

Robert's Rules of Order Presentation

Basic Concepts

- Robert's Rules of Order: The purpose of Robert's Rules of Order are to ensure majority rule, secure the rights of all members (including the minority and those absent at meetings), and promote order, fairness, decorum, and efficiency in parliamentary organizations such as the GSA.
 - These principles matter more than the "letter of the law."
- Parliamentarian: The parliamentarian is a non-voting member of the executive council. This status does not allow the parliamentarian to bring forth motions for consideration by the GSA, nor to participate in debate on particular motions. Participation in debate is particularly discouraged for this position, as it would violate the position's intended neutrality. The parliamentarian functions as a resource for the GSA and executive council, providing advice on points of order and motions as they relate to the bylaws of the organization and the norms of parliamentary procedure.
 - Because of the position's status as a non-voting member, the parliamentarian does not have the ability nor the responsibility to maintain order in meetings. This responsibility falls to the presiding officer, usually the organization's president. It is the responsibility of the parliamentarian to advise the presiding officer on matters of procedure, but the presiding officer is by no means bound to accept this advice.
- Quorum: The GSA cannot enact any motion that would require a vote without 50% of the acting Senators present for a meeting.
 - Without a quorum the presiding officer can call the meeting to order to satisfy the bylaw requirement that the meeting is held and then announce that there is no quorum and adjourn the meeting. Or, the presiding officer can call the meeting to order, announce to the membership and that there is no quorum, then entertain the following limited motions: motion to recess (which enables members to try to obtain a quorum), motion to establish the time to adjourn (which allows the membership to set another date and time to meet and is considered a legal continuation of the current meeting), or motion to adjourn (which means that the meeting immediately ends).
- Motions: A motion is a point brought before the general assembly for consideration.
 - Most motions require a simple majority to pass, but there are a few, including a constitutional amendment, restricting membership or participation in a meeting, or the removal of members of the executive council, which require a 2/3rds vote.
 - If a meeting's presiding officer believes that a motion will pass though unanimously (as is commonly the case for basic motions like roll calls, or calls to adjourn the meeting), the presiding officer can present a motion

for general consent, usually beginning with the phrase “If there is no objection, I motion that we...” If a single person objects to this motion, then a vote must occur. Otherwise the motion is immediately adopted.

Procedure

- The main procedural process that everyone needs to be aware of is the motion.
 - All voting members have the ability to present motions, debate on motions, and of course, vote of motions.
 - To present a motion, after a speaker has finished, raise your hand or rise. The meeting’s presiding officer (or Chair) should then recognize you and either give you the floor, or if there are others that have requested time to speak first, add you to the list of speakers.
 - When presenting a motion, specificity is key, as we vote on the language presented rather than a vague idea.
 - E.g. “Madam President, I move that we have a picnic on Saturday, June 15, at 3 p.m. in the park.” Is superior to “I move we have a picnic.”
 - The chair may request that motions be submitted in writing if they are too vague, complex, or less relevant than other business. Specificity helps to avoid this.
 - In addition, the chair may reject any motion as out of order, stating ““The Chair rules that the motion is not in order because...”
 - After a motion is presented and accepted, the chair may ask for the motion to be seconded. Any voting member can second a motion, which is done verbally, and signifies not an acceptance of the motion itself, but a desire to bring this motion to the floor to be debated.
 - There are some motions that don’t need to be seconded. These include Calls to Order (which move a meeting along the agenda) and Questions of Privilege (issues relating rights and privileges of the assembly or an individual, e.g. issues with temperature or volume).
 - After a motion is seconded, the chair restates the motion, and opens the floor for discussion.
 - E.g. “It is moved and seconded that we have a picnic on Saturday, June 15, at 3 p.m. in the park. Is there any discussion?”
 - After the chair has opened the motion to the floor, any member can enter debate on the current motion, though the member that first proposed the motion has the first right to speak.
 - All debate must be based on the motion that is currently being considered. In addition, all debate must take place in relation to a motion. If an idea is proposed without a motion having been put forward procedurally, then no

debate can take place until this has been formally proposed, seconded, and accepted by the chair.

- According to our bylaws (Article 2, Section A, Subsection ii.a) all speakers, save for those presenting official reports, are given two minutes to speak unless altered by a majority vote of the Senate.
 - One can request additional time to speak after being recognized by immediately putting forth a secondary motion to extend the limits of debate and specifying the amount of time you believe you'd need.
 - E.g. "Madam President, I move as a secondary motion to extend the limits of debate from two to five minutes so that I may fully explain my proposal for a picnic."
- No member may speak more than twice in regards to debate on any particular motion.
- During debate, one can only speak once they have had the floor yielded to them.
- Comments are to be directed to the chair rather than other members.
- In parliamentary procedure it is tradition to refer to other members by their titles and last names (e.g. Ms. President, Mr. Treasurer, Senator Smith) though this formality varies by institution and is not altogether necessary.
- The president is responsible for maintaining order during debate, pointing out violations in decorum and reprimanding as needed.
 - If the President feels the need to participate in debate, they must cede their chair to the Vice President for the duration of the debate.
- The Chair can interrupt a speaker if needed, or end the debate and bring the matter to a vote without a motion, or any voting member can move to end the debate and bring the motion to vote (which requires a second).
- Following the end of debate all voting members are asked to clearly state "Yay" or "Nay" to assert their support or opposition (either verbally or via a show of hands), after which the chair states the count and the resulting effect of the vote on the motion.
- Secondary motions may be introduced in order to help the assembly decide what to do with a main motion under consideration.
 - Subsidiary motions serve to do away with the main motion
 - They include, by order of precedence: Lay on the table (set aside temporarily), Previous Question (stop debate), Limit or extend the limits of debate, (change the amount of time allotted to speak), Postpone to a certain time (put off to another time), Refer to a committee (let a committee investigate an issue), Amend (change a motion) Postpone indefinitely (kill a motion)
 - Privileged motions are orders of immediate importance, and take precedence over Subsidiary motions.

- They include, by order of precedence: Fix the time to which to adjourn (set another time to continue the meeting), Adjourn (end meeting now), Recess (take a break) Raise a question of privilege (which deals with the welfare of individual/assembly), Call for the order of the day (stick to the agenda).
- Incidental motions deal with orders of procedure, and must be taken up immediately.
 - They include, by order of precedence: Point of order (suggest that a motion is against the rules), Appeal (disagree with chair's ruling), Division of the assembly (doubt the result of the vote and request a recount), Requests and inquiries (ask a question), Suspend the rules (temporarily put aside a rule), Division of the question (divide a motion into two or more questions).

On the next page one can see a simple chart to explain the basics of the various types of motions and how they can be debated, amended, and introduced.