

# Roberta's Rules of Order

## SURVIVAL TIPS

We must learn to run a meeting without victimizing the audience; but more importantly, without being victimized by individuals who are armed with parliamentary procedure and a personal agenda. Survival Tips on Parliamentary Procedure are based on Robert's Rules of Order.

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## Six Steps to Every Motion!

Every motion requires 6 steps (with some exceptions). The shoulds and shouldn'ts are as follows: (RONR(10th ed.),p.31-54)

**STEP 1. A member stands up, is recognized, and makes a motion;**

**Common Mistake:** Members do not stand up, do not wait to be recognized, and typically start to discuss their motion before completing STEP 2, STEP 3, and STEP 4 below!

**STEP 2. Another member seconds the motion;**

**Common Mistake:** The person seconding the motion dives into the merits of the motion.

**STEP 3. The presiding officer restates the motion to the assembly;**

**Common Mistake:** Motion is restated differently from the wording of the maker! Beware because the motion that is adopted is the one stated by the presiding officer, not the one stated by the maker of the original motion.

**STEP 4. The members debate the motion;**

**Common Mistake:** Debate gets out of control in temper, in duration, in relevance! Members talk at each other across the room rather than through the presiding officer.

**STEP 5. Presiding officer asks for the affirmative votes & then the negative votes;**

**Common Mistake:** The presiding officer states 'All in favor' and fails to tell the members what to do as a matter of voting (for example, 'say aye', 'stand up', 'raise your hand', etc.); or the negative vote is never requested or counted!

**STEP 6. The presiding officer announces the result of the voting; instructs the corresponding officer to take action; and introduces the next item of business.**

**Common Mistake:** Presiding officer fails to pronounce the result of the voting! No one is instructed to take action. Commonly, dead silence follows because the presiding officer is lost and stares at the assembly 

## When Six Steps Do Not Apply

We accept that the typical motion follows 6 steps.

- a. *Speaker stands, is recognized, and makes a motion.*
- b. *Motion is seconded.*
- c. *Presiding Officer restates the motion to the audience.*
- d. *The assembly debates the motion.*
- e. *The vote is taken.*
- f. *The chair announces whether the motion was adopted or not; instructs the correct officer to take action.*

Now let us review 2 Privileged Motions and 4 Incidental Motions which lack the 6 steps.

- I. **Privileged Motions** do not relate to the pending motion, but are of such immediate importance that they take precedence over any Main Motion.

1. **Question of Privilege:** As a member of the audience you believe that you can not hear or see the proceedings, but you have a feasible solution. You have the right to stop the meeting, and have the problem corrected.

2. **Call for the Orders of the Day:** You notice that the agenda specifies the time for each portion of the agenda. You notice that the part you are interested in is scheduled for 9:15 am, and the time is now 9:16 am. The meeting is stuck with the 9:05 am item. You 'Call for the Orders of the Day'. This automatically forces everyone to abandon the 9:05 item and deal with 9:15 item.

***In both cases, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! No vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

- II. **Incidental Motions** do not relate directly to the substance of the pending motion, but rather to the method of transacting the business of the motion. Incidental motions must be dealt with immediately.

1. **Point of Order:** During a meeting you notice that someone (even the presiding officer) is disobeying Robert's Rules of Order. You state 'Point of Order' and explain your point. The Presiding Officer rules on your point and you help to keep everyone in line.

2. **Point of Information:** One right no one can take from you is the right to understand the process and the potential

consequences of the next voting. You have the right to stop business and have someone explain the process and consequences of the debate or the voting. Your request for information can not be ignored by the Presiding Officer.

3. **Division of Assembly:** Whenever you doubt the Presiding Officer's hearing capabilities during a vote by loud ayes/nays, you can have the vote taken by having voters stand instead of yelling. You call for a '*Division of the Assembly*' and the vote has to be **retaken** in a more accurate manner.

***In the last 3 cases, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! No vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

4. **Object to Consideration:** Sometimes a sensitive or embarrassing motion is made. You can kill it before it is discussed by getting 2/3 of the assembly to agree with you to kill the motion **before it is discussed**.

***In this case, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! A 2/3 vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

If you know when the 6 steps do not apply, you can protect your rights as a member of an organization. Otherwise, somebody will undoubtedly and easily rob you of your rights. 

