

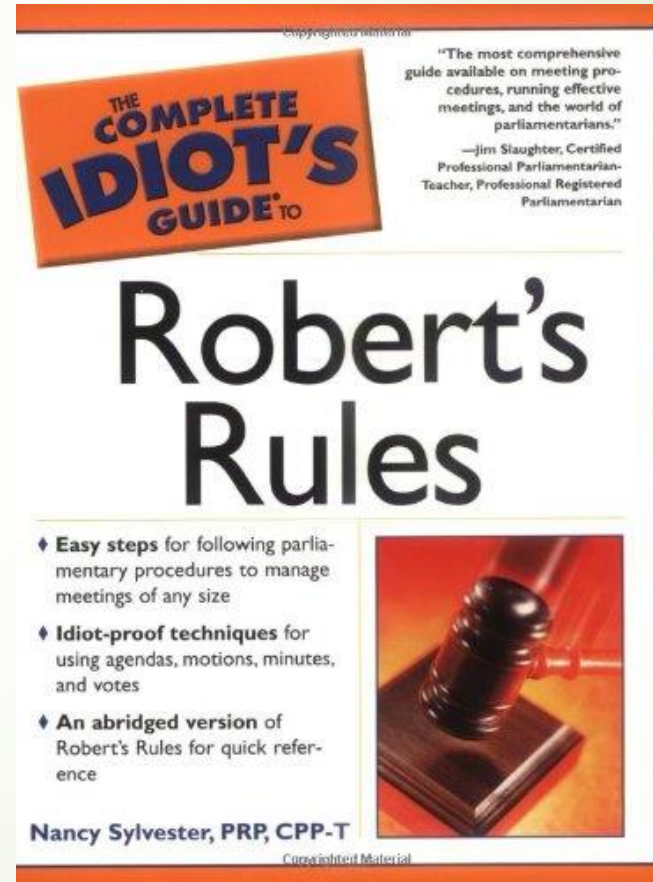


Robert's Rules Refresher

Thomas Pugh
Madison, WI

Objectives

- Refresh our understanding of Robert's Rules of Order (Robert's Rules)
- Understand how to apply these rules to manage meetings





Today's Meeting

- ▶ Group Members
 - ▶ All of us, at some time or another.
 - ▶ Having a grasp on Robert's Rules can be comforting.
- ▶ Group Chairpersons
 - ▶ Leading Meeting - Experienced or Little Experience?
 - ▶ Effective Leadership - Confident and Knowledgeable
- ▶ Me
 - ▶ Non-professional
 - ▶ Accidental Parliamentarian
 - ▶ Self-taught

Why do we need rules?



What type of rules?



- House of Commons rules in 1583:
 - One subject should be discussed at a time
 - Avoid personal attacks in the debate
 - Limit debate to merits of the question
 - Divide the question when there are several parts

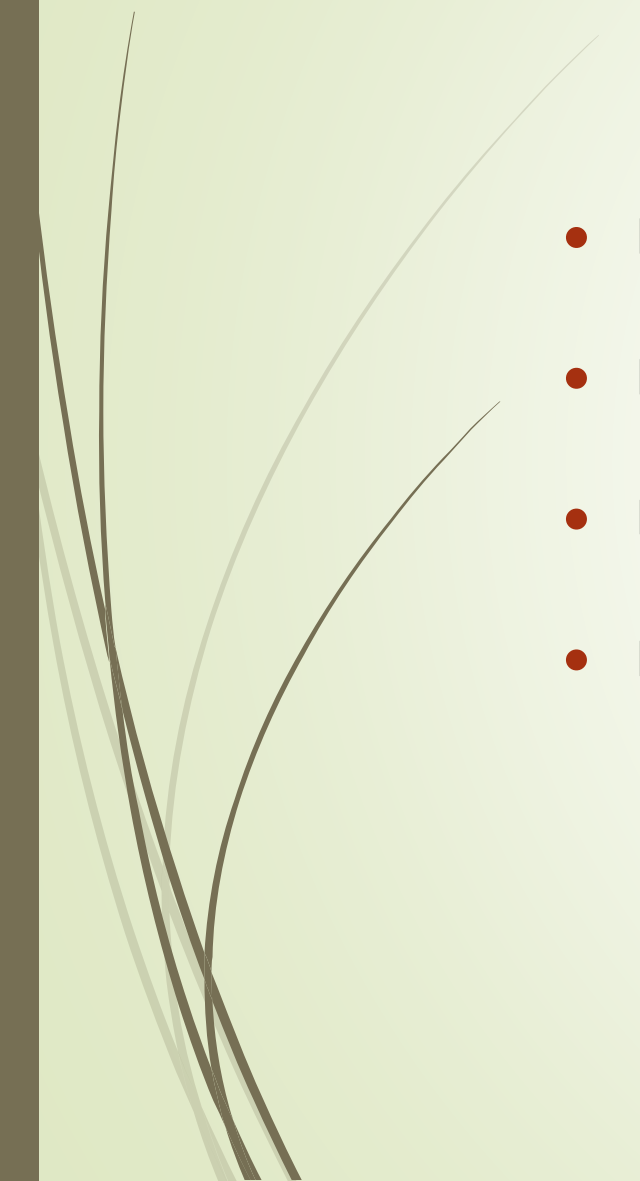
History of “The Rules”

