

# Leading Effective Meetings: Making Basic Parliamentary Procedure Work

## Objectives:

- ✓ Define parliamentary procedure
- ✓ Understand the key ingredients to running an effective meeting
- ✓ Describe and discuss the reasons for using parliamentary procedure in a meeting
- ✓ Recognize the importance of the use of an agenda
- ✓ Differentiate between types of motions and amendments
- ✓ Identify methods of voting

## Advance Preparation:

- ✓ Review the material provided in the lesson packet. Facilitator should have a basic understanding of parliamentary procedure.

## Materials Needed:

- ✓ Projection device
- ✓ The enclosed Power Point Presentation
- ✓ Bug cards cut out individually – each participant should have 3-4 cards (Attachment 1)
- ✓ Robert's Rules of Order handout for each participant (Attachment 2)
- ✓ Parliamentary Procedure "Lingo" handout for each participant (Attachment 3)
- ✓ Handling a Motion handout for each participant (Attachment 4)
- ✓ Parliamentary Procedures at a Glance handout for each participant (Attachment 5)
- ✓ Meeting of the Minds – Rate Yourself as a Participant handout for each participant (Attachment 6)
- ✓ Rate Yourself as a Leader handout for each participant (Attachment 7)
- ✓ Flip Charts
- ✓ Markers

## Time Needed:

- ✓ 1 hour

## Background

Meetings often become stressful and chaotic when a group is attempting to make a decision based on consensus. Multiple individuals are attempting to discuss at the same time while others sit in the back of the room and are disengaged from the topics being discussed. Meetings run ineffectively result in arguments among participants, poor decisions being made, and people leaving the meeting feeling confused and frustrated. A basic understanding of parliamentary procedure leads to organized meetings and positive decision making experiences for participants.

Parliamentary procedure is an organized method of running effective meetings. The use of parliamentary procedure provides a way of conducting business in a fair and democratic manner. The purpose is to help a group of decision makers accomplish their goals. It is important to understand that the "rules" of parliamentary procedure are simply guidelines to follow, not laws. The most commonly used system of parliamentary procedure is Roberts Rules of Order, which provides an in depth description of procedures used in conducting meetings.

Parliamentary procedure can be intimidating, confusing, and boring – especially for those who have had little or no experience. Starting with the basics provides an understanding of the practical approach for running meetings. For an in-depth review of parliamentary procedure, one should refer to Roberts Rules of Order.

**Interest Approach** *To be completed at the beginning of the lesson. (Attachment 2)*

As participants enter the meeting room, hand out 3-4 bug cards to each participant. On each card they should answer the question, “What bugs me most about meetings is...”. Give participants 3-5 minutes to complete the exercise.

After the group finishes the activity, discuss individual responses. As for volunteers to provide their responses and use the flip chart and markers to record responses. In most cases, you will get responses such as: one person dominating the discussion, arguments among the group, everyone talking at once, disorganization, lengthy meetings, etc. If these responses are not achieved, probe the group to come up with them. Explain to the group that most of the things that bug them about meetings can be overcome by knowing and applying basic parliamentary procedure.

## **Lesson**

- I. What is Parliamentary Procedure?
  - a. Set of proven “rules” used to move business along during a meeting.
  - b. Guidelines – not laws.
  - c. System that allows an organization to conduct business in a fair and democratic manner.
  
- II. Why use Parliamentary Procedure?
  - a. Handle only one item of business at a time
  - b. All participants have an opportunity to participate in discussion
  - c. Observe the rule of the majority
  - d. Protect the rights of the minority

Pass out the handout “Robert’s Rules of Order – Basic Principles (Attachment 3). Discuss the basics with the group and make sure there is a general understanding.

- III. Using the Parli Pro Lingo
  - a. Motion – proposal or resolution by a member that the assembly take a certain action or express a certain view. A motion is considered out of order if it conflicts with the constitution or by-laws of the group
  - b. Main Motion – a motion to introduce a principal subject. Only one main motion may be considered at a time and must be disposed of before another main motion may be considered
  - c. Motion to Lay on the Table – a motion to lay aside a pending question for an indefinite amount of time
  - d. Motion to Take from the Table – a motion enabling the assembly to resume consideration of a previously tabled item
  - e. Point of Order – to object to a proceeding as being in conflict with the rules of procedure. The chair must recognize the point

- f. Previous Questions – a motion to end debate, which requires the assembly to vote on the issue at hand. The motion must be suspended, requires a 2/3 vote, and is not debatable
- g. Friendly Amendment – a small change to an original motion. Those who made and seconded the original motion must agree to the amendment
- h. Motion to Adjourn – a motion made at the conclusion of a business meeting or at the final business session
- i. Majority Vote – more than half of the votes, or 50% +1
- j. Quorum – the number of members required in the by-laws to hold a legal meeting

Pass out the handout “Parliamentary Procedure Lingo” (Attachment 4). Discuss the definitions with the group.