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### **Some General Exceptions**

For the sake of expediency, the chair can always say "***If there is no objection ...***", and then declares what action the chair is going to take in the name of the assembly! If no one objects, the 6 steps are skipped and the motion has been adopted in 5 words. If someone objects, the chair follows the 6 steps, cheerfully.

On the other hand, not all motions require the 6 steps. Your power comes in knowing which motions do and which motions do not require the 6 steps, especially when the chair cannot get away with "***If there is no objection ...***".

### **STEP 1. State the Motion:**

Some motions are so important that the maker can interrupt the speaker and not even wait to be recognized by the chair! - *Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Point of Information, Division.*

### **STEP 2. Second the Motion:**

Some motions do not require a second - Generally, if Robert's Rules of Order allow you to interrupt a speaker, you do not need a second (except *Appeal*).

### **STEP 3. Chair Restates the Motion:**

The presiding officer may help a verbose person rephrase the motion.

### **STEP 4. Discuss the Motion:**

Some motions may not be debated because the debate would defeat the purpose of the motion - *Recess, Orders of the Day, Lay on the Table, Limit or Close Debate, Division of the Assembly, Division of the Question.*

### **STEP 5. Vote on the Motion:**

Some motions are made and passed without voting - *Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Point of Order, Division.*

### **STEP 6. Announce Result of Vote:**

No exceptions here. The result of the voting must always be announced.



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## **Undebatable Motions**

**You can make some motions which no one can speak against, mostly because sometimes the right to debate does not make sense!** (Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, you probably can not amend them either!).



**Some motions perform a time sensitive task where a discussion would be counter productive.**

1. Call for the Orders of the Day.
2. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
3. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
4. Division of a Question.
5. Suspend the Rules.
6. Reconsider a Motion (most).
7. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.

**Some motions intend to prevent further debate. Discussing the motion defeats the purpose of the motion.**

8. Adjourn.
9. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
10. Previous Question (Close Debate).
11. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate.
12. Recess.

**Some motions intend to perform simple tasks which require immediate attention.**

13. Parliamentary Inquiry.
14. Point of Information.
15. Point of Order.
16. Raise a Question of Privilege.
17. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair (most).

If you know when others can debate your issues and when they can not, you will be better prepared to wisely make your point unopposed. 

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### **Unamendable Motions**

**The power to amend any motion leads to a quick compromise which pleases most of the members. Notice that amending the following motion makes no sense.**



In all of the motions listed in this section, the members either allow something to occur or they do not allow it. A member is either granted a request or is not. Normally, there is no half way position; there is no modification. (Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, then you probably can not amend them either!).

1. Adjourn.
2. Call for the Orders of the Day.
3. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
4. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
5. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.
6. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
7. Postpone Indefinitely.
8. Previous Question (Close Debate).
9. Parliamentary Inquiry.
10. Point of Information.
11. Point of Order.
12. Raise a Question of Privilege.
13. Suspend the Rules.

14. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair.
15. Reconsider a Motion.

Once you realize which motions you can make without the obstacle of an opposing debate or modification, you can then assure the victory of your plans.

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## Four Motions that are always Out of Order

A Main Motion reflects the will of the members of the organization! However, the following 4 motions are never in order, even if adopted by a unanimous vote:

1. Motions which **conflict with laws** (federal, state, or local), or with bylaws, constitution, or rules of the organization;
2. Motions which present something **already rejected** during the same session, or conflict with a motion already adopted. (See Robert's sections on *Rescind*, *Reconsider*, and *Amend Something Already Adopted*);
3. Motions which conflict with or present substantially the **same question** as one which has been temporarily disposed of (meaning, *Postponed*, *Laid on Table*, *Referred to Committee*, or *Being Reconsidered*);
4. Motions which propose actions **beyond the scope** of the organization's bylaws. (However, a 2/3 vote may allow this kind of motion).



But, what if the motion is in order, and you still do not agree with all or parts of it? You can always protect your interests by [amending the motion!](#)

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## Five Ways to Modify a Motion

Motions are rarely perfect for everyone. Modifications are inevitable.



1. **Between the time that a motion is made and before the chair states the motion**, any member may informally offer modifying suggestions to the maker of the motion. The maker may accept or reject that member's recommendations.

