

Tips for Parliamentary Procedure



Parliamentary Procedure is a tool

- to help keep your meetings running smoothly
- to help you accomplish your needed agenda
- to involve your members and make the meeting as engaging as possible

The chairman calls the meeting to order and should be addressed as Mr. or Madam Chair.

A member must be recognized by the chairman before speaking. Once recognized by the chairman, that member has the floor.

The meeting follows the flow as outlined in the agenda. Amendments to the agenda should be made at the beginning of the meeting and must be approved by majority vote.

A member makes a motion by saying, "I move to/that..." and the motion statement should include what is to be done, when, where and how. The "why" is addressed during discussion.

Each motion should have a second to indicate that at least one other member is interested in discussing it. Another member says, "I second" or "second."

The maker of a motion has the right to speak first for the motion during discussion. Each member has the right to speak before a member speaks for the second time.

If a member needs additional information about a motion, he/she says, "Point of information" at any time during debate. The chairman asks the member to state his point. The chairman answers the question or asks another member or consults with staff. Debate continues on the motion.

A motion may be referred to a committee with the motion, "I move we refer this motion to a committee." Or, "I move to refer this matter to a committee of X members and a chairperson appointed by the Chairman." This motion must be seconded, discussed and the vote taken.

A motion may be postponed to a set time (the next regularly scheduled meeting) or postponed indefinitely. "I move we..." followed by the motion to postpone. The motion is seconded, discussed and/or amended, and voted up or down.

To make a change in a motion, a member says, "I move to amend the main motion by striking out, adding, or inserting" words or phrases. The motion is seconded, debated, amended, and requires a majority vote. Debate at this point deals with the amendment and **not** the main motion.

To make a change in an **amendment**, a member says, "I move to amend the amendment by..." The motion must be seconded, may be debated, may **not** be amended and requires a majority vote. Debate on the secondary amendment must deal with the amendment only and may not include other information. All motions and amendments must be voted on in the order they were made (secondary amendment, primary amendment, and then, the motion – probably, as amended).

A member may end discussion/debate on a motion by saying, "I move the previous question." Or "Question". There should be a second. The Chairman must stop and process the vote to end debate. If the motion to end debate passes, the Chairman must ask for a vote on the motion with no further discussion.

Voting may be by hand, voice or acclamation, standing, ballot, or by general consent; typically as determined by the Chairman. If a member doesn't agree with a voice vote, he/she asks for a recount by calling "Division" immediately after the Chairman announces the outcome of the vote. The Chair then calls for a vote that may be physically counted.

If a member notices a mistake in parliamentary procedure, he/she should call out, "point of order" immediately when the mistake has been made. Once debate proceeds, the point of order is no longer germane. The Chair will ask the member to state his/her point. After the member has stated the concern, the Chair may agree, "Your point is well taken" or disagree, "Your point is not well taken." At this time the Chair asks the speaking member to correct the action or continues speaking.