

# Roberts Rules of Order Simplified

## Guiding Principles

Everyone has the right to participate in discussion if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time. Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker. Only one thing (motion) can be discussed at a time.

## Unanimous Consent

This is a great way to reduce the time needed to pass a motion and should be used as often as possible. If a matter is considered relatively minor or opposition is not expected, a call for unanimous consent may be requested. The chair proposes a given action, and then says, "Is there any objection?" If a member agrees, they remain silent which means consent. If all members are silent, the chair would say, "Hearing none, the motion passes." If a member disagrees, they say, "Objection." The chair then takes a vote in the usual way.

A **motion** is the topic under discussion (e.g., "I move that we add a coffee break to this meeting"). After being recognized by the president (or the "chair" of the meeting), any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table (being discussed). Most motions require a second to be considered. If there is no second, the matter is not considered. Once a second is made, the chair restates the motion and opens the floor for discussion. Each motion must be disposed of or resolved with passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely.

- The person who made the motion may amend the motion.
- If more time is needed before taking a vote, move to refer the motion to a specific committee, or move to postpone or "table" the motion. This requires a majority vote. Tabled motions must be taken up at the next meeting or else it is dead.
- To limit the time for speakers to debate, a set time period may be established with another motion which requires an affirmative 2/3 vote.
- To end debate, move to close the debate which is also referred to as "calling the question."
- To bring discussion back to the agenda because it drifted away, make a motion to "call for orders of the day."
- To take a short break, move to recess for a set period of time.
- To end the meeting before all items on the agenda were discussed, move to adjourn.
- To clarify a procedure being used, without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The chair will attempt to clarify the situation.
- If a person wants to change their mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which they were on the winning side, they may move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.
- To change an action voted on at an earlier meeting, move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, an affirmative 2/3 vote is required.

## When can the chair (President) vote on a motion?

The President is a member of the voting body and has exactly the same rights and privileges as all other members. This includes the right to make motions, to speak in debate, and to vote on all questions. So, in meetings of a small board (where there are not more than about a dozen board members present), and in meetings of a committee, the presiding officer may exercise these rights and privileges as fully as any other member. However, the impartiality required of the presiding officer of any other type of assembly (especially a large one) precludes exercising the rights to make motions or speak in debate while presiding, and also requires refraining from voting except when the vote is by ballot or whenever their vote will affect the result.

## When will the chair's vote affect the result?

On a vote that is not by ballot, if a majority vote is required and there is a tie, the chair may vote in the affirmative to cause the motion to prevail. If there is one more in the affirmative than in the negative, the chair can create a tie by voting in the negative to cause the motion to fail. Similarly, if a two-thirds vote is required, they may vote either to cause, or to block, attainment of the necessary two thirds. [RONR (12th ed.) 44:12–13; see also Table A, p. 206 of RONR In Brief.]

# Motion Summary Chart

Action	What to Say	Can interrupt speaker	Needs a Second	Can be Debated	Can be Amended	Vote Count
Introduce main motion	<i>"I move to..."</i>		√	√	√	Majority
Amend a motion	<i>"I move to amend the motion by // (add or strike words or both)"</i>		√	√	√	Majority
Move item to committee	<i>"I move that we refer the matter to committee."</i>		√	√		Majority
Postpone item	<i>"I move to postpone the matter until..."</i>		√	√		Majority
End debate	<i>"I move the previous question."</i>		√	√		Majority
Recess the meeting	<i>"I move that we recess until..."</i>		√			Majority
Adjourn the meeting early	<i>"I move to adjourn the meeting."</i>		√			Majority
Request information	<i>"Point of information."</i>	√				No vote
Overrule the chair's ruling	<i>"I move to overrule the chair's ruling."</i>	√	√	√		Majority
Extend the allotted time	<i>"I move to limit the time to ___ minutes per person."</i>		√		√	2/3
Object to procedure	<i>"Point of order."</i>	√				Chair decision
Enforce the rules or point out incorrect procedure	<i>"Point of order."</i>	√				No vote
Object to considering an undiplomatic matter	<i>"I object to consideration of this matter..."</i>	√				2/3
Verify voice vote with count	<i>"I call for a division."</i>					No vote
Table a Motion	<i>"I move to table..."</i>		√			Majority
Take up a previously tabled item	<i>"I move to take from the table..."</i>		√			Majority
Reconsider something already disposed of	<i>"I move to reconsider our action to..."</i>	√	√	√	√	Majority
Consider something out of its scheduled order	<i>"I move to suspend the rules and consider..."</i>		√			2/3
Close the meeting for executive session	<i>"I move to go into executive session."</i>		√			Majority
Personal preference - noise, distractions	<i>"Point of privilege"</i>	√				No vote

\*A member may make a motion to reconsider something that was already disposed; however, the reconsidered motion may not be subsequently reconsidered. A motion to reconsider must be made during the same meeting and can extend to a meeting that lasts for more than one day.