2. **After the chair has stated the motion**, the maker of the motion may *request unanimous consent* from the members to modify the motion. Remember that at this time, the motion belongs to the assembly and not the original maker.
3. **By means of the subsidiary motion to *Amend***, any member may propose changes to the motion, before the motion is voted upon. These proposed changes must be seconded and may be amended and/or debated.
4. **If a motion requires further study**, the members may vote to *Refer the Main Motion to a Committee*. When the committee returns the motion to the assembly, the committee normally **proposes** amendments for the assembly to vote upon.
5. **Sometimes the motion is so complex** that the only way to do it justice is for a member to urge its rejection and offer to propose a simpler version as a *Substitute Motion*. Upon defeat of the complex motion, anyone may propose the *Substitute Motion*.

Once a member learns which motions are out of order, how to make a motion, and how to amend a motion, the member becomes a productive member of the organization. Until then, the member is just another victim of the organization! 

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### Three Ways to Amend a Motion

As a matter of survival, the most common motion a club member needs to know completely is the ***Motion to Amend a Pending Motion***.



The difficult part is remembering that the more urgent **motions can not be amended** - *Adjourn, Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Lay on/Take from the Table, Previous Question, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Suspend the Rules, and Reconsider*.

During the Debate step of a Pending Motion, one may move to Amend the Pending Motion. All one needs to remember is that there are really **only 3 basic processes of amendments**:

**Let's Amend this Sample Motion:** "I move that we buy a new sign."

1. **You can Move to Amend by *Inserting words or paragraphs*.**  
*I move to Amend by Inserting the phrase "not to exceed \$50 dollars" at the end of the motion.*

2. You can Move to Amend by **Striking out** (not deleting) words or paragraphs.  
*I move to Amend by striking out the word "new".*
3. You can Move to Amend by **Striking out and Inserting** words or paragraphs. One can even Amend by **Substituting** (Striking out and Inserting) entire paragraphs or the complete motion.  
*I move to Amend by Striking out the word "sign" and Inserting the word "billboard".*

#### **You can also Amend the Amendment, before it is voted upon:**

But you can only Amend the Inserted or Struck out **words**. You can not Amend a separate part of the Main Motion not covered by the Amendment that is currently being discussed!

After the current Amendment is voted upon, you can Amend the Motion again and Amend this new Amendment.

If you carefully review these 3 basic processes of amendments (*insert, strike out, and strike out/insert*), you will agree that any other form is not an amendment. Proper usage of these 3 processes will reduce the chances of chaos and confusion that is common during discussion of motions and amendments.

When one understands the means to amend a motion, one will be able to calmly defend oneself from all tyrannical group leaders.



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#### **Unfinished Business, Yes; Old Business, Never!**

"Old Business" means that you are reconsidering matters already disposed of. "Unfinished Business" means that you are continuing with matters which are currently not completed. (RONR(10th ed.),p.346)



Before the current agenda is put together, the secretary advises the chair of the matters which were not disposed of from the previous meeting. Also, the parliamentarian advises the chair which issues can be carried forward as "Unfinished Business". Therefore, the chair should never ask the members, "Is there any Unfinished Business." That question can be answered only by the secretary and the parliamentarian.

There are really only a few reasons why a matter may be considered in the "Unfinished Business and General Orders" portion of the **current** meeting's agenda.

### Questions left pending at the previous meeting:

- I. A question was being discussed and being dealt with when the **previous** meeting adjourned.
- II. A question was listed on the **previous** meeting's agenda as part of the unfinished business, but was not reached, when the meeting adjourned.
- III. A question had been postponed (made prior General Order) to the **previous** meeting, but was not reached, when the meeting adjourned.

### Questions NOT left pending at the previous meeting:

- IV. A question was postponed (made current General Order) to the **current** meeting.
- V. Though not technically "Unfinished Business", any tabled matter may be taken from the table at this time as well.

### Notice:

1. Let us suppose that a group meets monthly.
2. In March, **an issue is listed as "Unfinished Business"** for the first time.
3. In March, the group adjourns without dealing with the issue.
4. In April, the issue can be **taken up again as "Unfinished Business"**.
5. But, if in April the issue is not dealt with, **the issue dies!**
6. Of course, in May the issue may be introduce again, but only as "New Business".

So, if you understand what can be considered under "Unfinished Business", you can protect your favorite issue from being ignored. On the other hand, you could manipulate the time of adjournment to defeat the opponent's favorite issue. 

