

TOP 5 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question 1:

Is it true that, once a quorum has been established, it continues to exist no matter how many members leave during the course of the meeting?

Answer:

No. Once a quorum at a meeting has been established, the continued presence of a quorum is presumed to exist only until the chairperson or any other member notices that a quorum is no longer present. If the chairperson notices the absence of a quorum, he or she should declare this fact, at least before taking any vote or stating the question on any new motion. Any member noticing the apparent absence of a quorum can and should make a *Point of Order* to that effect whenever another person is not speaking. It is dangerous to allow the transaction of substantive business to continue in the absence of a quorum. Although a Point of Order relating to the absence of a quorum is generally not permitted to affect prior action, if there is clear and convincing proof no quorum was present when business was transacted, the presiding officer can rule that business invalid (subject to appeal). [RONR (10th ed.), p. 337-38; see also p. 12-13 of *RONR In Brief*.]

Question 2:

Can we round to the nearest number in computing the result of a vote? For example, since two thirds of 101 is 67.3333, will 67 affirmative votes out of 101 votes cast meet the requirement of a two-thirds vote?

Answer:

No. The requirement of a two-thirds vote means at least two thirds. As a consequence, nothing less will do. If 101 votes are cast, 67 affirmative votes are not at least two thirds. It is less than two thirds, and will not suffice. [RONR (10th ed.), p. 388.]

Question 3:

Do abstention votes count?

Answer:

The phrase "abstention votes" is an oxymoron, an abstention being a refusal to vote. To abstain means to refrain from voting, and, as a consequence, there can be no such thing as an "abstention vote."

In the usual situation, where either a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required, abstentions have absolutely **no effect** on the outcome of the vote since what is required is either a majority or two thirds of the votes cast. On the other hand, if the vote required is a majority or two thirds of the members present, or a majority or two thirds of the entire membership, an abstention will have the same **effect as a "no" vote**. Even in such a case, however, an abstention is not a vote. [RONR (10th ed.), p. 387, l. 7-13; p. 388, l. 3-6; p. 390, l. 13-24; see also p.66 of *RONR In Brief*.]

Question 4:

How do you deal with a "friendly amendment"?

Answer:

On occasion, while a motion is being debated, someone will get up and offer what he or she terms a "friendly amendment" to the motion, the maker of the original motion will "accept" the amendment, and the chairperson will treat the motion as amended. This is wrong. **Once a motion has been stated by the chairperson, it is no longer the property of the mover, but of the assembly.** Any amendment, "friendly" or otherwise, must be adopted by the full body, either by a vote or by unanimous consent.

If it appears to the chairperson that an amendment (or any other motion) is uncontroversial, it is proper for the chairperson to ask if there is "any objection" to adopting the amendment. If no objection is made, the chairperson may declare the amendment adopted. If even one member objects, however, the amendment is subject to debate and vote like any other, regardless of whether its proposer calls it "friendly" and regardless of whether the maker of the original motion endorses its adoption. [RONR (10th ed.), p. 154.]

Question 5:

Must debate on a motion stop immediately as soon as any member calls the question?

Answer:

It is a fairly common misconception that, after debate has continued for some time, if any member shouts out "Question!" or "I call the question!", debate must immediately cease and the chairperson must put the pending question to a vote. This is simply not the case. Any member who wishes to force an end to debate must **first obtain the floor** by being duly recognized to speak by the chairperson, and must **then move the Previous Question**. Such a motion must be seconded, and then adopted by a two-thirds vote, or by unanimous consent. It is not in order to interrupt a speaker with cries of "Question" or "Call the Question," and even if no one is speaking, it is still necessary to seek recognition. [RONR (10th ed.), p. 193-94; see also p 35-37 of *RONR In Brief*.]

If you have any questions or need additional support please call Office of Parent and Community at

(213) 481-3350.



General Principles of Parliamentary Procedure



The most commonly used parliamentary procedures are Robert's Rules of Order. These Rules were written by General Henry M. Robert, a U.S. Army engineer, and published in 1876. His work is still regarded as the basic authority on the subject of parliamentary law. The most recent edition of the work, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 10th edition, October 2000, is the accepted authority for almost all organizations today.

USING THESE
PRINCIPLES
WILL ENSURE
ALL MEMBERS'
VOICES ARE
RESPECTED.

Every member of an organization should be familiar with the following simple rules and customs:

- A. All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
- B. The minority has rights which must be protected.
- C. Full and free discussion of all motions, reports, and other items of business is a right of all members.
- D. In doing business the simplest and most direct procedure should be used.
- E. Logical precedence governs introduction and disposition of motions.
- F. Only one question can be considered at a time.
- G. Members may not make a motion or speak in debate until they have risen and been recognized by the chairperson and thus have obtained the floor.
- H. Member may speak a second time on the same question if all other members have been given an opportunity to speak at least once on the same question if they wishes to do so.
- I. Members must not attack or question the motives of other members. Customarily, all remarks are addressed to the presiding officer.

In voting, members have the right to know at all times what motion is before the assembly and what affirmative and negative votes mean.

Summary of Steps in Handling a Motion

- 1. A member rises and addresses the presiding officer.
- 2. The presiding officer recognizes the member.
- 3. The member states the motion.
- 4. Another member seconds the motion.
- 5. The presiding officer restates the motion, thus placing it before the assembly for consideration.
- 6. The assembly may discuss the motion if it is debatable and amend the motion if it is amendable.
- 7. The presiding officer takes the vote.

