

**Survival Tips on  
Robert's Rules of Order**

**Six Steps to Every Motion!**

**Every motion requires 6 steps (with some exceptions ). The shoulds and shouldn'ts are as follows: (RONR(10th ed.),p.31-54)**

**STEP 1. A member stands up, is recognized, and makes a motion;**

*Common Mistake: Members do not stand up, do not wait to be recognized, and typically start to discuss their motion before completing STEP 2, STEP 3, and STEP 4 below!*

**STEP 2. Another member seconds the motion;**

*Common Mistake: The person seconding the motion dives into the merits of the motion.*

**STEP 3. The presiding officer restates the motion to the assembly;**

*Common Mistake: Motion is restated differently from the wording of the maker! Beware because the motion that is adopted is the one stated by the presiding officer, not the one stated by the maker of the original motion.*

**STEP 4. The members debate the motion;**

*Common Mistake: Debate gets out of control in temper, in duration, in relevance! Members talk at each other across the room rather than through the presiding officer.*

**STEP 5. Presiding officer asks for the affirmative votes & then the negative votes;**

*Common Mistake: The presiding officer states 'All in favor' and fails to tell the members what to do as a matter of voting (for example, 'say aye', 'stand up', 'raise your hand', etc.); or the negative vote is never requested or counted!*

**STEP 6. The presiding officer announces the result of the voting; instructs the corresponding officer to take action; and introduces the next item of business.**

***Common Mistake:*** *Presiding officer fails to pronounce the result of the voting! No one is instructed to take action. Commonly, dead silence follows because the presiding officer is lost and stares at the assembly.*

## **Some General Exceptions**

For the sake of expediency, the chair can always say "*If there is no objection ...*", and then declares what action the chair is going to take in the name of the assembly! If no one objects, the 6 steps are skipped and the motion has been adopted in 5 words. If someone objects, the chair follows the 6 steps, cheerfully.

On the other hand, not all motions require the 6 steps. Your power comes in knowing which motions do and which motions do not require the 6 steps, especially when the chair cannot get away with "If there is no objection ...".

### **STEP 1. State the Motion:**

Some motions are so important that the maker can interrupt the speaker and not even wait to be recognized by the chair! - *Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Point of Information, Division.*

### **STEP 2. Second the Motion:**

Some motions do not require a second - Generally, if Robert's Rules of Order allow you to interrupt a speaker, you do not need a second (except *Appeal*).

### **STEP 3. Chair Restates the Motion:**

The presiding officer may help a verbose person rephrase the motion.

### **STEP 4. Discuss the Motion:**

Some motions may not be debated because the debate would defeat the purpose of the motion - *Recess, Orders of the Day, Lay on the Table, Limit or Close Debate, Division of the Assembly, Division of the Question.*

### **STEP 5. Vote on the Motion:**

Some motions are made and passed without voting - *Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Point of Order, Division.*

### **STEP 6. Announce Result of Vote:**

No exceptions here. The result of the voting must always be announced.

## When Six Steps Do Not Apply

We accept that the typical motion follows 6 steps.

1. *Speaker stands, is recognized, and makes a motion.*
2. *Motion is seconded.*
3. *Presiding Officer restates the motion to the audience.*
4. *The assembly debates the motion.*
5. *The vote is taken.*
6. *The chair announces whether the motion was adopted or not; instructs the correct officer to take action.*

Now let us review 2 Privileged Motions and 4 Incidental Motions which lack the 6 steps.

**Privileged Motions** do not relate to the pending motion, but are of such immediate importance that they take precedence over any Main Motion.

1. ***Question of Privilege:*** As a member of the audience you believe that you can not hear or see the proceedings, but you have a feasible solution. You have the right to stop the meeting, and have the problem corrected.
2. ***Call for the Orders of the Day:*** You notice that the agenda specifies the time for each portion of the agenda. You notice that the part you are interested in is scheduled for 9:15 am, and the time is now 9:16 am. The meeting is stuck with the 9:05 am item. You '*Call for the Orders of the Day*'. This automatically forces everyone to abandon the 9:05 item and deal with 9:15 item.

***In both cases, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! No vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

**Incidental Motions** do not relate directly to the substance of the pending motion, but rather to the method of transacting the business of the motion. Incidental motions must be dealt with immediately.

3. ***Point of Order:*** During a meeting you notice that someone (even the presiding officer) is disobeying Robert's Rules of Order. You state '*Point of Order*' and explain your point. The Presiding Officer rules on your point and you help to keep everyone in line.

4. ***Point of Information:*** One right no one can take from you is the right to understand the process and the potential consequences of the next voting. You have the right to stop business and have someone explain the process and consequences of the debate or the voting. Your request for information can not be ignored by the Presiding Officer.
5. ***Division of Assembly:*** Whenever you doubt the Presiding Officer's hearing capabilities during a vote by loud ayes/nays, you can have the vote taken by having voters stand instead of yelling. You call for a '*Division of the Assembly*' and the vote has to be **retaken** in a more accurate manner.

***In the last 3 cases, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! No vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

6. ***Object to Consideration:*** Sometimes a sensitive or embarrassing motion is made. You can kill it before it is discussed by getting 2/3 of the assembly to agree with you to kill the motion **before it is discussed**.