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### Entitled to be Heard

#### Who is entitled to be heard? When?

Any form of discussion on the merits of a motion is referred to as debate. You may not make a motion or speak in debate unless you obtain the floor, by being recognized by the chair. (See the situations where you may speak without recognition)



being required). You may not stand (waiting to be recognized) until after the current speaker has yielded the floor.

**When a motion is pending** (during a debate), the sequence of events is as follows:

1. The current speaker ceases his debate and yields the floor.
2. Other speakers promptly stand and state "Mr. Chair".
3. The chair recognizes the speaker who is entitled to speak next, based on the following general rules.
  - a. The first person who stood up AFTER the speaker yielded the floor.
  - b. The maker of the motion, if he has not spoken yet.
  - c. Whoever has not spoken on this motion, this day.
  - d. The person presenting an opposing opinion to the last speaker. The chair must allow the floor to alternate between opposing views.

If the chair fails to follow these rules, any member may raise a 'Point of Order' or 'Appeal from the Decision of the Chair.'

**When a motion is NOT pending**, any of the following sequences apply:

1. Member A has been assigned to make a motion for which the Special Meeting has been called. Member A is entitled to speak next.
2. Member B lays a motion on the table. Member B is entitled to speak next in order to Take the motion from the Table.
3. Member C moved to Suspend the Orders of the Day in order to enable a certain motion be made. Member C is entitled to speak next and make that certain motion.
4. Member D urges the defeat of a motion so as to offer an alternate motion. Member D is entitled to speak next and make that alternate motion.
5. Member E states he wishes to Reconsider the vote on a motion. Member E is entitled to speak next.

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### **Totally Wrong Phrases!**

I am sure you have frequently heard these phrases applied with loud and blind confidence.

#### I. **SO MOVED!**

This is a common statement which means nothing. One must state the actual motion so as to avoid confusion in



the audience. Everyone has the right to know exactly what is being moved and discussed. "So moved!" is vague and pointless. Do not allow your club members to be vague and pointless.

## II. **I MOVE TO TABLE!**

First of all, the motion is "*Move to Lay on the Table*". According to Robert's Rules of Order, this motion is in order only as a **temporary interruption of the agenda**, so as to allow something special and urgent out of turn. It is not intended to kill a motion. If your members wish to kill a motion, let them use the correct motion - "*Move to Postpone Indefinitely*".

## III. **CALL FOR THE QUESTION!**

This is not a motion. The person calling "Question! Question!" is being disorderly, if another person has the floor. At best, it is a nagging hint to the chair to stop the discussion and get on with the voting. The chair should make sure that everyone has had an opportunity to speak and still please the nagging "call for the question" hint. The chair should state that after one or two more speakers' comments, the vote shall be taken.

It is critical that the chair not automatically stop the discussion when someone says "Call for the question". The disorderly member who wishes to stop the discussion does not have more rights than the members who wish to discuss the issue. Actually, a motion to stop the discussion ("*I Call for*" or "*I Move the Main Question*") would **require a 2/3 vote** to be adopted.

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## Unanimous Consent

**"If there is no objection ...".** These are the 5 most helpful words a chairperson will ever find.



In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business; or on questions of little importance; and in the presences of a quorum; you can save time by obtaining Unanimous Consent (General Consent) from the assembly. And then in one meeting, you as a chair can accomplish ten times the amount of work.

After all, parliamentary procedure is designed to protect the minority, and generally need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority (opposition) to protect. In these cases, a motion can be adopted without the Six Steps or even the formality of making a motion.

Any meeting can be ten times more productive if the chair will merely state, "If there is no objection, (we will adopt a motion to do such and such)." When no objection is heard, the chair states, "Since there is no

objection, ... (such and such a motion is adopted)." If someone objects, the chair cheerfully proceeds with the traditional Six Steps.

Examples of situations which clearly beg for the Unanimous Consent approach are:

1. To correct or approve the minutes. You do not need a time wasteful motion for this.
2. To withdraw an own motion before the vote is taken. The maker may wish to withdraw his own motion; but the motion belongs to the assembly. Only the assembly may allow the withdrawal of a motion.
3. To suspend a rule on a matter clearly not controversial (and as long as no ByLaw is violated).
4. To allow a speaker a few more minutes than the prescribed time.
5. To allow a guest speaker to speak in an order contrary to the approved agenda (or Rules of Order).
6. To divide a complex motion into logical parts for discussion, amendments, and voting purposes.
7. To close polls on a voting process after inquiring if there are any more votes. No motion to close the polls is necessary.
8. To elect a lone nominee by acclamation.

