

# **Parliamentary Procedure for Leaders**

Year of Leader Formation

BOOK OF ORDER –  
FOUNDATIONS OF PRESBYTERIAN POLITY

**F-3.0204**

Presbyters are not simply to reflect  
the will of the people,  
but rather to seek together to find and represent  
the will of Christ.

## **F-3.0208**

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power,  
to be exercised jointly  
by presbyters gathered in councils.

## **1 Corinthians 14:40**

**“... all things should be done decently and in order.”**

### **F-3.0205**

**Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote,  
following opportunity for discussion and discernment,  
and a majority shall govern.**

BOOK OF ORDER –  
FORM OF GOVERNMENT

**G-3.0105**

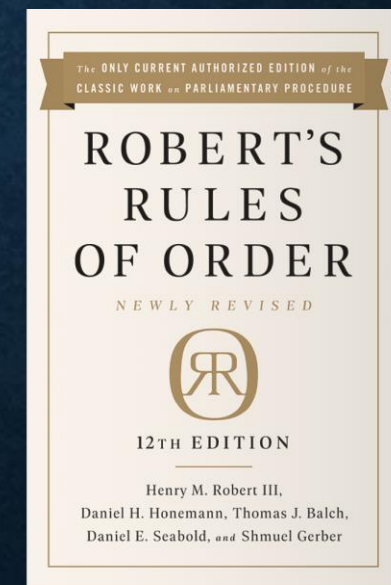
Meetings of councils shall be opened and closed with prayer.  
Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with  
the most recent edition of  
*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*,  
except when it is in contradiction to this Constitution.  
Councils may also make use of processes of discernment  
in their deliberations  
prior to a vote as agreed upon by the body.

# The rules of parliamentary law

are based on a regard for the rights:

- of the majority,
- of the minority, especially a strong minority – greater than one third,
- of individual members,
- of absentees, and
- of all these together.

[RONR 12<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 54 (Kindle)]



## **G-3.0104**

**The moderator possesses the authority necessary  
for preserving order  
and for conducting efficiently  
the business of the body.**

**He or she shall convene and adjourn the body  
in accordance with its own action.**

# RULES OF DECORUM

Speakers shall

- (usually) seek and obtain recognition before speaking and not interrupt another speaker
- address the Moderator
- confine remarks to the pending question
- not impugn another member or their motives
- Not be allowed to speak against their own motion
- not speak a second time until everyone who wishes has spoken
- honor time limits



# Processing a Motion

1. Motion moved
2. [Seconded]
3. Moderator states the question
4. Moderator calls for debate
5. Moderator states the question
6. Moderator puts the question
7. Vote taken
8. Moderator declares results
9. Moderator explains effect

Unanimous Consent  
and  
Consent Agenda

# QUORUM

“... a quorum in an assembly is the number of members who must be present in order that business can be validly transacted. The quorum refers to the number of members present, not to the number actually voting on a particular question.” RONR, 12th edition (p. 390). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

**G-1.0501:** Congregations shall provide by rule the quorum necessary to conduct business.

**G-3.0203:** Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.

**G-3.0304:** A presbytery may set its own quorum, but it shall be not fewer than three ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are members of the presbytery and three ruling elder commissioners from three different congregations.

**G-3.0405:** A synod may set its own quorum, but it shall include an equal number of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament representing at least three presbyteries or one-third of its presbyteries, whichever is larger.