- ▶ 1876 by U.S. Army officer General Henry M. Robert. (1837-1923)
- ▶ Military Engineer; Civil War fortifications, harbors, locks & dams, incl. Galveston, TX, Seawall.
- ▶ Adapted the rules and practice of Congress to the needs of non-legislative societies.





Why use rules?

- Provide for the orderly transaction of business and to expedite meetings
 - Protect the rights of the minority, the absentees and individual members
 - Ensure decisions are in favor of the majority rule
 - Provide for order, fairness and decorum
- 



Basic Principles (part 1)

- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
- Full and free discussion of every motion is a basic right.
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time.
- No person can speak until recognized by the chair.
- Personal remarks are always out of order.



Basic Principles (part 2)

- Members have a right to know what the immediately pending question is and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
- A majority decides a question except when basic rights of members are involved.
- A two-thirds vote is required for any motion that deprives a member of rights in any way (e.g., cutting off debate).
- Silence gives consent. Those who do not vote allow the decision to be made by those who do vote.
- The chair should always remain impartial



Meeting Basics

Quorum

Order of Business
(Agenda)

Approving the Minutes

Adjourning a Meeting

Types of Motions


Handling Motions

Minutes



Quorum

- Majority of membership or as defined in the By-Laws.
 - E.g., My church; By-Laws specify 50.
- No quorum means no business can be conducted (no motions can be passed!).
 - Any decisions made without a quorum are unofficial and must be ratified at a subsequent meeting where there *is* a quorum.
 - May include 'Must pass' or time-sensitive items.



Order of Business, aka The Agenda as suggested by Robert's Rules

1. Determine if a Quorum is present.
2. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting.
 1. Any corrections? (additions=corrections)
3. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees
 1. No motion is required to receive a report from an officer of committee
4. Reports of Special Committees
5. Special Orders – high priority items, from By-Laws
 1. E.g., “Election of officers at the January meeting”
6. Unfinished Business (not ‘Old’ Business).
 1. Items postponed from, or not taken up at the previous meeting.
7. New Business
8. Adjourn