In reality, as long as you have a quorum and do not violate a ByLaw, these 5 powerful words can allow a chair to quickly accomplish just about anything. These 5 words can shorten any meeting which is typically run by an egocentric, self-indulging, power meister. 

### A Meeting vs. a Session

The words 'Meeting' and 'Session' are typically misused. Robert's Rules of Order clearly indicates that a regular weekly, monthly, or quarterly meeting for an established order of business in a single afternoon or evening, constitutes a separate session. (RONR(10th ed.),p.79) A meeting is actually a subset of a session, (for instance, the separate gatherings during an annual or biennial convention). The convention is a session, but its gatherings are meetings.

**The significance of a session lies in the freedom of each session.**



1. One session can not tie the hands of the majority at any later session, or place a question beyond the reach of a later session. The rights of the majority of one session can not adversely affect the rights of a majority of a later session. Powerful stuff!
2. One of Robert's fundamental rules is that the same or substantially the same question can not be brought up a second time **during the same session**. So, if a session lasts longer than one gathering, a

question may not be revisited for several gatherings. Manipulative stuff!

3. Another fundamental rule is that a question that is being *Postponed to a Certain Time* must be postponed no further than the next session. But, if a session lasts longer than one gathering, the question would be postponed for a very long time. Impactful stuff!

**The term 'Meeting' does have its own special meanings:**

1. **Regular (or Stated) Meeting** - Refers to the periodic business meeting held weekly, monthly, or quarterly, as prescribed by the Bylaws. Each regular meeting normally completes a separate session.

If an issue was never reached on the agenda of one session, the issue could be carried forward as described in Unfinished Business.

If an issue was reached in the agenda but not finally disposed of, it could be reached by the next session if the issue had been postponed (or made a special order), laid on the table, moved for Reconsideration at the correct time, or referred to a committee.

2. **Special (or Called) Meeting** - Is held at a time different from a regular meeting, and convened only to consider one or more items of business specified in the call of the meeting. Each special meeting normally completes a separate session.
3. **Adjourned Meeting** - Is a continuation of the immediately preceding regular or special meeting. An adjourned meeting takes up its work at the point where the preceding meeting was interrupted in the order of business. Each adjourned meeting normally completes the preceding session.
4. **Annual Meeting** - The only difference between a regular meeting and an annual meeting is that at an annual meeting, Annual Reports from Officers and Standing Committees, and Election of Officers are in order. Each annual meeting with its numerous separate meetings normally completes a separate session.
5. **Executive Session** - any meeting in which the proceedings are secret constitutes an executive session. Boards, committees, and disciplinary sessions are normally held in executive session. Some organizations operate under the lodge system where every meeting is a secret meeting and held in executive session. Each executive session normally completes a separate session.

## 🗳️ Counting Votes; Voting Results



### Majority:

Does Robert mean

... the Majority of the entire membership?

... the Majority of the members present?

... the Majority of the Votes Cast?

How should you count the blank votes, the illegal votes, the abstentions?

The basic requirement for adoption of a motion by any assembly with a quorum is a **Majority Vote**, except for certain motions as listed below. A Majority is 'more than half' of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blank votes and abstentions. **Majority does not mean 51%.** In a situation with 1000 votes, Majority = 501 votes; but 51% = 510 votes.

### Let's see an example:

- The chair instructed the members, at a meeting with a quorum, to vote by writing 'Yes' or 'No' on a piece of paper.
- Of the members present, 100 were entitled to vote, but 15 did not cast a ballot. Of the 85 votes cast: 75 were legal; 10 were illegal (the members wrote 'Maybe'); and 4 were turned in blank (abstained).
- The Majority is any number larger than one half of the total of ...  
(legal votes cast) - (blank votes cast) + (illegal votes cast).
- Of the 85 Votes Cast by members entitled to vote ...  
(75 were valid) - (4 were blank) + (10 were illegal) = 81 Votes Cast.
- One half of 81 Votes Cast is 40 1/2. Majority was 41 votes.