**Chart #1: The Ranking Motions**

Characteristics:		In order when another has the floor	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Vote required for adoption	Can be reconsidered
<b>PRIVILEGED MOTIONS:</b>							
13.	Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	Yes
12.	Adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
11.	Recess	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
10.	Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
9.	Call for Orders of the Day	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
<b>SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS:</b>							
8.	Lay on the Table	No	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
7.	Previous Question (“Call the Question”)	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes
6.	Limit or Extend Limits of Debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Yes
5.	Postpone Definitely	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
4.	Refer (or Commit)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes <sup>1</sup>
3.	Amend	No	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Maj	Yes
2.	Postpone Indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Maj	Yes <sup>3</sup>
1.	MAIN MOTION	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes

**Chart #2: Some Common Additional Motions**

Characteristics:	In order when another has the floor	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Vote required for adoption	Can be reconsidered
<b>INCIDENTAL MOTIONS:</b>						
Appeal a Ruling of the Chair	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>4</sup>	No	Maj	Yes
Close Nominations or Polls	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	No
Consider by Paragraph (or Consider "Seriatim")	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
Divide the Question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
Division of the Assembly	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
Object to Consideration <sup>5</sup>	Yes	No	No	No	2/3	Yes <sup>6</sup>
Request for Information or Parliamentary Inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
Suspend the Rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
<b>MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY:</b>						
Reconsider	No	Yes	Yes <sup>7</sup>	No	Maj	No
Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 <sup>8</sup>	Yes
Take from the Table	No	Yes	No	No	Maj	No

# MANY MOTIONS YOU'LL ENCOUNTER

- Require a second
- May not interrupt a speaker
- May be debated
- May be reconsidered
- May be amended
- Require a majority vote

# MOTIONS

- Require a **majority** vote – except **2/3**
  - when abridging the rights of members
    - end debate
    - limit or extend limits of debate
  - when changing something already decided
    - suspend the rules
    - rescind or amend something previously adopted

**Chart #1: The Ranking Motions**

Characteristics:		In order when another has the floor	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Vote required for adoption	Can be reconsidered
<b>PRIVILEGED MOTIONS:</b>							
13.	Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	Yes
12.	Adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
11.	Recess	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
10.	Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
9.	Call for Orders of the Day	Yes	No	No	No	—	No
<b>SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS:</b>							
8.	Lay on the Table	No	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
7.	Previous Question (“Call the Question”)	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes
6.	Limit or Extend Limits of Debate	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Yes
5.	Postpone Definitely	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
4.	Refer (or Commit)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes <sup>1</sup>
3.	Amend	No	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Maj	Yes
2.	Postpone Indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Maj	Yes <sup>3</sup>
1.	MAIN MOTION	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes



# **Primary Amendment**

**3.1**

# Forms of Amendment

- to insert [between words] or add [at the end] – words or paragraphs
- to strike out – words or paragraphs
- to do both (strike out some words and insert/add others)

The words must be consecutive.

# **Secondary Amendment**

**3.2**

**Not amendable**

# **Substitute Motion**

**Commit/Refer**

**4**

# Motions to commit / refer should be clear about

- what committee/task force/commission (already existing, or special) will consider the matter
- its task or charge
- when it shall report.

# **Postpone Definitely**

**5**

**Majority vote**

**unless the time**

**when the motion will be taken up**

**creates a special order**

**for a particular time –**

**then, 2/3**

**Limit Debate/  
Extend Limits  
of Debate**

**6**

**Not debatable  
2/3 vote**



# **Previous Question**

**7**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**2/3 vote**

# **Lay on the Table**

**8**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**May not be reconsidered**

# **Call for the Orders of the Day**

**9**

**Not seconded**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**No vote – ruled on by the moderator –  
unless it is being refused, then 2/3 negative**