***In this case, you do not need to be recognized, or seconded. No one can amend or debate your motion! A 2/3 vote is necessary. You can get your way without going through the 6 steps.***

If you know when the 6 steps do not applied, you can protect your rights as a member of an organization. Otherwise, somebody will undoubtedly and easily rob you of your rights.

## Four Motions that are always Out of Order

**A Main Motion reflects the will of the members of the organization! However, the following 4 motions are never in order, even if adopted by a unanimous vote:**

1. Motions which **conflict with laws** (federal, state, or local), or with bylaws, constitution, or rules of the organization;
2. Motions which present something **already rejected** during the same session, or conflict with a motion already adopted. (See Robert's sections on *Rescind*, *Reconsider*, and *Amend Something Already Adopted*);
3. Motions which conflict with or present substantially the **same question** as one which has been temporarily disposed of (meaning, *Postponed*, *Laid on Table*, *Referred to Committee*, or *Being Reconsidered*);
4. Motions which propose actions **beyond the scope** of the organization's bylaws. (However, a 2/3 vote may allow this kind of motion).

But, what if the motion is in order, and you still do not agree with all or parts of it? You can always protect your interests by amending the motion!

## Five Ways to Modify a Motion

**Motions are rarely perfect for everyone. Modifications are inevitable.**

1. **Between the time that a motion is made and *before the chair states the motion***, any member may informally offer modifying suggestions to the maker of the motion. The maker may accept or reject that member's recommendations.
2. **After the chair has stated the motion**, the maker of the motion may *request unanimous consent* from the members to modify the motion. Remember that at this time, the motion belongs to the assembly and not the original maker.
3. **By means of the subsidiary motion to *Amend***, any member may propose changes to the motion, before the motion is voted upon. These proposed changes must be seconded and may be amended and/or debated.
4. **If a motion requires further study**, the members may vote to *Refer the Main Motion to a Committee*. When the committee returns the motion to the assembly, the committee normally **proposes** amendments for the assembly to vote upon.
5. **Sometimes the motion is so complex** that the only way to do it justice is for a member to urge its rejection and offer to propose a simpler version as a *Substitute Motion*. Upon defeat of the complex motion, anyone may propose the *Substitute Motion*.

Once a member learns which motions are out of order, how to make a motion, and how to amend a motion, the member becomes a productive member of the organization. Until then, the member is just another victim of the organization!

## **Three Ways to Amend a Motion**

**As a matter of survival, the most common motion a club member needs to know completely is the *Motion to Amend* a Pending Motion.**

The difficult part is remembering that the more urgent motions can not be amended - *Adjourn, Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Lay on/Take from the Table, Previous Question, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Suspend the Rules, and Reconsider.*

During the Debate step of a Pending Motion, one may move to Amend the Pending Motion. All one needs to remember is that there are really **only 3 basic processes of amendments:**

**Let's Amend this Sample Motion:** "I move that we buy a new sign."

**1. You can Move to Amend by *Inserting* words or paragraphs.**

*I move to Amend by Inserting the phrase "not to exceed \$50 dollars" at the end of the motion.*

**2. You can Move to Amend by *Striking out* (not deleting) words or paragraphs.**

*I move to Amend by striking out the word "new".*

**3. You can Move to Amend by *Striking out and Inserting* words or paragraphs.** One can even Amend by *Substituting* (Striking out and Inserting) entire paragraphs or the complete motion.

*I move to Amend by Striking out the word "sign" and Inserting the word "billboard".*

**You can also Amend the Amendment, before it is voted upon:**

But you can only Amend the Inserted or Struck out **words**. You can not Amend a separate part of the Main Motion not covered by the Amendment that is currently being discussed!

After the current Amendment is voted upon, you can Amend the Motion again and Amend this new Amendment.

If you carefully review these 3 basic processes of amendments (*insert, strike out, and strike out/insert*), you will agree that any other form is not an amendment. Proper usage of these 3 processes will reduce the chances of chaos and confusion that is common during discussion of motions and amendments.

When one understands the means to amend a motion, one will be able to

calmly defend oneself from all tyrannical group leaders.

## **Unamendable Motions**

**The power to amend any motion leads to a quick compromise which pleases most of the members. Notice that amending the following motion makes no sense.**

In all of the motions listed in this section, the members either allow something to occur or they do not allow it. A member is either granted a request or is not. Normally, there is no half way position; there is no modification. (Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, then you probably can not amend them either!).

1. Adjourn.
2. Call for the Orders of the Day.
3. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
4. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
5. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.
6. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
7. Postpone Indefinitely.
8. Previous Question (Close Debate).
9. Parliamentary Inquiry.
10. Point of Information.
11. Point of Order.
12. Raise a Question of Privilege.
13. Suspend the Rules.
14. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair.
15. Reconsider a Motion.

Once you realize which motions you can make without the obstacle of an opposing debate or modification, you can then assure the victory of your plans.

## **Undebatable Motions**

**You can make some motions which no one can speak against, mostly because sometimes the right to debate does not make sense!** (Notice that among the common motions, if you can not debate them, you probably can not amend them either!).