The presiding officer announces the results.

Transacting Business at a Meeting

Quorum

- A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present at a meeting for business to be legally transacted.
- Quorum is 51% of the entire membership.

Obtaining the Floor

- Before a member in an assembly can make a motion or speak in debate, he or she must obtain the floor; that is, the member must be recognized by the chairperson as having the exclusive right to be heard at that time.
- If two or more members rise to seek recognition at the same time, the member who rose and addressed the chairperson first after the floor was yielded is usually entitled to be recognized.

Introducing Business (Making Motions)

- Business may be introduced by an individual member in the form of a motion.

Seconding a Motion

- After a motion has been made, another member, without rising and obtaining the floor, may second the motion.
- A second merely implies that the seconder agrees that the motion should come before the assembly and not that he or she necessarily favors the motion.

Placing a Motion before the Assembly

- After a motion has been made and seconded, the chairperson repeats the motion verbatim, thus placing it before the assembly for debate and action.
- After the motion has been restated by the chairperson, it is officially before the assembly and must be dealt with appropriately (e.g., adopted, rejected, postponed).

Debate

- Every member of the assembly has the right to speak on every debatable motion before it is finally acted upon; this right cannot be interfered with except by a motion to limit debate.
- While debate is in progress, amendments or other secondary motions can be introduced and disposed of accordingly.
- No member may speak twice on the same motion at the same meeting as long as any other member who has not spoken on the motion desires to do so.
- Unless the rules are suspended, a member who has spoken twice on a particular question on the same day has exhausted his or her right to debate that question for that day.
- During debate, no member can attack or question the motives of another member.
- The maker of a motion, although allowed to vote against it, is not allowed to speak against it.

Amendments

- Once a motion has been restated by the chairperson, the maker has the right to modify his or her motion or to withdraw it entirely after it has been restated by the chairperson, however, a motion may be modified only by means of an amendment.
- There are six ways to amend a motion:
 - a. Add words, phrases, or sentences at the end of a motion;
 - b. Insert words, phrases, or sentences;
 - c. Strike words, phrases, or sentences;
 - d. Strike and insert words, phrases, or sentences;
 - e. Strike and add words, phrases, or sentences;
 - f. Substitute whole paragraphs or an entire text.
- Only two amendments (primary and secondary) may be pending on a main motion at any time.
- Discussion of an amendment must relate only to the amendment, unless the whole motion is involved by substitution.
- An amendment must be relevant to the question under consideration.

Voting

- The Parliamentarian can vote on the School Site Council and on the English Learner Advisory Committee, since both school groups have a small numbers of members.
- The presiding officer of the assembly, can vote as any other member does.
- The presiding officer can, but is not obliged to, vote after all other members have voted, especially whenever his or her vote will affect the result since her or she can either break or create a tie.
- Any member may request a roll call vote to insure clarity of the vote.
- Majority of the votes decides matter. Majority is more than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blank ballots/abstentions.

Announcing a Vote

- In announcing the vote on a motion, the chairperson should:
 - a. report on the voting itself, stating which side has prevailed;
 - b. declare that the motion is adopted or lost;
 - c. state the effect of the vote or order its execution.



Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn may be made by any member. It may be made during the consideration of other business, although it may not interrupt a speaker or the assembly when engaged in voting or verifying a vote.
- When it appears that there is no further business to be brought before the assembly, the chairperson, instead of waiting for a motion, may simply adjourn the meeting.

Parliamentary Terms

Addressing the Chairperson: Getting the chairperson's attention by saying, "Madam Chairwoman," Mr. Chairman,"

Agenda: Order of business; program of a business meeting.

Ad Hoc Committee: Committee established for a specific purpose, for a particular case.

Ballots: Slips of paper for voting.

Carried: Passed or adopted; used in referring to affirmative action on a motion.

Chairperson: the chairperson, chairman, chairwoman: To preside over; the presiding officer.

Convene: To open a session.

Division of the Question: A motion to divide a pending motion into two or more separate questions in order that they may be considered separately.

Election by Acclamation: Election by unanimous consent; used when only one person has been nominated for an office.

Having the Floor: Having been recognized by the chairperson to speak.

Main Motion: A motion which brings before the assembly some new subject upon which action of the assembly is desired.

Majority: More than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding abstentions.

Minutes: Written records of business transacted.

Motion: A proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take a particular action.

Nominate: To propose an individual for office.

Obtaining the Floor: Securing permission to speak.

Orders of the Day: Agenda for a meeting.

Parliamentarian: Parliamentary adviser to the presiding officer, and is a voting member..

Pending Question: A motion awaiting decision.

Point of Information: Request for information concerning a motion.

Previous Question: Motion which, if adopted, orders an immediate vote.

Recess: A short intermission.

Recognize: To allow someone to obtain the floor in order to speak.

Roll Call Vote: A procedure by which the vote of each member is formally recorded in the minutes. Second: To indicate support for consideration of a motion by saying: "I second the motion." Slate: List of members.

Unanimous (or General) Consent: A means of taking action on a motion without a formal vote. When a presiding officer perceives that there is little or no opposition to a motion before the assembly, business can often be expedited by the chairperson's simply calling for objections, if any. If no objection is heard, the motion is adopted; if even one member objects, the motion is brought to a formal vote by the usual procedure.

Voice Vote: A vote taken by having members call out "aye" or "no" at the chairperson's direction.