**May not be reconsidered**

# **Question of Privilege**

**10**

**No vote –**

**ruled on by the moderator**

**Not seconded –**

**unless requires formal action**

**OR: Not debatable or amendable**

**May not be reconsidered**

**Recess**

**11**

**Not debatable**

**May not be reconsidered**

**Adjourn**

**12**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**May not be reconsidered**

# **Point of Order**

**Not seconded**

**Not debatable –**

**unless the moderator submits it to the body**

**Not amendable**

**No vote – ruled on by the moderator**

**unless it is submitted to the body or appealed**

**May not be reconsidered**

**Request for Information**

**or**

**Parliamentary Inquiry**

**Not seconded**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**No vote**

**May not be reconsidered**



# **Appeal from a Ruling of the Chair**

**Not amendable**

# **Divide the Question**

**Not debatable  
May not be reconsidered**

**Consideration  
by Paragraph  
(Seriatim)**

**Not debatable  
May not be reconsidered**

# **Division of the Assembly**

**Not seconded**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**No vote**

**May not be reconsidered**

# **Suspend the Rules**

**Not debatable**

**Not amendable**

**2/3 vote (usually)**

**May not be reconsidered**

# **Procedure in Small Boards and Committees**

- **Motions need not be seconded.**
- **Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.**
- **When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed to by unanimous consent, however, all proposed actions must be approved by vote under the same rules as in larger meetings...**
- **A chair who is a member may, without leaving the chair, speak in informal discussions and in debate, and vote on all questions.**

# **FLEXIBILITY for DISCERNMENT**

- committee of the whole
- quasi committee of the whole
- informal consideration
- recess with breakout groups

# ABSTENTION

To abstain = to choose not to vote

- Do not call for abstentions
- Do not count abstentions in figuring a majority or 2/3
  - If the vote requires a majority of the entire membership (rare), you are still not counting abstentions – you're working from a number that may include absentees



# ADOPT/ACCEPT/AGREE TO

When used in reference to a report (as opposed to a recommendation within a report), “an affirmative vote on such a motion has the effect of the assembly’s endorsing every word of the report—including the indicated facts and the reasoning—as its own statement... Adoption of an entire report is seldom wise except when it is to be issued or published in the name of the whole organization.”

Robert, III, Henry M.. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition (p. 546). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

# RECEIVE A REPORT

“A common error is to move that a report ‘be received’ after it has been read—apparently on the supposition that such a motion is necessary in order for the report to be taken under consideration or to be recorded as having been made. In fact, this motion is meaningless and is therefore not in order, since the report has already been received. Even before a report has been read, a motion to receive it is unnecessary if the time for its reception is established by the order of business, or if no member objects.”

Robert, III, Henry M.. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition (p. 547).  
PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

# **ELECTRONIC MEETINGS**

# AUTHORIZATION

Except as authorized in the bylaws, the business of an organization or board can be validly transacted only at a regular or properly called meeting—that is, ... a single official gathering in one room or area—of the assembly of its members at which a quorum is present.

Robert, III, Henry M.. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition (p. 144). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

# REQUIREMENT!

- It is important to understand that, regardless of the technology used, **the opportunity for simultaneous aural communication** is essential to the deliberative character of the meeting. Therefore, a group that attempts to conduct the deliberative process in writing (such as by postal mail, e-mail, “chat rooms,” or fax)—which is not recommended—does not constitute a deliberative assembly. Any such effort may achieve a consultative character, but it is foreign to the deliberative process as understood under parliamentary law.

- Robert, III, Henry M.. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition (p. 145). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

# RULES FOR

- the type of equipment or computer software required for participation in meetings, whether the organization must provide such equipment or software, and contingencies for technical difficulties or malfunctions
- methods for determining the presence of a quorum
- the conditions under which a member may raise a point of order doubting the presence of a quorum, and the conditions under which the continued presence of a quorum is presumed if no such point of order is raised
- methods for seeking recognition and obtaining the floor
- means by which motions may be submitted in writing during a meeting
- methods for taking and verifying votes

Robert, III, Henry M.. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition (p. 146). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

# MINUTES

## RONR SECTION 48

- the kind of meeting: regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special
- the name of the body
- date, time, place
- the fact that the regular moderator and clerk were present or, the names of the persons who substituted for them
- whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved—as read, or as corrected—and the date of that meeting
- motions and what happened to them, with name of the mover
- the complete substance of oral committee reports; written reports may be attached/appended
- tally of a counted vote, tellers' report of ballot votes
- time of adjournment
- clerk's signature

# MINUTES

Any correction approved by the assembly is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes were approved “as corrected,” without specifying what the correction was.



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