
Excerpts from Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised

The following information, condensed from the 1990 edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, is offered as an aid for those seeking guidance in the fundamentals of parliamentary procedure. All page references are to the 9th Edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* published by Scott, Foresman and Company, by General Henry M. Robert, but section numbers, i.e. §18, should remain consistent regardless of the publisher.

Orders of the Day, § 18, pp. 217ff

A motion calling for the "Orders of the Day" is made for the purpose of requiring the assembly to conform to its adopted agenda.

This motion does not require a second; it is not debatable; it's not amendable; a two-thirds vote is required to refuse to proceed to the orders of the day; it cannot be reconsidered.

To Obtain the Floor, §3, p. 28ff

Prior to speaking in the assembly, whether to make a motion or to engage in debate, it is necessary for a member to obtain the floor, i.e., to be recognized by the chair as having the right to speak at that time.

Microphones are placed at convenient locations so that members may address the chair, when no one else "has the floor," saying "Mister/Madame Chair." If recognized by the chair, the member is entitled to speak.

Persons recognized by the chair are asked to identify themselves by giving their names, and the name of the synod they represent. In a few instances, it is not necessary to seek recognition of the chair before speaking, e.g.:

- to appeal a decision by the chair - appeal to be made before any debate or other business has intervened (pp. 254-259);
- to suggest amount, name, place, date, or numbers to "fill blanks" when invited by the chair (pp. 159-164);
- to call for "division," if vote is doubtful (pp. 276-278);
- to call for a count, if the result of the "division" is in doubt (pp. 276-278);
- to divide a question that contains a series of parts on different subjects (pp. 268-271);
- to extend time for consideration of a pending question or until scheduled recess or adjournment, when the orders of the day are announced or called for (pp. 221-222);
- to call for the orders of the day (pp. 217-222);
- to raise a point of order, or a question of order (pp. 247- 254);
- to make a parliamentary inquiry (pp. 283-285);
- to raise a question of privilege, unless a person is speaking or unless such interruption is unavoidable (pp. 223-229);
- to request permission to read a paper or a section of a book (pp. 283-284, 289-291);
- to move reconsideration of a motion previously acted upon (pp. 309-326);

- to request permission to withdraw a motion, or to modify a motion, that has been stated by the chair (pp. 283-284, 287-289);
- to object to consideration of the question (pp. 265-268).

Voting, §4, p. 43ff

Members may change their votes on a motion up to the time when the chairperson announces the result; after that, they can change their votes only by permission of the assembly (pp. 47, 403).

Most motions can be adopted by a majority of the members present and voting, provided a quorum is present.

The following motions require a two-thirds vote of members present and voting to adopt:

- Amend or rescind something previously adopted, if notice has not been given;
- Close nominations;
- Discharge an order for the day before it is pending;
- Extend time for consideration of pending question, or time until scheduled adjournment or recess;
- Limit or extend limits of debate;
- Make a special order;
- Previous question;
- Refuse to proceed to the orders of the day;
- Suspend the rules;
- Take up a question out of its proper order, or take up an order of the day before the time for which it has been set (Table 46).

Actions that Cannot be Rescinded or Amended, §34, p. 302

- a. Authorization or direction to do something that has been completed (any incomplete part of the action may be rescinded or amended);
- b. Authorization to enter into contract and the other party to the contract has been informed of the action;
- c. Election to, or expulsion from, or action upon resignation from membership or office, and the person affected was present or has been officially informed of the action (p. 302).

Amendment of Agenda, §40, p. 345ff

Any change in the program of assembly business, after it has been adopted, requires (a) a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, or (b) a majority vote of all registered members, or (c) unanimous consent (p. 526). This will be modified by a proposed special assembly rule.

An item of business can be taken out of its prescribed order (a) by adopting, by a two thirds vote, a motion to suspend the rules, or (b) by unanimous consent (p. 358).

Quasi Committee of the Whole, §51, p. 530ff

The assembly can "go into the quasi committee of the whole" to discuss under conditions of freedom approximating those of a committee a matter that can best be discussed informally (p. 165).

No binding decisions may be taken by a quasi committee of the whole; however, it may make recommendations to the assembly;

The chair of the quasi committee of the whole may be the presiding officer (p. 522).