#### IV. Importance of the Agenda

- a. An agenda is a formal listing of business that is to be conducted at a meeting
- b. Usually developed by the chair and distributed to the members in advance
- c. Must be approved by the membership at the beginning of the meeting
- d. A well planned agenda is critical to a well run, organized meeting

#### V. Sample Agenda

- a. Call to Order – chair begins the meeting at the published time by saying something like “The meeting will now come to order.”
- b. Roll Call (if appropriate) – this is a legal requirement for some organizations. The minutes must list the names of those present and absent. Most civic organizations and community groups don’t need to record members present by taking roll call.
- c. Adoption of the Agenda – members should be sent a copy of the agenda prior to the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair calls for a motion to adopt the agenda. Less formal groups don’t need to formally adopt the agenda.
- d. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting – minutes should be sent out with the agenda prior to the meeting for members to read. If there are no changes, the minutes are approved without a motion or voting.
- e. Reports of Officers – typical officer reports include the treasurer and secretaries reports.
- f. Reports of Committees – prior to the meeting, the chair should check with committees to see what progress is being made and to find out if they have a report for the group.
- g. Unfinished Business – these are items pending from previous meetings.
- h. New Business – new business items should be listed on the agenda.
- i. Announcements – announcements should be listed on the agenda to avoid meetings that don’t stop.
- j. Adjournment

#### VI. Role of Meeting Participants

- a. It is the participants responsibility to establish and maintain effective meeting structure

- b. All participants have the right and responsibility to participate in meetings and in parliamentary procedure
- c. Participants should know the Constitution and By-Laws of the organization
- d. Be involved in discussion! – strong group discussion leads to strong decisions being made.

#### VII. Keys to Effective Meetings

- a. Parliamentary procedure is based on motions
- b. The key to parliamentary procedure is learning and understanding these motions
- c. Don't become overwhelmed by the list of motions -- concentrate on those that will be used on a regular basis
- d. **REMEMBER** – using parliamentary procedure take patience, practice, and a lot of effort!!!!

#### VIII. Use of the Gavel

- a. The gavel allows the chair to obtain attention quickly
- b. One tap – signals for members (participants) to be seated and follows the completion of an item of business or announces adjournment
- c. Two taps – calls a meeting to order
- d. Three taps – signals for members to stand
- e. Series of taps – restores order of the room

#### IX. Methods of Voting

There are 4 common methods of voting:

1. Voice Vote – works in small groups but not large. With a large group it's hard to distinguish quantity.
  2. Rising Vote – either hand or physically rising. This is the most common method of voting. The chair counts in response to those in favor and those against.
  3. Secret Ballot – secretary distributes, collects, tallies, and reports the decision to the chair who announces the result.
  4. Roll Call – each member is asked how they vote by the chair.
- a. Quorum – review definitions from earlier
  - b. Simple Majority
  - c. Two-thirds Vote

#### X. Motions – each of these motions will be discussed in detail

- a. Main Motions
- b. Privileged Motions
- c. Subsidiary Motions
- d. Incidental Motions
- e. Unclassified Motions

#### XI. Main Motions

- a. Introduces a principal subject. Only one main motion may be considered at a time and must be disposed of before another can be considered.
- b. The only way to start a motion is to say..."I move..."

- c. Example: “Mr./Madame President, I move that we attend the County Leadership Camp.”
- d. Main motions require a second and they are debatable and amendable
- e. A majority vote is required

Refer to the handout “Handling a Motion” (Attachment 5).