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### 2/3 Vote:

Robert specifies which motion will require at least a 2/3 vote for adoption. Notice that it is not called a 2/3 majority. A 2/3 vote is generally not taken as a voice vote, but rather as a standing count, or some other easily countable fashion. Generally speaking, a 2/3 vote is required for adoption of any motion which ...

1. Suspends or modifies a rule of order already adopted;
2. Prevents the introduction of a question to consideration;
3. Closes, limits, or extends the limits of debate;
4. Closes nominations or the polls;
5. Takes away membership or office.

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### Previous Notice:

There is a further requirement. As you can see from the following table, a

**Previous Notice** is needed by some motions which require a 2/3 votes to adopt. A Previous Notice is an announcement of the intent to introduce the motion. A Previous Notice is typically given at least one meeting before the meeting when the proposal is to be introduced.

Votes Required to Adopt a Motion by a 2/3 Vote	
<b><i>A Motion Not involving a By Law, the Constitution, or an issue listed as Special Order on the Agenda:</i></b>	
With Previous Notice	Majority of votes cast
With NO Previous Notice	2/3 of votes cast; OR Majority of entire membership of the organization
<b><i>A Motion Involving a By Law, the Constitution, or an issue listed as Special Order on the Agenda:</i></b>	
With Previous Notice	2/3 of votes cast
With NO Previous Notice	Majority of entire membership of the organization

Study this chart carefully and you will agree that it makes a great deal of sense. It protects your interests.



### **A Motion Can Be Adopted; Yet Still Not Be Final**

For every means of disposing of a motion, there is a means of returning the motion to the assembly, (with certain slight limitations)! You would think that once a motion is adopted (or is voted down), the question of the motion would be settled. To someone armed with Parliamentary Procedure knowledge, it does not mean any such thing! For example ...

1. **Move To Lay on the Table:** Anyone can Take from the Table, once the immediate urgency has been dealt with.
2. **Move To Refer to a Committee:** Anyone can move to discharge the committee with previous notice. The motion could again return to the assembly.
3. **Move to Rescind (annul or repeal):** Anyone regardless of how he voted and without time limitations (but with previous notice) may move to annul a motion already adopted.
4. **Move to Amend Something Previously Adopted:** Even after the assembly long debated and heatedly amended a controversial

motion, anyone with previous notice can later move to amend it some more. This is the strange case of amending a motion that is not pending.

5. **Move to Postpone Indefinitely:** Any motion which is killed may be reintroduced (as a new motion) in a subsequent session of the assembly.
6. **Move to Reconsider the Vote on... :** If a member votes on the prevailing side, he may Move to Reconsider the Vote at that same meeting. The result is that he will paralyze the majority's will by suspending all action which could have resulted from the adopted motion.

Robert's Rules of Order base Parliamentary Procedure on the potential of the majority to change its mind; to need to correct a hasty, and ill-advised action; or to need to take into account a changed situation since a voting.

How thorough!

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## **Rescind**

(often called Repeal or Annul)

**You always have the right to annul or amend something already adopted.**



Quite often it is obvious that a great deal of preparation and support has been quietly organized before a motion is presented to the members. The motion is adopted before you even understand the true purpose and potential consequences of the motion. Fortunately there are no time limitations to annul or amend any motion.

**There are no arbitrary restrictions, just a couple of logical ones:**

1. If on the day a motion was passed, someone moved to **reconsider the vote** on that motion, you can neither Rescind nor Amend that motion, until after the Motion to Reconsider has been resolved.
2. If the motion you wish to Rescind has been **executed in an irreversible manner**, you can not Rescind it. However, any reversible portion can be amended. A simple way to look at this is, if no one outside the meeting knows about the motion, the motion can probably be undone. If a part of the motion has not been executed, you can probably amend the unexecuted portion of the motion.
3. If a motion results in a contract and the other **party has been informed** of the vote, you can not Rescind the motion.

4. If the motion acts upon a resignation, or results in an election/expulsion, and the **person involved is officially notified** of the voting, you can not Rescind the motion. Fortunately, Robert's textbook allows for a reinstatement procedure and disciplinary removal of a person from office.
5. In order to Rescind a motion, it takes at least a 2/3 vote unless the membership has received a **Previous Notice**. (See the [Votes Required to Adopt a Motion by a 2/3 Vote Table](#)).

When a motion is adopted before you can prepare a means of defeating it, all you need is a 2/3 vote, and you can nullify or amend the offensive motion. 