During the period when the assembly is meeting as a quasi committee of the whole, even through the committee consists solely of members having vote and voice; it is technically not the assembly.

The rules, which apply to the assembly, also apply to the quasi committee of the whole, except as follows:

The only motions that are in order in committee of the whole are to adopt (within the committee, for inclusion in its report), to amend (what it is proposed to report), and to "rise" or "rise and report" except that, among the incidental motions, a point of order can be raised, an appeal from the decision of the chair can be made, a division of the assembly can be called for, and applicable requests and inquiries can be made. In debate on motions to adopt or amend, unless a limit is prescribed by the assembly before it goes into committee of the whole, each member can speak an unlimited number of times for the same length of time as allowed by the assembly rules (p. 525).

Courtesy, §3, p. 21ff

Members should refer to speakers by title or some other designation, and should avoid mentioning names, if possible. A speaker's motives should not be called into questions (c.f. pp. 42, 386-389).

Division of a Question, §27, p. 268ff

A motion that focuses on a single question, but consists of several parts each of which can stand as a distinct proposal, even if separated from the other parts, can be considered and voted upon separately following adoption of a motion of "division of the question." The motion to divide must state clearly the manner in which the question is to be divided (pp. 268-271).

Privileged Motions, §6, p. 66ff

(In order of precedence from highest to lowest)

- Adjourn
- Recess
- Question of Privilege

Subsidiary Motions, §5, p. 58ff

(In order of precedence from highest to lowest)

- Lay on the Table
- Previous Question
- Limit Debate
- Postpone to a Certain Time
- Refer to Committee
- Committee of the Whole
- Amend
- Postpone Indefinitely

Amendments, §12, p. 127ff

When a motion brought before the assembly does not meet with ready acceptance by all the members and if it can be made more suitable or acceptable in an altered form, a proposal to modify the wording can be introduced by making a motion to amend. A motion may be amended by inserting words, striking out words, striking out and inserting words, adding words at the end of a sentence, and substituting. A motion to amend requires a second; is debatable, if the motion to be amended is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote even though the motion amended requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption; and can be reconsidered (pp. 11 I- 1 12, 127-150).

Substitute, §12, p. 150ff

A motion to strike out an entire paragraph, section, or article, or a complete main motion, and to insert a different paragraph, section, article, or main motion is a motion to substitute. The motion to substitute requires a second; is debatable, if the motion is debatable; require a majority vote; and is amendable. Amendments can be made first to the original and then to the substitute motion. When both have been perfected, the vote is taken on whether to substitute the proposed substitute (with any amendments to it that have been adopted) for the original paragraph, section, article, or main motion with any amendments that previously had been adopted. A majority vote is required. After the motion to substitute has been adopted, the substitute becomes the pending paragraph, section, article, or main motion, and then the substituted material cannot be amended except by adding something that does not alter the content of the substituted material. When material has been substituted for other material, the assembly must still vote on whether the substituted material is to be adopted (pp. 150, 159).

Lay on the Table, §17, p. 207ff

A motion of this character would, if adopted, permit the assembly to put aside temporarily a pending question, so that a more urgent matter can be considered. This motion requires a second; cannot be debated; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered (pp. 207-216).

A motion to lay on the table should not be made, if the intent is to "kill" the pending motion (p.214). See "Postpone Indefinitely" below.

Limit or Extend Limits of Debate, §15, p. 188ff

The purpose of this motion may be (1) to shorten or to increase the limit (e.g., three minutes) placed upon each speaker, or (2) to limit the number of speeches, or (3) to close debate at a specified time. This motion requires a second; can be amended; cannot be debated; requires a two-thirds vote; and can be reconsidered (pp. 265-268).

Object to Consideration of a Matter, §26, p. 265ff

This motion is used to test the assembly's desire even to consider an original main motion. It must be made immediately after the question is stated by the chair and before there has been any debate or higher ranking motion stated by the chair. Its use is to prevent discussion on controversial or personal questions. A member may rise and, without waiting for recognition, say, "I object to the consideration of the question (or motion)." A second is not required, and the motion may not be debated or amended. A two-thirds vote is required to sustain an objection to consideration (pp.265-268).