#### XII. Seconding a Motion

- a. Seconding a motion shows support by other members
- b. Puts the motion to a vote

#### XIII. Debating a Motion

- a. Members can raise any concerns they may have about the motion
- b. Others can be persuaded to vote one way or another
- c. Further information about the motion can be provided to the group

#### XIV. Amending a Motion

- a. Allows for changes to be made to the motion
- b. No more than 2 amendments can be considered at one time
- c. Requires:
  - i. Second
  - ii. It is debatable and amendable
  - iii. Majority vote
- d. Main motion can be altered by:
  - i. Addition – adding a word or phrase
  - ii. Subtraction (striking out) – removal of part of the motion but not to change the intent
  - iii. Substitution – removing part of the motion and inserting a new word or phrase

#### XV. Privileged Motions

- a. Do not relate to a pending question, however they are of such great importance that they take precedence over all other motions
- b. Include:
  - i. Fix time to which to adjourn – sets date and time to adjourn meeting (requires second, Non debatable, amendable, and majority vote)
  - ii. Adjourn – ends current meeting immediately (requires second, non debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)
  - iii. Recess – temporary break in a meeting (requires second, non debatable, amendable to time only, and majority vote)
  - iv. Raise a question of privilege – secures comfort for members (requires nothing – the question posed is decided upon by the chair)
  - v. Call for the orders of the day – demands compliance with the agenda or seek information on order of agenda (requires nothing – addressed by the chair)

#### XVI. Subsidiary Motions

- a. Applied to other motions for the purpose of appropriate disposal
- b. Include:

- i. Lay on the table – delays a motion briefly until it's taken from the table (requires second, non debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)
- ii. Call for the previous question – ends debate immediately (requires second, non debatable, non amendable, and 2/3 vote)
- iii. Postpone definitely – delays motion to a certain time (requires second, debatable, amendable, and majority vote)
- iv. Refer to a committee – assigns the motion to a committee (requires second, debatable, amendable, and majority vote)
- v. Amend – changes motion by addition, subtraction, or substitution)
- vi. Postpone indefinitely – kills motion without a vote (requires second, debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)

#### XVII. Incidental Motions

- a. Correct ill-advised actions
- b. Correct improper use of parliamentary procedure
- c. Include:
  - i. Object to the consideration of question – stops offensive or inappropriate measures (Requires no second, non debatable, non amendable, and 2/3 vote)
  - ii. Appeal from the decision of the chair – allows members to overrule the chair if they feel the chair made a decision not in agreement with the group (requires second, only debatable if motion was debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)
  - iii. Rise to a point of order – parliamentary errors have been made (requires nothing – decided on by the chair)
  - iv. Withdraw a motion – motion proposed is retracted. Can only be made by the member who proposed the original motion (requires nothing – chair asks for objections, if there is an objection, majority vote is needed)
  - v. Suspend the rules – make exceptions to the by-laws of the organizations constitution (requires second, non debatable, non amendable, and 2/3 vote)
  - vi. Call for the division of the house – requires a countable vote if voice vote was used (requires nothing – addressed by the chair)
  - vii. Rise to parliamentary inquiry – check on parliamentary questions or ask how to carry out an ability (requires nothing – chair addresses the issue)

#### XVIII. Unclassified Motions

- a. Have a definite purpose but are not classified as any other type of motion
- b. Usually pertain to actions taken at previous meetings
- c. Include:
  - i. Reconsider – corrects an action completed in error. The member who moves to reconsider must have been on prevailing side or the motion (requires second, debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)
  - ii. Rescind – revokes previous action (requires second, debatable, amendable, and 2/3 vote)

- iii. Take from the table – resume consideration of tabled motion (requires second, non debatable, non amendable, and majority vote)

#### XIX. Final Thoughts

- a. Don't get overwhelmed – mastering parliamentary procedure takes a lot of practice and patience
- b. Modify parliamentary procedure to fit the needs of your group – not all motions need to be memorized – only focus on those you'll use on a regular basis
- c. Educate members of your organization about parliamentary guidelines
- d. Refer to the handout for questions

Hand out attachment 6 “Parliamentary Procedures at a Glance”

#### XX. Putting it all Together

- a. Using the handouts provided (attachment 7 and 8) rate yourself as a participant of a meeting and as the leader of a meeting.
- b. How did you do?
- c. What will you change now that you know the basics of parliamentary procedure?

#### **Application**

Parliamentary procedure is based on proven methods that have worked for hundreds of years. Whether you are a leader or a participant in a meeting, having a basic understanding of parliamentary procedure will make the meeting run more smoothly and you will feel as if you accomplished your goals. Having a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure is a vital skill that is used in wide range of meetings (school boards, county fair boards, 4-H clubs) as well as in Congress.