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### **Bylaws - The Best Advice**

**Parliamentary Procedure is useless to you, unless you are familiar with your organization's Bylaws.** The best advice anyone can give you is to become familiar with the Bylaws and Constitution of your organization. You will never win if you do not even know which parliamentary authority (= rule book) was adopted as part of your Bylaws.

Your Bylaws state which one Parliamentary Authority will rule your organization. I have seen many club officers blend several parliamentary rule books to rationalize their decisions. Later, the same club officers cite a different parliamentary source to justify other actions. The powerless membership allows itself to be manipulated and deprived.

If you become familiar with your Bylaws, you will win half of your battles merely because you will probably be the only person who has ever read the Bylaws in your organization. Knowing a little Parliamentary Procedure and the Bylaws will make you the most successful member of your organization!

#### **Typical Basic Bylaw Articles**

##### **I. Name.**

*There must be no ambiguity as to the identity of the group.*

##### **II. Object and Reason for the group's existence.**

*This alone will help you combat abuse of power, and will help you keep the organization focused.*

##### **III. Members.**

*This explains the members' rights, limitations, and qualifications. It clarifies issues such as fees, attendance, resignations, and honorary membership.*

IV. **Officers.**

*Explains methods for nominations, voting, elections, and filling vacancies, as well as term of office and duties.*

V. **Meetings.**

*Details quorum, regular meetings, special meetings, and conventions.*

Often, the remaining Articles are referred to as the Constitution. In many cases, organizations refer to all the 9 Articles as the Constitution and the Bylaws as if they were one document.

VI. **Executive Board or Board of Directors.**

*The board's composition, power, and quorum are clearly stated in this article.*

VII. **Committees.**

*Standing committees must be described as to name, composition, manner of selection, attendance, and duties.*

VIII. **Parliamentary Authority.**

*The rules of order must be clearly established. It could be Robert, Sturgis, Cannon, Demeter, Riddick, etc. The important thing is to have a document which assures order under fire. Regardless of the rule book, an organization is ruled first by local, state, and federal laws; and then by its parent organization; followed by any adopted special rules of order; and finally by its adopted parliamentary authority.*

IX. **Amendment of Bylaws.**

*Typically, a Bylaw can be amended with 2/3 of the collected votes, if a prior notice has been given during the prior meeting. Otherwise, it takes a majority of the entire registered membership to amend any Bylaw.*

Some organizations have additional Articles for matters of Finances, Policies, or Discipline. Nevertheless, once you read the Bylaws, you will be more powerful than any club officer. Try it. After all, you do know what is best for your organization. Right? 

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## **The Agenda - Choreography of Rights and Abuses**

**The more serious an issue is, the more the reason to insist that the issue be included on the agenda, and that the agenda includes explicit starting time for each major section.**

The easiest way to defeat an issue is to take so much meeting



time so that the issue never comes up. If the agenda specifies times for the major sections, you can always assure that your issue will be addressed before the meeting is adjourned.

**An agenda according to Robert's (RONR(10th ed.),p.342-351), with a few comments.**

- I. **Reading and approval of the minutes.**  
(Motion to approve is not necessary. The minutes are either approved as read or as corrected, but without a vote.)
- II. **Reports of Officers, Boards, Standing Committees.**  
(This includes correspondence, treasurer's report, etc. Treasure's report is never adopted or voted upon unless it has been audited. )
- III. **Reports of Special Committees.**  
(Each report could conclude with a motion which the assembly must address.)
- IV. **Special Orders.**  
(Any motion which was adopted as a Special Order which guarantees that the motion will be dealt with before the meeting is adjourned.)
- V. **Unfinished Business and General Orders.**  
(Any issue which was not concluded, was postponed, or was tabled during the prior meeting. The secretary's minutes should inform the chair which items to add to this section. Only a clueless chair would ask the assembly, 'Is there any unfinished business?')
- VI. **New Business.**  
(This is when the chair and the parliamentarian can be surprised by the sequence of events. It is best to always anticipate issues the membership may present, or else be embarrassed by the complications.  
It is at this time that announcements, educational programs, and speakers are introduced.)
- VII. **Adjournment.**  
(A motion to adjourn may be made at any time of the meeting. The assembly should never be forced to meet longer than it is willing to meet.)