

Robert's Rules of Order & Parliamentary Procedure

The two go hand in hand. Here is a summary, with additional resources where you can find out more specifics that apply to your organizational meetings.

Parliamentary Procedure

This procedure is about the *rules of democracy* or the “commonly accepted way in which a group of people come together, present and discuss possible courses of action, and make decisions,” according to the National Association of Parliamentarians. Parliamentary procedure is a way for groups to make decisions in fair, consistent ways while also making good use of members’ time. It also outlines the duties of officers.

This procedure is an important part of *Robert's Rules of Order*. For a great overview of parliamentary procedure, go to the National Association of Parliamentarians’ website at <http://parliamentarians.org/procedure.php>. Also check out www.csufresno.edu/comm/cagle-p3.htm, where Dr. John A. Cagle, a professor of Communication at Cal State, Fresno breaks it down into manageable chunks.

A Fixed Order of Business

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. For instance:

1. Call to order
2. Roll call of members present
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting
4. Officer reports
5. Committee reports
6. Special orders—Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting
7. Unfinished business
8. New business
9. Announcements
10. Adjournment

Source:

www.robertsrules.org/rulesintro.htm



Robert's Rules of Order

When Army engineering officer Henry Martyn Robert was asked to oversee a church meeting, he got embarrassed when he didn't know how. So, he decided to learn about parliamentary law and did some reading. He also witnessed chaos throughout the U.S. when people couldn't agree on meeting procedures.

Motions

Under *Robert's Rules*, members use motions to make proposals to the group. There are 4 basic types:

1. **Main Motions**—Purpose is to introduce items to members for them to consider.
2. **Subsidiary Motions**—Purpose is to impact how a main motion is handled and is voted on before the main motion is.
3. **Privileged Motions**—Purpose is to bring up items about special, important matters unrelated to the business at hand.
4. **Incidental Motions**—Purpose is to provide a way to question procedures concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

Source: www.robertsrules.org/rulesintro.htm

That's how he decided to write *Robert's Rules of Order*—to help control the chaos! The first version came out in 1876. The book is currently in its 10th edition.

Source: www.robertsrules.org/history.html

Robert's Rules of Order allow for deliberative assemblies, where all questions are discussed before decisions are made. The idea is to have constructive, democratic meetings, not ones where too much strictness intimidates or limits members' participation.

The rules contain everything from a Point of Order (infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking—must be raised immediately after the error is made) to Amending (inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions).

For an excellent overview of The Rules, head to www.robertsrules.org/.

Other helpful resources include:

Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order • www.robertsrules.org/rulesintro.htm

Motions Chart • www.robertsrules.org/motions.htm