

General Information on Roberts Rules of Order

This should be used solely for the purpose of suggesting ways to conduct fair and orderly meetings. It is in no way meant to dictate the business of Classified Senate.

In democratic settings, the “will of the majority” is commonly used to decide questions. However when deciding questions by the majority’s will, great care must be given to protecting the rights of minority’s view.

The point addressed by Robert’s Rule of Order is that there must be some order to the consideration of questions by any organization. Without order there is chaos.

Robert’s Rules of Order provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language.

Robert’s Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should “undue strictness” be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

HOW TO MAKE A MOTION (six steps to every motion)

- A member raises his/her hand, and when recognized by the Chair, gives name, and states his/her motion. A member may also give a brief explanation for introducing the motion.
- Another member must second the motion to continue
- The Chair calls for discussion on this motion only and members proceed to debate
- When the debate appears to be finished, the Chair inquires, “Are you ready for the question?”
- If, after a reasonable pause, no one rises to claim the floor, the Chair assumes that no member wishes to speak and proceeds to “put the question.”
- The Chair calls for a vote on the motion and then states the results of the vote.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL DEBATES

- A member should speak no more than twice during the same meeting/day to the same question or longer than the agreed upon time limit.
- No member should speak a second time to a question as long as any other member desires to speak who has not spoken to the question.
- Debates should be limited to the merits of the immediately pending question.
- All remarks should be directed to the chair.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business; or on questions of little importance; and in the presence of a quorum; the Chair can save time by obtaining Unanimous Consent (General Consent) from the assembly. This gives the assembly, in the one meeting, the opportunity to accomplish ten times the amount of work.

“If there is no objection...”These are the 5 most helpful words a Chair will ever find. When no objection is heard, the Chair then states, “Since there is no objection, (such and such a motion is adopted).” If someone objects, the Chair proceeds to open the matter for debate.

Examples of situation which clearly beg for the Unanimous Consent approach are:

- To correct or approve the minutes. You do not need a time wasteful motion for this.
- To withdraw a member's own motion before the vote is taken. The maker may wish to withdraw his/her motion; but the motion belongs to the assembly. Only the assembly may allow the withdrawal of motion.
- To suspend a rule on a matter clearly not controversial (and as long as no Bylaw is violated).
- To allow a speaker a few more minutes than the prescribed time.
- To allow a guest speaker to speak in order contrary to approved agenda.
- To divide a complex motion into logical parts for discussion, amendments, and voting purposes.
- To close polls on a voting process after inquiring if there are any more votes. No motion to close to the polls is necessary.
- To elect a nominee by acclamation.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

Chairing a democratically-based meeting of any association, board or organization can be a challenge. A balance is needed between efficient decision making and listening to divergent views. If this balance is not well cared for by the Chair, frustration with the organization often results. The role of the Chair includes:

- To open the session and call members to order at the agreed upon time for the assembly to meet.
- To announce the business before the assembly in the order in which it is to be acted upon.
- To recognize members entitled to the floor.
- To state and put to vote all questions which are regularly moved, or necessarily arise in the course of the proceedings, and to announce the result of the vote.
- To protect the assembly from annoyance from evidently frivolous or dilatory motions by refusing to recognize them.
- To restrain members when engaged in debate, within the rules of order; to enforce on all occasions the observance of order and decorum among the members.

The Chair is to never engage in debate. If the Chair has even the appearance of being partisan, he/she could lose the ability to control the meeting. One who expects to take an active part in debate should never accept the Chair position. During a debate, the Chair should remain seated and pay attention to the speaker. When a member has the floor, the Chair cannot interrupt.