The a-b-c's of PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

I rise to a point of order!

American Institute of Parliamentarians
WHAT IS PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

It's a set of rules for conducting business at meetings and public gatherings.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE HAS A LONG HISTORY

IT ORIGINATED in the early English Parliaments.

IT CAME TO AMERICA with the first European settlers.

IT BECAME UNIFORM in 1876, when Henry M. Robert published his manual on Parliamentary Law.

Today, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 9th Edition, is the basic handbook of operation for many clubs, organizations and other groups.

Note: A glossary and index are on page 14.
Because it allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

**Parliamentary Procedure Means:**

- **Democratic Rule**
- **Flexibility**
- **Protection of Rights**
- **A Fair Hearing for Everyone.**

It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization.

So, it's important for everyone to know these basic rules!
A FIXED AGENDA,
or order of business, is generally followed by organizations using parliamentary procedure. Here's a typical example:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>CALL TO ORDER</strong></td>
<td>5. <strong>SPECIAL ORDERS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a quorum* is present, the chair (the person conducting the meeting) says, &quot;The meeting will come to order.&quot;</td>
<td>This is important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>MINUTES</strong></td>
<td>6. <strong>UNFINISHED BUSINESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The secretary reads a record of the previous meeting.</td>
<td>This is business that has come over from the previous meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>OFFICERS' REPORTS</strong></td>
<td>7. <strong>NEW BUSINESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is often limited to a report from the treasurer, but others may report at this time.</td>
<td>New topics are introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>COMMITTEE REPORTS</strong></td>
<td>8. <strong>ANNOUNCEMENTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First come reports from standing (permanent) committees, then from special (temporary) committees.</td>
<td>These inform the assembly (the people at the meeting) of other subjects and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. <strong>ADJOURNMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The meeting ends by a vote or by general consent (or by chair's decision if time of adjournment was prearranged by vote).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A QUORUM
is the number or percentage of members that must be present for business to be conducted legally. The actual number is usually stated in the bylaws.
They make motions. A motion is a proposal that the assembly take a stand or take action on some issue. Members have a right to:

**PRESENT MOTIONS**  (make a proposal)

I move that...

**SECOND MOTIONS**  (express support for discussion of another member’s motion)

Second.

**DEBATE MOTIONS**  (give opinions on the motion)

I think...

**VOTE ON MOTIONS**  (make a decision)

All those in favor...
There are 5 general types of motions

1. MAIN MOTIONS
These introduce subjects for consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions.
For example:

2. SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS
These change or affect how the main motion is handled. (They are voted on before the main motion.)
For example:

3. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS
These concern special or important matters not related to pending business. In general, they are considered before other types of motions.
For example:

4. INCIDENTAL MOTIONS
These are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. They must be considered before the other motion. For example:

5. MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY
These enable certain items to be reconsidered. In general, they are brought up when no business is pending.
For example:
### Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Do This</th>
<th>You Say This</th>
<th>May You Interrupt the Speaker?</th>
<th>Do You Need a Second?</th>
<th>Is It Debatable?</th>
<th>Can It Be Amended?</th>
<th>What Vote Is Needed?</th>
<th>Can It Be Reconsidered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjourn Meeting</td>
<td>&quot;I move that we adjourn.&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No vote</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call an Intermission</td>
<td>&quot;I move that we recess for...&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complain about Heat, Noise, Etc.</td>
<td>&quot;I rise to a question of privilege.&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No vote</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Suspend Consideration of an Issue</td>
<td>&quot;I move to table the motion.&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Debate and Amendments</td>
<td>&quot;I move the previous question.&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone Discussion For a Certain Time</td>
<td>&quot;I move to postpone the discussion until...&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Closer Study of Something</td>
<td>&quot;I move to refer the matter to committee.&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend a Motion</td>
<td>&quot;I move to amend the motion by...&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce Business</td>
<td>&quot;I move that...&quot;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Motions Listed Above Are in Order of Precedence. Below, There Is No Order...

