

Robert's Rules of Order Cheat Sheet

Meetings proceed and business is conducted with **Motions**. It's important to state motions before discussion, so the board knows what, specifically, they're discussing.

Motions

There are several types of motions. These are the four most nonprofit boards use regularly.

1. **Main Motion:** Introduce a new item
2. **Amended Motion:** Change or affect how to handle a main motion. The vote on the amendment to the motion proceeds before vote on the main motion.
3. **Motion to Table:** Kills a motion
4. **Motion to Postpone:** Delays a vote (can reopen debate on the main motion)

Every motion has various steps:

1. **Motion:** A member verbally makes a specific motion.
"I make a motion to..." or "I move to..."
2. **Second:** Another member seconds the motion.
"I second the motion."
3. **Restate motion:** The chairperson restates the motion.
4. **Discuss:** The members discuss the motion.
5. **Call the Question:** A member asks for discussion to be closed in order to vote. It requires a majority vote to accept this, but it typically happens when discussion becomes unproductive in resolving the issue.
"I call the question..." or "I call for an end to discussion on this motion..."
6. **Vote:** The chairperson restates the motion, and then first asks for affirmative votes, and then negative votes, and then abstaining votes. Unless otherwise specified, votes should be by open verbal statement by each member.
7. **Announce the vote:** The chairperson announces the result of the vote and any instructions.

"The motion passes..." or "The motion is declined..."

Tips and Reminders for Chairpersons

A skilled chairperson (chair) allows all members to voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard. Here are some points to keep in mind in leading a meeting.

- The chair **Calls the Meeting to Order** and establishes that a **Quorum** exists.
- Follow the agenda to keep the group moving toward its goals. It's advisable to allot times for parts of the agenda before the meeting. Though not locked into this schedule, it helps the chair manage the meeting. It's also helpful to appoint a timekeeper to assist.
- When working from a **Consent Agenda**, ask for **Exceptions to the Consent Agenda**. These exceptions may be small (immediate clarification) or substantial (discuss something listed in the Consent Agenda). The chair removes the points a member asks for Exception. Other items in the Consent Agenda are not addressed in detail. Quick, verbal reports are acceptable, but limit the scope of such reports.
- Let the group do its own work; don't over-direct or over-participate.
- 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.
- If a member calls for **Point of Order**, discussion should stop to address the point, which is usually procedural.
- Help to develop the board's skills in parliamentary procedure by properly using motions and points of order.
- Give each speaker your undivided attention.
- Keep an emotional pulse on the discussions.
- Build a consensus, when possible.
- If a meeting is long or uncomfortable, the chair may call for a recess for a specified time.
- The chair typically asks for a motion to adjourn the meeting.