the manner in which the body conducts business. Incidental motions are given immediate consideration. Listed in order by rank.



# Parliamentary inquiry - point of order

- Questions about parliamentary procedure. Must be made immediately.
  - May be made when another has the floor.
  - Does not require a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - Not voted. president rules.

# Appeal

- Objection to the decision of the president. Must be made immediately after the decision.
  - May be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - Majority to reverse president's decision.

# Suspend the rules

- Allows body to act contrary to regular rules.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - 2/3 vote.

# Withdraw a motion

- A request to withdraw a motion from the body. Must be made before a vote on the motion. Can be withdrawn by consent if no one objects.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Does not require a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Not amendable
  - Majority vote.

# Divide the question

- A request to vote on portions of the main motion separately. Can be divided only if each part could have been proposed separately.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Not debatable.
  - Amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Reconsideration

- Brings back a motion previously voted on for further consideration. Must be made no later than the next meeting. Must be made by the person who voted with the prevailing side, but may be seconded by any member. An item may not be reconsidered twice. Unless reconsidered at the same meeting, the motion must include a date when the item will be placed on the agenda.
  - May not be made when another has the floor.
  - Requires a second.
  - Debatable.
  - Not amendable.
  - Majority vote.

# Parliamentary rules from the city code

- Debate

- Members must limit debate to the question under consideration.
- Discussion must be addressed to the president and not to other members.
- Members may only speak once on an item, until all members have spoken.
- Members can only speak twice on an item, and no longer than five minutes. An extension may be granted by 2/3 vote.
- Members must preserve order and decorum, and must obey the orders of the president, and follow the rules of the board.
- Members may speak only if recognized by the president.
- Members should not be interrupted when speaking, except when a point of order is made and ruled upon by the president.
- Members may not speak while a vote is being taken.
- Members shall not use indecorous language; and not make rude and derogatory remarks, reflections as to integrity, abusive comments, or statements as to motives or personality.

# Parliamentary rules from the city code

- Voting.
  - Any member may request a roll call vote.
  - A member present at a meeting, but who is absent during a vote, will be recorded as voting in the affirmative.
  - A member who arrives late, or returns to the meeting before adjournment shall, upon arrival, vote on the record unless prohibited from doing so by a conflict of interest.
  - Members are required to vote unless there is a conflict of interest.



# Parliamentary rules from the city code

- City staff, media and public.
  - City staff must follow the same rules of procedure and decorum applicable to members.
  - City staff must address comments to the board as a whole, and not to individual members.
  - City staff may address the board only with permission of the president.
  - The media may not interview people inside the meeting room during a meeting.
  - The public must follow the same rules of procedure and decorum applicable to members.

# Parliamentary rules from the city code

- Miscellaneous.

- A member may not leave a meeting without permission of the president.
- Any member may move to require the president to enforce the rules of procedure.
- Members may be removed from the room for failure to comply with decisions of the president or the rules of the board.
- A member may appeal a ruling of the president to the board. The president may be overruled by majority vote.
- Meeting procedure is governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

# Frequently asked questions

Q: Do you lose quorum if a member has a conflict of interest?

A: No. The conflict does not make the person absent. The person with the conflict is present, but not voting.

**Note: The recused must stay in the building.**

# Frequently asked questions

Q: Can you have discussion before a motion is made?

A: No. Technically, a motion should be on the floor before debate begins. The purpose of the rule to keep the body focused on a specific proposal. In practice, however, the president may allow some limited discussion if it will facilitate the making of a motion.

# Frequently asked questions

Q: What is a “friendly amendment”?

A: Technically, there is no such thing. Once a motion is made and seconded, it belongs to the body as a whole. The correct procedure is to offer an amendment to the main motion. Informal practice, however, is sometimes used to allow a member to offer a friendly amendment to the main motion. If no one on the body objects, the amendment has been made by consent.

# Frequently asked questions

Q: Does the president get to vote?

A: Yes, unless the board's rules provide otherwise.

Q: What happens if no one makes a motion?

A: If the body fails to take action, the agenda item is denied and the status quo is preserved.

# Frequently asked questions

Q: What happens if you have a tie vote?

A: A majority is more than half of the body. Therefore, the motion fails, and the status quo is preserved. The floor is then open for another motion.

# Frequently asked questions

Q: What do you do if you don't know what the parliamentary rules require?

A: The president should make a ruling that preserves order, allows everyone to speak, and that allows the body to efficiently reach a decision. If no one appeals the ruling of the president, the procedure is adopted by consent. If someone appeals the decision of the president, the vote of the body will determine the procedure.