

# The Long-haired Guy's Short Guide to Parliamentary Procedure

by Bruce W. Chenoweth

## PURPOSE

The purpose of Parliamentary Procedure is to help groups conduct their meetings in an orderly manner, assuring that decisions are made fairly and in good faith, especially in an environment of conflicting interests.

## PRINCIPLES

- Justice and courtesy are extended to every member.
- Address only one main issue at a time.
- The Majority has the right to decide the issue.
- The Minority has an equal right to speak on the issue and to be heard in full, fair and equitable debate.
- All members have the right to know the meaning and the effect of the motion before the assembly.
- Each voting member has one vote. The votes of all voting members are counted equally.
- The desires of Individuals must be merged into the desires of the organization.
- To be used for the facilitation, not the obstruction, of business.

## DEFINITIONS

**Adjourn.** To suspend or move a meeting to a different time or place. A final meeting would “adjourn sine die” (*adjourn without day*) meaning no future meeting is scheduled.

**Constitution.** Defines the basic structure and regulations of an organization. Usually includes the name, purpose for existing, membership qualifications, governing body, officers titles and duties, number required to make a *quorum*, meeting structure and parliamentary authority to be implemented. Includes the *Bylaws*.

**Bylaws:** Contain local or circumstantial amendments to the *constitution*, including provisions for making amendments. Usually a 2/3 vote in favor is required to make or amend the bylaws.

**Standing Rules:** Specific rules governing administration of the organization which do not affect the Constitutional Structure (i.e. holiday schedule exceptions to the meeting day and time). Usually only a *majority* is required to make and amend Standing Rules.

**Quorum:** The minimum number of voting members who must be present to legally transact business. If not otherwise specified in the Constitution, a quorum is more than half of the members who are eligible to vote.

**Majority:** More than half of the members present and voting.

**Motion:** A formal proposal that the organization takes or makes a certain action, made during a legal business meeting by a recognized member in good standing of the organization.

**Main Motion:** A motion proposed while no other *questions* are before the assembly.

**Question:** Another term to describe *motions* which are before the assembly. A motion can be called a question after it has been restated to the assembly by the *Chair*.

**Presiding Officer:** The member who conducts the meeting and sees that the rules are observed. This member is also referred to as the *Chair* or *Chairman*.

**Chair, Chairman:** Other terms to describe or address the *Presiding Officer*.

IN ORDER TO:	MOTION TO USE:
Introduce new business	Main Motion
Defer or Kill a proposal	Postpone indefinitely
Change or modify a proposal	Amend
Reduce study to a few members	Refer to Committee
Set a question aside to be considered at a later time	Postpone Definitely
Set the amount of time for consideration of a question	Limit, or Extend Limits of Debate
Stop the debate and put the question to a vote now	Call for the Previous Question
Put a question on hold while something else is considered	Lay on the Table
Insist that the pre-established order of business is followed	Call for the Orders of the Day
Ask a privileged question	Rise to a Question of Privilege
Take a break	Take a Recess
End the meeting	Adjourn (Unqualified)
Set a time to continue the meeting after current adjournment	Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn
Bring a motion back before the assembly for reconsideration	Take from the Table or Reconsider or Rescind
Prevent a vote from being final	Reconsider and Have Entered on the Minutes
Allow a deviation from the normal rules in order to consider a matter	Suspend the Rules
Stop a Motion before it is voted on	Withdraw a Motion
Have a paper read which is not included in the Orders of the Day	Read Papers
Suppress a question before it is debated	Object to Consideration
Have the assembly follow the Rules of Order	Rise to a Point of Order
Ask about an aspect of Parliamentary Procedure	Rise to a Parliamentary Inquiry
Object to a decision made by the chair and have the assembly decide it	Appeal from the Decision of the Chair
Have the assembly split into those favoring and those opposed to a question	Call for a Division of the Assembly
Have a question divided into parts so each can be considered separately	Call for a Division of a Question

## BEFORE YOU STAND FOR A MOTION:

- May you interrupt a speaker to present it?
- Will it require a second? Should you pre-arrange this?
- Do the rules allow it to be Debated? Amended?
- What vote percentage is required to carry it?
- May it be reconsidered?
- Is there a different motion which would better serve your purpose?
- Does it's rank or precedence allow it to be introduced at this point?

## “REGULAR” ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to Order
2. Reading and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
3. Treasurer’s Report
4. Reports of other Officers and Standing Committees
5. Reports of Special Committees (*Unfinished Business*)
6. (*other*) Unfinished Business
7. New Business
8. Program (*Training, Guest Speaker, Entertainment, etc.*)
9. Adjournment

## MECHANICS OF A MOTION

1. A Member signals for and receives recognition by the Chair.
2. The Member proposes a motion. (Lengthy motions must be presented both orally and in writing.)
3. Another Member, *without recognition*, Seconds the motion.
4. The Chair restates the motion to the assembly as originally proposed.<sup>1</sup>  
-----Motion becomes the property of the Assembly-----
5. Chair opens the floor for Debate:
  - a. Proposer has first right to speak on the question.
  - b. Alternate between favoring and opposing opinions.
  - c. Each member gets equal opportunity to speak.
  - d. Debate must be germane (*relevant to the issue*).
  - e. Debate continues until *completed*.<sup>2</sup>
6. Chair takes the Vote:
  - a. Chair defines how vote will be indicated (“*Aye*”-“*Nay*”; *Raising hands; Standing; Counted ballot; Secret ballot; White/black balls; Division of the Assembly; etc.*)
  - b. Neutrally state the call for both “yes” and “no” votes.
  - c. Call for “no” votes even when “yes” is obvious winner.
  - d. If the results are unclear, call for a countable indication.
  - e. Any member may require a “Division of the Assembly”.
7. Chair immediately states the Results:
  - a. “The ayes have it and the motion is adopted” or “The noes have it and the motion is lost.”
  - b. If the vote was counted, “There are \_\_\_ in favor and \_\_\_ opposed. The motion is (adopted) (defeated).”
  - c. If the motion carried, the Chair will announce the course of action to implement it. (“*The treasurer is authorized to write a check for \$ \_\_\_ and deliver it to the secretary so that he may purchase the \_\_\_.*”)

## TYPES OF MOTIONS:

**MAIN MOTION** brings a single proposal before the assembly for consideration.

**SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS** modify or dispose of the main Motion under consideration.

**PRIVILEGED MOTIONS** are not relevant to the Motion, but are of urgent importance to the assembly, and must be considered immediately.

**INCIDENTAL MOTIONS** relate to the pending business and are of such importance that they must be decided immediately.

*Unless otherwise noted, all Motions must first get recognition, do require a second, are debatable and pass with a majority vote.)*

### FOOTNOTES:

1. The chair may suggest wording changes which do not affect the intent or meaning of the motion. The proposer may, at this time, accept or reject the suggestions.
2. Completion may be determined by no more members seeking recognition, or forced by “*Call for the Previous Question*” motion which carries a 2/3 vote of the assembly.

## THE RANK AND ORDER OF MOTIONS

1. Only one **Main** Motion may be under consideration at any one time. Highest precedence motions are considered first.
2. Main, Subsidiary and Privileged Motions are numbered and arranged in their order of precedence. The higher the number, the higher its priority of action.
3. Incidental motions and motions which “regurgitate” motions previously adopted have no order of precedence. They are proposed as circumstances make them appropriate. They always yield to Privileged Motions which are in order at the time.

## CHART OF PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS

*Unless otherwise noted, all Motions must first gain recognition, do require a second, are debatable and pass with a majority vote.*

### LEGEND OF EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE:

- (LD) Limited Debate (*on the action only*)  
(ND) No Debate (*the question is absolute*)  
(IS) May Interrupt the Speaker (*recognition is not needed*)  
(NS) No Second is required before consideration  
(2/3) Requires 2/3rds vote for adoption (*limits rights*)  
(OM) Opens the Main Motion for debate

### PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

12. To fix time to Which to Adjourn . . . . . (LD)
11. To Adjourn (unqualified) . . . . . (ND)
10. To Take a Recess . . . . . (LD)
9. To Rise to a Question of Privilege . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND)
8. To Call for the Orders of the Day . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND)

### SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

7. To Lay On The Table . . . . . (ND)
6. To Call for the Previous Question . . . . . (ND) (2/3)
5. To Limit, or Extend the Limits of Debate . . . . . (LD) (2/3)
4. To Postpone Definitely . . . . . (LD)
3. To Refer to a Committee . . . . . (LD)
2. To Amend (*Strike Words; Add Words; Substitution; Fill Blanks*)
1. To Postpone Indefinitely . . . . . (OM)

### MAIN MOTIONS

#### A. General Main Motion

#### B. Specific Main Motions

- To Take from the Table . . . . . (ND)
- To Reconsider (*only by member who voted FOR*) . . (IS) (OM)
- To Reconsider and Have Entered On the Minutes . . (IS) (ND)
- To Rescind . . . . . (OM) (2/3)
- To Expunge . . . . . (OM) (2/3)
- To Adopt a Resolution
- To Adjourn (Qualified)
- To Create Orders of the Day . . . . . (2/3)
- To Amend (Constitution, Bylaws, etc.) . . . . . (2/3)

### INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

- To Rise to a Point of Order . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND)
- To Appeal From the Decision of the Chair . . . . . (IS) (LD)
- To Suspend the Rules . . . . . (ND) (2/3)
- To Object to Consideration . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND) (2/3)
- To Call for a Division of the Question . . . . . (ND)
- Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim . . . . . (ND)
- To Withdraw a Motion . . . . . (NS) (ND)
- To Read Papers . . . . . (ND)
- To Rise to a Parliamentary Inquiry . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND)
- To Call for a Division of the Assembly . . . . . (IS) (NS) (ND)
- To Rise to a Point of Information (*many possibilities-see book*)