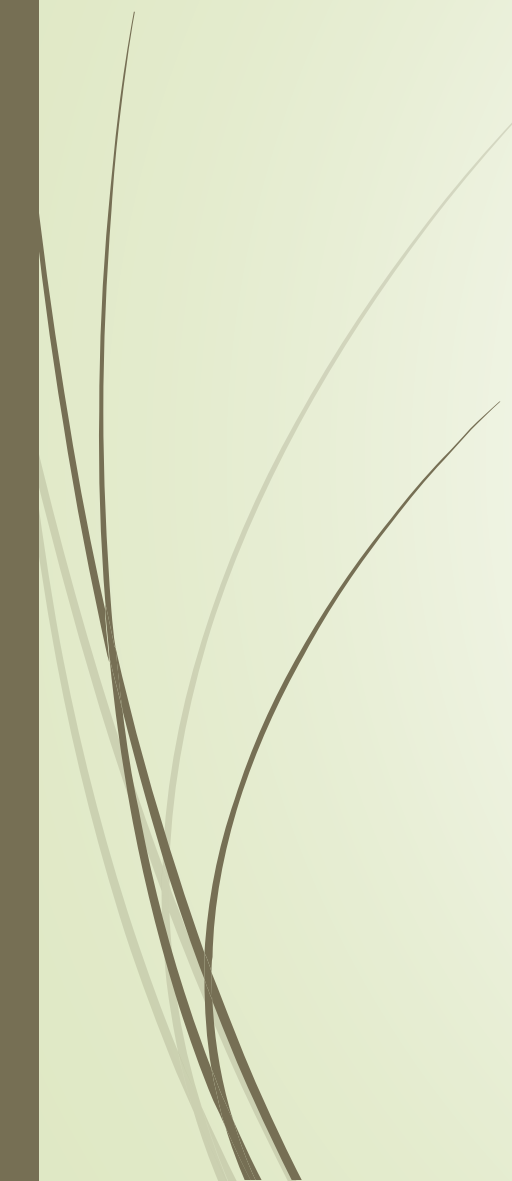


Consent Agendas

- A Consent Agenda (Consensus Agenda) is a component of a meeting agenda that enables the board to group routine items and resolutions under one umbrella to be acted upon without explanations or comments.
- Possible consent items (standard, non-controversial, or self-explanatory)
 - Committee and previous board minutes
 - Committee or executive reports not requiring deliberation or vote
 - Updated documents (e.g., address changes)
 - Standard contracts used regularly



Consent Agendas - Considerations

- Information pertaining to the items to be included in the consent agenda should be distributed well ahead of the meeting, allowing thorough examination without using valuable meeting time.
 - If this is not helpful enough, any member may request an individual item be removed and addressed separately.
 - Removal of an item may be requested even before the meeting.
 - Use of a Consent Agenda should be well explained to all board members before use ensuring that all understand the details of the procedure.
- 



The Minutes



- May be examined for accuracy ahead of the next meeting.
 - Minutes are often printed and distributed ahead of the meeting along with the agenda.
- Reading of minutes may be waived (thank goodness!!)
- Usually approved at beginning of next scheduled meeting
- Minutes not official until approved!
- A formal motion to approve minutes is usually not needed; approval can be handled by unanimous consent.
 - “Are there any corrections to the minutes?”
 - “Are there any further corrections?”
 - “If there are no objections, the minutes stand approved as read [or as corrected].”



Handling of Motions – Making a Motion

1. The member making the motion must obtain the floor (i.e., be recognized by Chair), and state the motion (providing a written copy is encouraged).
2. Another member must second the motion to proceed any further on the motion.
3. The Chair states the motion and then asks: “**Is there any discussion [or debate].**” At this point – the group owns the motion!
4. When debate is concluded (and proposed amendments disposed of), the Chair “**calls the question**” (restating the motion, as amended).



Handling of Motions - Voting

5. A vote is taken using an appropriate method: voice, hand raising, or standing; can be counted. Roll Calls are used when members represent constituencies.
6. If there is no apparent opposition to a Motion, the Chair may ask: “**Are there are any objections to the motion?**” If no one objects, the Chair might announce that motion passes by “**unanimous consent**” or “**with no opposition.**”
7. The Chair announces outcome of vote and states what action will be taken as a result of the vote (e.g., “The Motion is approved” or “the Motion fails.”)
8. If, after the result of a voice or an uncounted standing vote is announced, but a member believes the vote is too close to be determinative, the member may move for a “**division of the assembly**” to request a standing count.



Motions – Other things to know

- Seconding means more than one member believes motion should be discussed.
- A motion made by a committee chair does not need a second (unless it's a committee of one!).
- At this point, the Motion is *owned* by the assembly.
- The person who makes a motion has first opportunity to speak.
- Up until Chair “**puts the question**” to the assembly (i.e., formally states the motion proposed), the motion may be perfected by Amendment to improve its clarity or intent.
 - After the Chair formally states the motion, it may be amended or withdrawn only by a motion from the floor.
- A Motion can be withdrawn only with the consent of the group. The Chair would ask, “Is there any objection to the motion being withdrawn?”
 - If there is any objection, the motion remains to be acted upon by the Assembly; Adopted or Rejected.




