

A Motion Chart for Robert's Rules

When you're using Robert's Rules to help your meeting run well, the following chart can come in very handy when you're in the thick of debate on a main motion. It's designed to help you choose the right motion for the right reason. (In the chart, the subsidiary and privileged motions are listed in descending order of precedence; that is, motions lower on the list can't be made if anything higher is pending.)

| | | | Can Interrupt | Requires Second | Debatable | Amendable | Vote Required | Can Reconsider | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| SECONDARY MOTIONS | PRIVILEGED | Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn | | S | | A | M | R | |
| | | Adjourn | | S | | | M | | |
| | | Recess | | S | | A | M | | |
| | | Raise a Question of Privilege | I | | | | Chair decides | | |
| | | Call for Orders of the Day | I | | | | Chair decides | | |
| | SUBSIDIARY | Lay on the Table | | | S | | | M | Negative Only* |
| | | Previous Question | | | S | | | 2/3 | R* |
| | | Limit or Extend Limits of Debate | | | S | | A | 2/3 | R* |
| | | Postpone Definitely | | | S | D | A | M | R* |
| | | Commit (or Refer) | | | S | D | A | M | R* |
| | | Amend | | | S | D* | A* | M | R |
| | | Postpone Indefinitely | | | S | D | | M | Affirmative Only |
| | Main Motion | | | | S | D | A | M | R |
| | * See text for exceptions | | | | | | | M = Majority vote | |

Consult a book on Robert's Rules for clarification on the exceptions.

Making and Handling Motions According to Robert's Rules

When that light bulb goes off in your head and you have a great idea, you make a motion according to Robert's Rules to get your idea discussed and a decision made. Following are the eight steps required from start to finish to make a motion and get the group to decide whether it agrees. Each step is a required part of the process.

| Step | What to Say |
|--|--|
| 1. The member rises and addresses the chair. | "Madam Chairman. . . ." |
| 2. The chair recognizes the member. | "The chair recognizes Ms. Gliggenschlapp." |
| 3. The member makes a motion. | "I move to purchase a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for our president." |
| 4. Another member seconds the motion. | "Second." |
| 5. The chair states the motion. | "It is moved and seconded to purchase a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for your president. Are you ready for the question?" |
| 6. The members debate the motion. | "The chair recognizes Ms. Gliggenschlapp to speak to her motion. . . ." |
| 7. The chair puts the question and the members vote. | "All those in favor of adopting the motion to buy a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for your president will say 'aye,' [pause] those opposed will say 'no'." |
| 8. The chair announces the result of the vote. | "The ayes have it and the motion carries, and a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> will be purchased for your president." |

Guidelines

- Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state Mr./Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order! Must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!
- Debate cannot begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote!
- Before the motion is stated by the Chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.
- The "immediately pending question" is the last question stated by the Chair!
Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone
- The member moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to preference to the floor!
- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once!
- All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations! When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes occur!

The Rules

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are

considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble can not be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.

- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "**Close Debate**" if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "**Committee of the Whole**" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified