

Principles of Parliamentary Procedure October 12, 2003

The following information is taken from Webster's New World "Robert's Rules Of Order - Simplified and Applied", Second Edition

There are two extremes in organizational structure:

- **Authoritarian** – power is concentrated in a person or small group of people
- **Democratic** – members of the organization make all the decisions

Most organizations create an agreed-upon balance of power between leadership and members. This is done by using the democratic principles of decision-making in the context of governing documents (constitution, bylaws, rules of order, policies, parliamentary authority, etc.).

What are democratic principles?

- Members rule through a decision-making process that they have established by vote.
- Ideas come from the members and are presented to the assembly to decide upon.
- Leaders come from the people through an election process
- Checks and balances between leadership and the members are established in the governing documents.
- All members are equal – they have equal rights and responsibilities.
- The organization is run with impartiality and fairness.
- There is equal justice under the law; members and officers have a right to a fair trial if accused.
- The majority rules, but the rights of the minority and absent members are protected.
- Everything is accomplished in the spirit of openness, not secrecy.
- Members have the right to resign from the office or organization.

Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

- **Take up business one item at a time**
 1. Each meeting follows an agenda
 2. Only one main motion can be pending at a time
 3. When a main motion is pending, members can make a motion from a class of motions called "secondary motions".
 4. Only one member can be assigned the floor at a time
 5. Members take turns speaking
 6. No member speaks twice about a motion until all members have had the opportunity to speak.
- **Promote courtesy, justice, impartiality and equality**
 1. The chair calls the meeting to order on time
 2. Members take their seats promptly when the chair calls the meeting to order and conversation stops.
 3. Those members giving reports during the meeting take seats in front.
 4. Members rise to be recognized by the presiding officer and don't speak out of turn.
 5. Members always refer to other members and officers in the third person (by title).
 6. In debate, members do not cross-talk, or talk directly to each other when a member is speaking.
 7. Members keep discussion to the issues, not to the personalities or other member's motives.
 8. When correcting a member, the presiding officer does not use the member's name.
 9. Members speak loudly and clearly so all can hear.
 10. Members listen while others are speaking.

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- **The majority rules, but the rights of the individual, minority, and absent members are protected.**
 1. Members have the right to have notice of all meetings.
 2. Members have the right to know by previous notice when there is a proposal to rescind or amend something previously adopted.
 3. In any situation where rights may be taken away from members, two thirds of the members must approve the motion (rather than a majority).
 4. No one has the right to require more than a majority vote on issues unless the bylaws or the parliamentary authority specifically states that more than a majority is required.
 5. Members have a right to be informed of the work of the organization

Motions and Secondary Motions

Order of Making Motions is top to bottom below. Order of voting on motions below is bottom to top. Motions in bold italics require 2/3 vote.

1. Main Motion
2. Postpone Indefinitely
3. Amend
4. Refer to a Committee
5. Postpone to a Certain Time
6. ***Limit or Extend Limits of Debate***
7. ***Previous Question (close debate)***
8. Lay on the Table (set main motion aside temporarily in order to take up something of immediate urgency)
9. Call for the Orders of the Day (call to conform to the agenda or order of business)
10. Raise a Question of Privilege (permits a member to request a main motion related to the rights of an individual or group. Examples are for inability to hear a speaker, or room too hot or cold)
11. Recess
12. Adjourn
13. Fix Time to Adjourn

Incidental Motions

- Point of order
- Appeal from decision of the chair
- Parliamentary inquiry
- Point of information
- Permission to modify or withdraw a motion
- ***Object to consideration of a question***
- Division of the assembly (revote another way)
- Division of the question (divide a complex motion into parts that can stand alone)
- ***Suspend the rules***