

## What is Robert's Rules of Order, and What Is It Used For?

Robert's Rules of Order is a lengthy manual of parliamentary procedure that was first created in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert as an adaptation of the rules and practices of Congress.

Robert's Rules is a framework that is comprised of a set of codes and rules of ethics that helps groups hold orderly meetings that allow the majority to rule while allowing minority voices to be heard. Most nonprofits and groups use Robert's Rules because it ensures order and creates a ripe environment for productivity. The principles help ensure meetings are fair, efficient, democratic and orderly.

### Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)

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Robert's Rules is efficient at getting through an agenda. It offers order and predictability.

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People can understand how to operate the system by studying the rules, and a group can revise its procedures by discussing them.

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Its many checks and balances can provide an enormous degree of protection against demagoguery, impulsivity and laziness.

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Robert's Rules gives people shared language, and shared points of reference with which to communicate thoughtfully and systematically about their process.

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Historically, it demystified democratic decision-making for the general public, permitting -- for the first time -- democratic control of the process itself, expanding the possibilities for self-governance.

- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations
- No person can speak until recognized by the chair
- Personal remarks during debate are out of order
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time
- Members have a right to know what the immediately pending question is and to have it restated before a vote is taken
- Full and free discussion of every main motion is a basic right

- A quorum must be present for business to be conducted
- A majority decides a question except when basic rights of members are involved or a rule provides otherwise.
- A 2/3 vote is required for any motion that deprives a member of right in any way (e.g., cutting off debate)
- Silence gives consent. Those who do not vote allow the decision to be made by those who do vote.
- The Chair should always remain impartial

## Commonly Held Fundamental BASIC PRINCIPLES

### Basic principles

The basic principles of Robert's Rules are:

1. All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. Everyone has the right to be heard.
2. Only one item of business or question can be taken up at any time. This gives the chance for a full and fair discussion, dissuades topic tangents and maintains order.
3. The majority vote rules. However, this doesn't mean the rights of every individual aren't protected.
4. An impartial chairperson must be present.

These principles ensure that everyone is heard and that any debate, question or vote can be conducted as fairly as possible. All of the rules of order support the principles. Some key examples include:

- 'No member speaks twice about a motion until all members have had the opportunity to speak.'
- 'Only one main motion can be pending at a time.'
- 'Each meeting follows an order of business called an agenda. Everything on the agenda is reviewed in its order and disposed of before members go on to the next item.'

## **Basic definitions**

### ***Motion***

A motion is a formal proposal by a member of the group. In simple terms, they can help form decision-making processes. Usually, this starts with the phrase "I move". For example, "I move that we build a new play park in our neighbourhood." This then opens the 'motion' up for debate and discussion.

### ***Second***

To 'second' a motion means that another member of the group agrees with the motion and would also like for it to be considered. "I second the motion".

## Robert's Rules of Order Cheat Sheet

### HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW BUSINESS – The Main Motion Process

1

- Member makes a **clearly worded motion to take action or a position.**
- "I move..."
- Motions recorded in minutes

2

- **Motion must be seconded.**
- "Second!"
- A second allows discussion to occur; it does not signify approval.
- A motion without a second does not move forward.

3

- **Chairman restates the motion.**
- "It is moved and seconded that..."
- Provides clarity

4

- **Discussion/debate occurs.**
- Maker of motion starts discussion.
- Amendments may be offered - return to step 1 to amend motion: "I move to amend the motion by..."

5

- Chair closes discussion and **states the question/asks for a vote.**
- "The question is on the adoption of the motion that..."
- Motion repeated word-for-word

6

- Chairman provides **voting directions:**
- "Those in favor of the motion, say aye";
- "Those opposed, say no"

7

- Chairman announces the **result of the vote:**
- "The ayes have it, and the motion is adopted" or
- "The noes have it, the motion is lost."
- Recorded in minutes

## The role of the chair

The chairperson's role is critical to the efficacy of Robert's Rules and to running a successful meeting. The chair is normally an elected officer of the organisation or assembly, and he or she has a set of responsibilities to fulfil as the person in charge of the meeting.

As part of this role, there are some essential rules to follow:

- You should set goals for the meeting, discussion or vote.
- You must be and remain impartial and neutral.
- You should take control of the meeting.
- You should ensure that the rights of all members are protected.
- You cannot take part in motions, debates or votes (unless in specific situations).

A skilled chairperson allows all members to voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard. The following tips and reminders will help chairpersons run a successful and productive meeting without being run over or running over others.

- Follow the agenda to keep the group moving toward its goals.
- Let the group do its work — don't over-command.
- Control the flow of the meeting by recognizing members who ask to speak.
- Let all members speak once before allowing anyone to speak a second time.
- When discussions get off-track, gently guide the group back to the agenda.
- Model courtesy and respect and insist that others do the same.
- Help to develop skills in the parliamentary procedure by properly using motions and points of order.
- Encourage members to present motions positively rather than negatively.
- Give each speaker your undivided attention.
- Keep an emotional pulse on the discussions.
- Allow a consensus to have the final authority of the group.

Source: [Robert's Rules of Order | Cheat Sheet for Nonprofits | BoardEffect & Robert's Rules of Order: Simplified Beginner's Guide - iBabs](#)

### Some videos:

[Robert's Rules of Order - Mastering the 3 Most Important Motions - YouTube](#) – pretty good

[Robert's Rules of Order Quickstart - YouTube](#)

[Henry Martyn Robert and His Rules of Engagement - YouTube](#) – who was Robert?

[The Basics of Making Motions - YouTube](#) – nice and simple Motion

[Making and debating a motion at a meeting - YouTube](#) – Nice and simple – skit of a meeting from Sask

[Using Parliamentary Procedures for Effective Meetings - YouTube](#) – good overview that includes what a good motion is

[Basics of Robert's Rules - YouTube](#) – good one from SFU

[Robert's Rules: 5 Key Things to Know - YouTube](#) – Highlevel overview

[Rules, Rules, Rules! - YouTube](#) – Why Robert's Rules exist – making beautiful music together

[How to Make a Motion according to Robert's Rules of Order - YouTube](#) – Main motion – 90's style

[Amending a Motion \(Basic\) - YouTube](#) – amending the motion'

[The Basics of Amending Motions - YouTube](#) – Group meeting

[Amending a Main Motion - YouTube](#) – Amending motions – 90's style

[Closing a Debate: Previous Question - YouTube](#) – Calling the question

[How to Use Point of Order Properly - YouTube](#) – Point of Order (fault in Parliamentary procedure)

[Secondary Motion - Privilege Motions - YouTube](#) – Privilege Motion

Chairing Meeting

[How to Facilitate a Successful Meeting - YouTube](#) – from Iowa Corn

# Basic Skills: Making Motions

- **Main vs. Secondary Motions**
- **Conditions required to make a main motion:**
  - Quorum exists
  - No other motions are pending (p 33 ll 1-4)
  - Must get recognized
- **When are main motions allowed?**
  - No binding order of business exists:

"If the assembly has no binding order of business, any member who obtains the floor can introduce any legitimate matter he desires (within the objects of the organization as defined in its bylaws) at any time when no business is before the assembly for consideration." p 25 ll 24-29.
  - Binding order of business exists:

During New Business when chair calls "Is there any (further) new business?" (p 121 ll 10-11, and p 360 ll 14-15)  
After officer or committee report if a recommendation is made.
- **The form of a main motion:**
  - "I move ..."

Bull horn technique - large meeting - Chairman will say - go get a bite to eat - will do the business that is not the best way of doing it - designate someone to stay in the room.