#### **References**

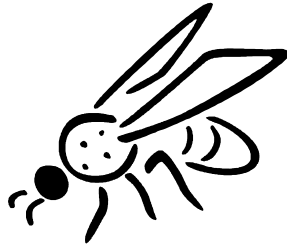
Archer, T. M., Dill, D., & Weber, E. M. Ohio State University Fact Sheet. (n.d.). *Parliamentary procedure*. Retrieved December 9, 2004, from <http://ohioline.osu.edu/4h-fact/0011.html>

Robert, H. M., Evans, W. J., Honemann, D. H., & Balch, T. J. (2000). *Robert's rules of order: Newly revised* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

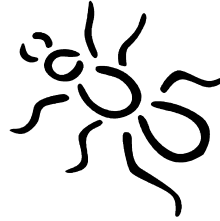
Quinn, T., Riggs, N., & Hanson, D. (1998). *Simplified parliamentary procedure*. [Brochure]. Iowa State University, University Extension. Ames, IA.

Attachment 1 –  
Bug Cards (Interest Approach)  
*Copy page as needed based on group size*

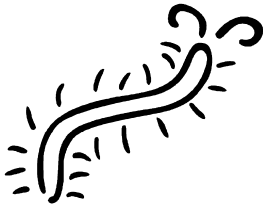
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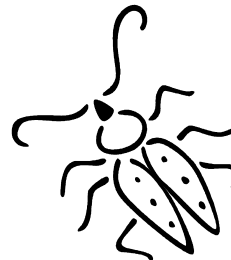
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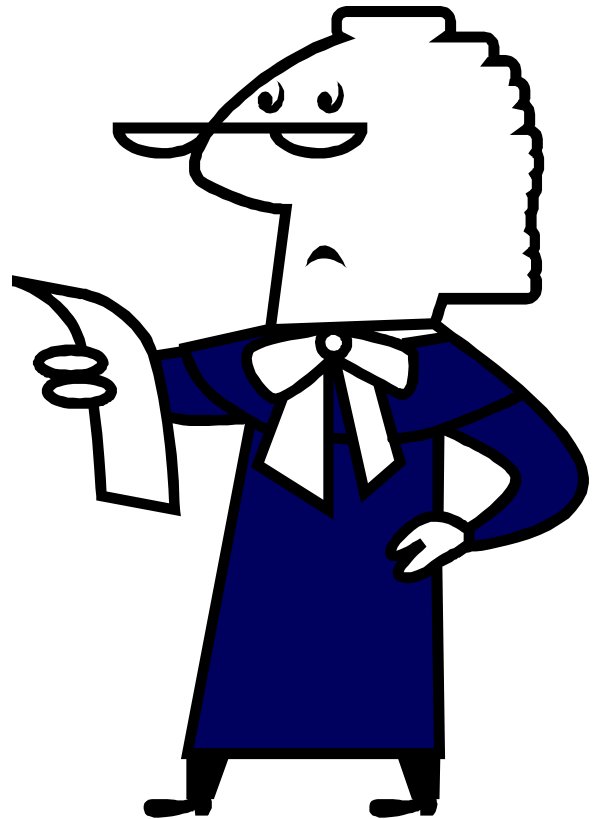




# Robert's Rules of Order

## Basic Principles

- ◆ Parliamentary procedure exists to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony.
- ◆ All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
  - The majority has the right to decide.
  - The minority has rights, which must be protected.
- ◆ A quorum must be present for the group to act.
- ◆ Full and free discussion of every motion considered is a basic right.
- ◆ Only one question at a time can be considered at any given time.
- ◆ Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
- ◆ No member can speak until recognized by the chair.
- ◆ No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
- ◆ The chair should be strictly impartial.



## Attachment 3 – Parliamentary Procedure “Lingo”

### **Motion**

A proposal or resolution by a member that the assembly take a certain action or express a certain view. A motion is considered out of order if it conflicts with the constitution or by-laws of the group.

### **Main Motion**

A motion to introduce a principal subject. Only one main motion may be considered at a time and must be disposed of before another main motion may be considered.



### **Motion to Lay on the Table (or Tabling)**

A motion to lay aside a pending question for an indefinite amount of time.

### **Motion to Take from the Table**

A motion enabling the assembly to resume consideration of a previously tabled item

### **Point of Order**

To object to a proceeding as being in conflict with the rules of procedure. The chair must recognize the point.