**Some motions perform a time sensitive task where a discussion would be counter productive.**

1. Call for the Orders of the Day.
2. Call for the Division of the Assembly.
3. Lay on the Table/Take from the Table.
4. Division of a Question.
5. Suspend the Rules.
6. Reconsider a Motion (most).
7. Dispense with Reading of the Minutes.

**Some motions intend to prevent further debate. Discussing the motion defeats the purpose of the motion.**

8. Adjourn.
9. Objection to the Consideration of the Question.
10. Previous Question (Close Debate).
11. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate.
12. Recess.

**Some motions intend to perform simple tasks which require immediate attention.**

13. Parliamentary Inquiry.
14. Point of Information.
15. Point of Order.
16. Raise a Question of Privilege.
17. Appeal from the Decision of the Chair (most).

If you know when others can debate your issues and when they cannot, you will be better prepared to wisely make your point unopposed.

## **2/3 Vote vs Majority Vote**

**The basic requirement for approval of an action is a majority vote. However, the following situations require a 2/3 STAND UP vote for approval. Notice that all of these motions rob the individual of his rights. As a compromise between the rights of the individual and the rights of the assembly, a 2/3 vote is necessary:**

**1. Modify an Adopted Rule of Order or Agenda:**

- a. Amend or Rescind the Constitutions, Bylaws, or Agenda;*
- b. Amend or Rescind Something Already Adopted;*
- c. Suspend the Orders of the Day;*
- d. Refuse to Proceed to the Orders of the Day;*
- e. Take up a Question Out of its Order.*

**2. Prevent the Introduction of a Question for Consideration:**

**3. Modify the Extend of Debate:**

- a. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate;*
- b. Call for the Previous Question.*

**4. Close Nominations:**

**5. Repeal an Assignment:**

- a. Take Away Membership or Office;*
- b. Discharge a Committee.*

**6. Make a Motion a Special Order:**

- a. The presiding officer should take a rising vote in those motions where a 2/3 vote is required;*
- b. You can assure the victory of your ideas, once you are aware of the required amount of vote necessary for the adoption of your motion.*

## **A Motion Can Be Adopted; Yet Still Not Be Final**

**For every means of disposing of a motion, there is a means of returning the motion to the assembly, (with certain slight limitations)! You would think that once a motion is adopted (or is voted down), the question of the motion would be settled. To someone armed with Parliamentary Procedure knowledge, it does not mean any such thing!**

**For example ...**

1. **Move To Lay on the Table:** Anyone can Take from the Table, once the immediate urgency has been dealt with.
2. **Move To Refer to a Committee:** Anyone can move to discharge the committee with previous notice. The motion could again return to the assembly.
3. **Move to Rescind (annul or repeal):** Anyone regardless of how he voted and without time limitations (but with previous notice) may move to annul a motion already adopted.
4. **Move to Amend Something Previously Adopted:** Even after the assembly long debated and heatedly amended a controversial motion, anyone with previous notice can later move to amend it some more. This is the strange case of amending a motion that is not pending.
5. **Move to Postpone Indefinitely:** Any motion which is killed may be reintroduced (as a new motion) in a subsequent session of the assembly.
6. **Move to Reconsider the Vote on... :** If a member votes on the prevailing side, he may Move to Reconsider the Vote at that same meeting. The result is that he will paralyze the majority's will by suspending all action which could have resulted from the adopted motion.

Robert's Rules of Order base Parliamentary Procedure on the potential of the majority to change its mind; to need to correct a hasty, and ill-advised action; or to need to take into account a changed situation since a voting. How thorough!

## **Rescind**

(often called Repeal or Annul)

**You always have the right to annul or amend something already adopted.**

Quite often it is obvious that a great deal of preparation and support has been quietly organized before a motion is presented to the members. The motion is adopted before you even understand the true purpose and potential consequences of the motion. Fortunately there are no time limitations to annul or amend any motion.

**There are no arbitrary restrictions, just a couple of logical ones:**

1. If on the day a motion was passed, someone moved to **reconsider the vote** on that motion, you can neither Rescind nor Amend that motion, until after the Motion to Reconsider has been resolved.
2. If the motion you wish to Rescind has been **executed in an irreversible manner**, you cannot Rescind it. However, any reversible portion can be amended. A simple way to look at this is, if no one outside the meeting knows about the motion, the motion can probably be undone. If a part of the motion has not been executed, you can probably amend the unexecuted portion of the motion.
3. If a motion results in a contract and the other **party has been informed** of the vote, you cannot Rescind the motion.
4. If the motion acts upon a resignation, or results in an election/expulsion, and the **person involved is officially notified** of the voting, you can not Rescind the motion. Fortunately, Robert's textbook allows for a reinstatement procedure and disciplinary removal of a person from office.
5. In order to Rescind a motion, it takes at least a 2/3 vote unless the membership has received a **Previous Notice**. (*See the Votes Required to Adopt a Motion by a 2/3 Vote Table.*)

When a motion is adopted before you can prepare a means of defeating it, all you need is a 2/3 vote, and you can nullify or amend the offensive motion.