Postpone Indefinitely, § 1 1, p. 123ff

A motion to "postpone indefinitely" is used for one of two purposes: (1) to dispose of an ill-considered motion without voting on it directly; or (2) to get a "reading" on the strength of those supporting and those opposing a main motion. The effect of the motion, if adopted, is to "kill" the main motion. The motion to postpone indefinitely requires a second; is debatable; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and an affirmative vote only can be reconsidered (pp. 123-127).

Postpone to a Certain Time, §14, p. 176ff

A member has the right to make a motion to postpone action on another motion (1) so that it can be discussed more fully at a more convenient time, or (2) because arguments advanced during debate have indicated the need to make a decision at a later time. The time to which the motion is to be postponed should be stated definitely in this motion. The motion requires a second; is debatable; and can be amended. A majority vote is required unless the effect of the postponement is to create a special order, in which case a two-thirds vote is required; however, an amendment to the motion to postpone to a certain time requires only a majority vote. The motion to postpone to a certain time can be reconsidered (pp. 176-188).

Previous Question, §16, p. 194ff

To move the "previous question" is to bring the assembly to an immediate decision as to whether debate on another motion should cease. The maker of the motion must be properly recognized by the chair. The motion cannot be made by someone who has first participated in the debate. This motion requires a second; is not debatable; cannot be amended; requires a two-thirds vote; and can be reconsidered before any vote is taken under it. If adopted, the assembly proceeds, without further debate, to vote on the pending question. If the previous question is moved on "all pending questions," and adopted, the assembly proceeds without further debate, to vote successively on each pending question (pp. 194-207).

Reconsideration, §36, p. 309ff

Should it be deemed desirable to return to a motion already voted on, whether adopted or rejected, a motion is made to reconsider the vote on that subject. Such motion may be offered only by one who voted on the prevailing side of the issue, and may be made only on the day the previous vote on the subject was taken or on the next succeeding day of assembly business. If adopted, the question before the assembly is exactly the same question

and it is in the form as at the time the original vote was taken. The motion to reconsider requires a second; is debatable if the motion to be reconsidered is debatable; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered (pp. 309-329).

Refer (or Commit), §13, p. 165ff

This motion may be used to commit a main motion, with or without amendments and with or without subsidiary motions, to the Church Council, a division, commission, office, board, committee, or auxiliary to be designated by the Church Council for study and report to a future assembly (or for interim action), or to an assembly committee or a special committee for study and report back to the present assembly. The motion to refer requires a second; is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered, if the committee has begun to function (pp. 165-176).

Rescind or Amend**Something Previously Adopted, §34, p. 299ff**

These two motions may be applied to an earlier action of an assembly. If adopted, the motion to rescind has the effect of nullifying the earlier action; the motion to amend something previously adopted is to be used, if only a part of the earlier action is to be changed. The main motion requires a second; is debatable; and can be amended. A majority vote is needed to adopt a motion to rescind or to amend something previously adopted, provided notice of intent was given at the previous session or at the call to order of the present session; a two-thirds vote is necessary for immediate passage. A negative vote only can be reconsidered (pp. 299-304).

Suspend the Rules, §25, p. 259ff

If by reason of the assembly's rules, it is not possible, according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, to take a procedural action (such as bringing forward an action scheduled for later consideration), a member may move to suspend the rules, stating the specific purpose to be achieved, but not the specific rule.

Any such suspension of rules, however, may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this church; or with the laws of the municipality, state, or nation; or with the fundamental principles of parliamentary law. A motion to suspend the rules requires a second; cannot be debated; and cannot be amended. A two-thirds vote is required to adopt. It cannot be reconsidered (pp. 259-265)

Take from the Table, §33, p. 294ff

The purpose of a motion to "take from the table" is to enable new consideration of a motion that had previously been laid on the table. Such motion is in order any time after the business that interfered with consideration at an earlier time has been completed, provided no other business is before the assembly. A matter that has been tabled dies at the dose of the assembly, if no motion is adopted to take it from the table. A motion to take it from the table requires a second; cannot be debated; and cannot be amended. A majority vote is required to adopt. It cannot be reconsidered (pp. 294-298).