### **Previous Questions**

A motion to end debate, which requires the assembly to vote on the issue at hand. The motion must be suspended, requires a 2/3 vote, and is not debatable.

### **Friendly Amendment**

A small change to an original motion. Those who made and seconded the original motion must agree to the amendment.

### **Motion to Adjourn**

A motion made at the conclusion of a business meeting or at the final business session.

### **Majority Vote**

More than half of the votes, or 50%+1

### **Quorum**

The number of members required in the by-laws to hold a legal meeting.

## Attachment 4 – Handling a Motion

### Three steps by which a motion is brought before the group

1. A member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.

### Three Steps in the Consideration of a Motion

1. The members debate the motion (unless no member claims the floor for that purpose).
2. The chair puts the question to a vote.
  - A. The chair restates the question.
  - B. The chair takes the vote:

"All in favor of the motion, say aye."

"Those opposed, say no."



***A vote passes with a simple majority (except in cases of Suspending the rules, previous question, limit or extended debate & amend a previously adopted motion), which requires a 2/3 vote.***

3. The chair announces the result of a vote. A complete announcement should include:
  - A. Report on the voting itself, stating which side prevailed (and giving the count if a count prevailed).
  - B. Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.
  - C. Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution.
  - D. Where applicable, announcement of the next item of business or stating the question of the next motion that consequently comes up for a vote.

*Adapted from Roberts Rules of Order, 10<sup>th</sup> edition*

Attachment 5 –

## Parliamentary Procedures at a Glance

To do this...	You say this...	May you interrupt the speaker?	Must you be seconded?	Is the motion debatable?	What vote is required?
Adjourn meeting*	I move that we adjourn	No	Yes	No	Majority
Recess meeting	I move that we recess until...	No	Yes	No	Majority
Complain about noise, room temp., etc.*	Point of privilege	Yes	No	No	No vote
Suspend further consideration of something	I move we table it	No	Yes	No	Majority
End debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	2/3 vote
Postpone consideration of something	I move we postpone this matter until...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Have something studied further	I move we refer this matter to committee	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	I move this motion be amended by...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business (a primary motion)	I move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Object to procedure or personal affront*	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No vote, chair decides
Request information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No vote
Ask for actual count to verify voice vote	I call for a division of the house	No	No	No	No vote
Take up a matter previously tabled*	I move to take from the table...	No	Yes	No	Majority
Reconsider something already disposed of*	I move we reconsider our action relative to...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Vote on a ruling by the Chair	I appeal the Chair's decision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

\*Not amendable

Adapted from Roberts Rules of Order, 10<sup>th</sup> edition

**Attachment 6 –**

**Rate yourself as a participant of a meeting.**

Check Yes or No for each of the following questions based on how you act (or would act) as a meeting leader.

Yes	No	Do I....
		Typically know the purpose of the meetings I attend?
		Have a clear understanding of my role in meetings I attend?
		Confirm my attendance in advance of the meeting?
		Complete required “assignments” such as looking up information or studying proposals?
		Arrive at meetings before they are scheduled to begin?
		Ask questions when I am not sure about something?
		Engage in side conversations while the meeting is in progress?
		Leave meetings for reasons such as non-emergency telephone calls?
		Typically remain open to ideas of others?
		Practice good listening skills?
		Actively participate in discussions when there is something worthwhile to contribute?
		Help others stay on the subject?
		Take agreed-upon action following meetings?
		Contribute to improving meetings by giving feedback to meeting leaders either by a note, phone call, or visit?
		Inform people not attending the meeting about what was discussed and the outcome?

**Attachment 7 –  
Rate yourself as a leader of a meeting.**

Check Yes or No for each of the following questions based on how you act (or would act) as a meeting leader.

Yes	No	Do I....
		Have clear objectives for the meeting?
		Select and invite participants carefully?
		Prepare an agenda and distribute it in advance of the meeting?
		Arrive early enough to check the arrangements and seating?
		Start the meeting promptly, regardless of who is present?
		Follow the agenda?
		Manage time and conclude the meeting on schedule?
		Encourage all attendees to participate?
		Assist in the resolution of conflicts?
		Maintain proper control of the discussion?
		Summarize accomplishments at the end of the meeting and clarify any action which needs to be taken?
		Oversee the distribution of minutes in a timely manner?
		Request evaluative feedback from the participants?
		Take action I agreed upon?
		Follow up on action to be taken by others?

**What did you discover about yourself?**