More to know about motions

- An amendment to a main motion can have only one amendment at a time (i.e., an amendment to an amendment).
- Each member can speak only twice on any motion.
- In voting on motions, the Chair (if otherwise a member of the group):
 - May vote to break a tie allowing a vote to be Approved, or to create a tie causing a vote to fail.
 - Does not *have* to vote to break a tie.



Roles of the Chairperson

- Call the Meeting to Order.
- Determine the presence of a Quorum.
- Conduct the meeting in a fair and equitable manner.
- Process Motions.
- Vote to break ties, when appropriate
- Rule on any Points of Order
- Debate
 - The Chairperson must relinquish the chair to speak on a motion; the chair should be given to the vice-chair or a person believed to be objective on the issue at hand.
 - The Chair may resume the chair after the particular motion is disposed of.
 - This should be a rare event.




Committees – more informal

- The Committee Chair may make motions, speak in informal debates, and vote on motions.
- Motions need not be seconded.
- Informal discussions of subjects are permitted with no motions pending.
- A member may speak an unlimited number of times during debate.
- If a proposal is perfectly clear to the committee members, a vote can be taken without a formal motion.
- Committees are not necessarily defined by size (number of members).



Types of Motions – where the troubles begin.

- **Main** motion – the mechanism to bring business before the assembly.
- **Subsidiary** motions - intended to assist in handling the main motion
 - Amend
 - postpone to a time and date certain
 - Table
 - refer to a committee
- **Privileged** motions - not associated with main motion, but to matters that require immediate attention
 - adjourn
 - Recess
 - point of order



Motions - Amendments

- A motion to “**amend**” must be germane (related) to the main motion.
 - Paint the building: change ‘blue’ to ‘green’
 - Curiously, the amendment may completely change the meaning of the main motion!
 - Example: change “sell” to “not sell” ...the building (“add ‘not’ before the word ‘sell’”)
- A motion to amend can, itself, be amended
 - Above, change ‘green’ to ‘teal green’
- You may have only one Amendment and Amend-the-amendment ‘string’ under consideration at a time.
- Motion>Amend>Amend-the-amendment.
- They are considered (voted on) in ‘Reverse order’ (right-to-left, above)



Motions



- The subsidiary motion “**division of the question**” (call for a separate vote on each part of a motion or resolution) causes the motion to be subdivided into two or more issues to be decided individually.
- If a member wishes to defer consideration of a motion, the motion to “**commit**” or “**refer to a committee**” can be used, or the motion to “**postpone to a time or date,**” such as later in the same meeting or to a future meeting.
- If the motion and its associated amendments are **referred/committed** to a committee or **postponed**, no further votes are necessary until motion and amendments once again comes before the assembly.



Table or Kill?

- Motion to **Table** a main motion it to consider it at later time of the current session to allow for something else to happen (e.g., additional information).
 - Then, a motion to **Remove from the Table** allows continuation of debate and consideration.
 - It is an *inappropriate* method of 'killing' a proposal and not permitted by Robert's Rules.
- The appropriate mechanism to kill a motion and avoid a direct vote on it is to move to **Postpone indefinitely**.



Go to the Vote!

- Member can force a vote only by **Move the Previous Question** or **Move to Call the Question**.
 - The maker of the motion must be recognized by the Chair; they cannot simply call out from the floor.
 - The motion *must be seconded*, it is *not debatable*, and *requires a 2/3 vote* to pass. Why? Because it may deprive a member from exercising their right to debate.
 - Contrary to common use, a vocalized “Question” or “I call the Question” does not trigger an immediate vote. The call is Out of Order. See bullet #1, then bullet #2
- Usually, the Chair may sense the debate and consideration of the Motion and amendment has been exhausted, and may say, “Are you ready for the question?” (Inviting more discussion.) If none is forthcoming, then move to the vote.



Steps of the Motion – Chair

- Immediately re-State the Motion (Spend X dollars for Y.)
 - Call for a second
 - Discussion (if appropriate)
- Call for the vote; Re-state the Motion (Paint...); how the group will vote (voice/show of hands/standing/ballot), and what is required (majority or 2/3).
- Announce the result of the vote, numbers if known.
 - The Affirmative has it, the motion is adopted, we will (Spend...)
 - The Negative has it, the motion is lost, we will not (Spend...)
- Everyone knows what is being voted on, what the result is, and what will happen.