| Protest Breach of Rules or Conduct                 | "I rise to a point of order."                          | Yes                           | No                   | No              | No                | No vote              | No                     |
| Vote on a Ruling of the Chair                      | "I appeal from the chair’s decision."                  | Yes                           | Yes                  | Yes             | No                | Majority             | Yes                    |
| Suspend Rules Temporarily                           | "I move to suspend the rules so that..."                | No                            | Yes                  | No              | No                | Majority             | No                     |
| Avoid Considering an Improper Matter               | "I object to consideration of this motion."            | Yes                           | No                   | No              | No                | Majority             | Yes                    |
| Verify a Voice Vote by Having Members Stand        | "I call for a division," or "Division!"                | Yes                           | No                   | No              | No                | No vote              | No                     |
| Request Information                                 | "Point of information..."                              | Yes                           | No                   | No              | No                | No vote              | No                     |
| Take Up a Matter Previously Tabled                 | "I move to take from the table..."                     | No                            | Yes                  | No              | No                | Majority             | No                     |
| Reconsider a Hasty Action                           | "I move to reconsider the vote on..."                  | Yes                           | Yes                  | Yes             | Yes               | Majority             | No                     |

### Notes:
- Unless moved when no question is pending.
- If affirmative votes may not be reconsidered.
- Unless the question has begun.
- Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.
- Unless the motion to be amended is not debatable.
- Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision.
- A majority vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of the main motion.
- Only if the main question has not been debated yet.
- Only if the speaker has the floor but has not actually begun to speak.
- Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.
HOW DO I PRESENT MY MOTION?

Here's what happens when you want a motion considered:

1 YOU OBTAIN THE FLOOR

- Wait until the previous speaker is finished.
- Rise and address the chair. Say, "Mr. (or Madam) Chairperson" or "Mr. (or Madam) President."
- Give your name. The chair will recognize you by repeating it.

2 YOU MAKE YOUR MOTION

- Speak clearly and concisely.
- State your motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we do..." instead of "I move that we do not..."
- Stay on the subject and avoid personal attacks.
3 **YOU WAIT FOR A SECOND**
- Another member will say, "I second the motion."
- Or, the chair will call for a second.
- If there is no second, your motion will not be considered.
Motions made at the direction of a board or committee (of more than one person) do not require a second.

4 **THE CHAIR STATES YOUR MOTION**
- The chair must say, "It is moved and seconded that we..."
- After this happens, debate or voting can occur.
- Your motion is now "assembly property," and you can't change it without consent of the members.

5 **YOU EXPAND ON YOUR MOTION**
- As the person who made the motion, you are allowed to speak first.
- Direct all comments to the chair.
- Keep to the time limit for speaking.
- You may speak again after all other speakers are finished.
- You may speak a third time by a motion to suspend the rules with a ⅔ vote.

6 **THE CHAIR PUTS THE QUESTION**
- The chair asks, "Are you ready for the question?"
- If there is no more debate, or if a motion to stop debate is adopted, a vote is taken.
- The chair announces the results.
THE METHOD OF VOTING ON A MOTION

depends on the situation and on the bylaws of your organization. You may vote by:

**VOICE**
The chair asks those in favor to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no” (for majority votes only). A member may move for an exact count.

**SHOW OF HANDS**
Members raise their hands to verify a voice vote, or as an alternative to it. This does not require a count. A member may move for an exact count.

**ROLL CALL**
If a record of each person’s vote is needed, each member answers “yes,” “no” or “present” (indicating the choice not to vote) as his or her name is called.

**BALLOT**
Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This is done when secrecy is desired.

**GENERAL CONSENT**
When a motion isn’t likely to be opposed, the chair says, “If there is no objection...” Members show consent by their silence.

If someone says, “I object,” the matter must be put to a vote.
MORE ABOUT VOTING

A question (motion) is pending when it has been stated by the chair but not yet voted on.
The last motion stated by the chair is the first pending.
The main motion is always the last voted on.

A MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE
This motion is used to lay something aside temporarily to take care of a more urgent matter.
It should not be used to prevent debate or to kill a question.
Members can "take from the table" a motion for reconsideration.
This must happen by the end of the current or next session (depending on how soon the next session is scheduled).

A MOTION TO POSTPONE INDEFINITELY
This is parliamentary strategy. It allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. This is useful in case of a badly chosen main motion for which either a "yes" or "no" vote would have undesirable consequences.
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QUORUM
Number or percentage
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SECOND
A verbal signal from a member
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VOTING
Means by which motions
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PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE HELPS GET THINGS DONE

✓ MAKE MOTIONS that are in order.

✓ OBTAIN THE FLOOR properly.

✓ SPEAK clearly and concisely.

✓ OBEY the rules of debate.

And, most of all, be courteous.

That's always in order!
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