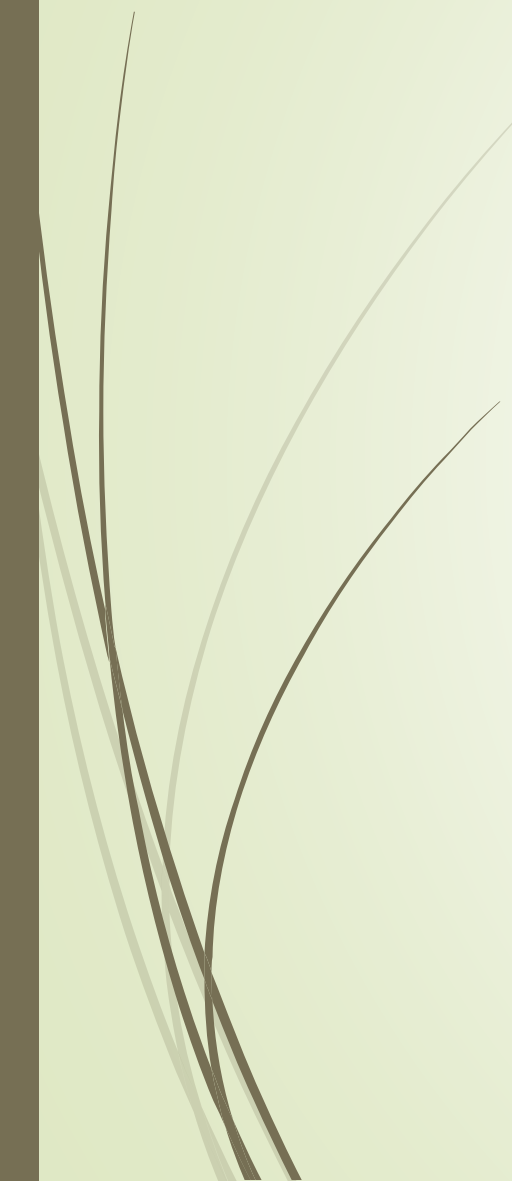


Voting results

- ▶ Majority
 - ▶ More votes **Yes** than votes **No**.
 - ▶ Tied, vote **Fails**
 - ▶ **No** = N
 - ▶ **Yes** = N
 - ▶ How many votes were cast?
 - ▶ Example: Assembly = 20, Votes cast = 15
 - ▶ No impact by: Abstentions, or not voted
 - ▶ **Yes** = 8, **No** = 7
 - ▶ Motion Carried/Approved
 - ▶ Chair may vote if;
 - ▶ **Yes** vote, would break tie (Motion carries)
 - ▶ **No** vote, would create a tie (Motion fails)



Precedence of Motions

- 'Ladder' of Precedence of Motions
 - Higher' position motions(s) must be acted up before 'lower' position motions
 - Next slide lists many common motions
 - There are more motions than can be included; see reference materials.
- 

Precedence

Motion	Debatable?	Vote Required?	Amendable?	Action
To adjourn (recess)	No	Majority	No	"Adjourn" ends the entire meeting. "Recess" is to a specified hour.
The order of the day	No	Majority	No	Forces an immediate return to the established agenda.
To suspend the rules	No	2/3	No	Suspends the stated rules or order or agenda for a specified purpose.
To table	No	Majority	No	Lays aside the main motion and any motions pertaining to it until taken from table.
The previous question	No	2/3	No	Forces immediate vote on motion to refer, amend, and the main motion to which they pertain.
To limit debate	No	2/3	No	Limits duration of debate on a particular motion.
Postpone to a certain time	Yes	Majority	Yes	Puts off the motion to a certain time, e.g., next meeting.
To refer or commit	Yes	Majority	Yes	Refers matter to a committee or other specified group.
To amend	Yes	Majority	No	Amends main motion by "adding", "deleting", or substituting." Also, to amend an amendment under consideration.
To Postpone indefinitely	Yes	Majority	No	Effectively kills the Main Motion
The Main Motion (Question)	Yes	Majority	Yes	Opens a new subject to debate. In order only when no other motion is on the floor.
Division of the Question	No	Majority	Yes	Separates consideration of the motion to parts
To take from table	No	Majority	No	Reopens debate on a matter previously tabled. Will be accepted only when no other motion is on the floor.
To reconsider	No	Majority	No	Reopens debate on a matter voted upon earlier in the meeting. Must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. Will be accepted only when no other motion is on the floor.



Adjournment




- When there appears to be no further business in meeting, and all the topics on agenda have been addressed, a motion to adjourn is not necessary.
- A meeting is not closed until Chair states that the meeting is adjourned.
- Motion to *Fix the Time to Adjourn* can be made at any time during the meeting.
- Motion to *Recess* is a short break in a meeting (lunch, stretch, coffee) after which business is resumed at point it left off.



Meeting Minutes

- The purpose of keeping minutes is to create a written record of what was done at the meeting.
 - This includes Motions, votes, and results of votes.
 - Questions and discussions need **not** be included.
 - If a counted vote was taken, the numbers can be recorded.
- Motions recorded in minutes should reflect exact wording when vote was taken or when presiding officer declared unanimous consent.
- Committees may want to include 'Notes' to record discussion points pertaining to information gathering.



Bonus nuggets – magic words

- Scripts are recommended to smooth the process of the Chair.
- General Agreement (Unanimous), use wisely.
 - **“I ask Unanimous Consent** (...that we immediately consider Item #7, changing the agenda)
 - Instead of Motion to *Suspend the Rules, seconded, not debatable, 2/3 vote*
 - **“If there is no Objection,** the meeting is adjourned”
 - ▶ **“Hearing none,** the meeting is adjourned”

Precedence

Motion	Debatable?	Vote Required?	Amendable?	Action
To adjourn (recess)	No	Majority	No	"Adjourn" ends the entire meeting. "Recess" is to a specified hour.
The order of the day	No	Majority	No	Forces an immediate return to the established agenda.
To suspend the rules	No	2/3	No	Suspends the stated rules or order or agenda for a specified purpose.
To table	No	Majority	No	Lays aside the main motion and any motions pertaining to it until taken from table.
The previous question	No	2/3	No	Forces immediate vote on motion to refer, amend, and the main motion to which they pertain.
To limit debate	No	2/3	No	Limits duration of debate on a particular motion.
Postpone to a certain time	Yes	Majority	Yes	Puts off the motion to a certain time, e.g., next meeting.
To refer or commit	Yes	Majority	Yes	Refers matter to a committee or other specified group.
To amend	Yes	Majority	No	Amends main motion by "adding", "deleting", or substituting." Also, to amend an amendment under consideration.
To Postpone indefinitely	Yes	Majority	No	Effectively kills the Main Motion
The Main Motion (Question)	Yes	Majority	Yes	Opens a new subject to debate. In order only when no other motion is on the floor.
Division of the Question	No	Majority	Yes	Separates consideration of the motion to parts
To take from table	No	Majority	No	Reopens debate on a matter previously tabled. Will be accepted only when no other motion is on the floor.
To reconsider	No	Majority	No	Reopens debate on a matter voted upon earlier in the meeting. Must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. Will be accepted only when no other motion is on the floor.



Question Re: Election of Officers

- Nominating Committee submits report with full slate of officers.
- By-laws permit nominations from the floor (even self nominations)
 - Additional nominations received, one or more office
- Procedure?
 - Split the Offices for voting: President, Treasurer, etc.
 - Non-contested offices: Chair might ask for voice vote for expediency.
 - Contested offices; Counted ballot; Need a majority to elect.
 - If multiple candidates for a single post, keep voting until one gets a majority
 - **Cannot** drop low vote getters from consideration.***
 - Same for multiple seats; e.g., 3 positions and >3 candidates
 - When any one nominee (or more) get(s) a majority (voting for 3), they are elected.
 - Remaining candidates continue to be considered for remaining open seat(s).



References



- Lewis, Arthur T. and Henry M. Robert. 2006. *Robert's Rules Simplified*, Chicago: Dover.
- Robert, Henry M III, Daniel H. Honemann, & Thomas J. Balch. 2011. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, In Brief*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press
- Sylvester, Nancy. 2004. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules*. New York: Alpha Books.



Questions?

- ▶ Thomas Pugh
- ▶ tdpugh@wisc.edu