

Robert's Rules of Order

Originally published in 1876, and authored by General Henry M. Robert, it is the classic guide to smooth, orderly, and fairly conducted meetings.

Basics

1. Before a member can make a motion, or address the assembly in debate, he or she should obtain the floor -- that is, she or he must rise after the floor has been yielded, and address the presiding officer. Member should state his or her name before speaking.
2. A motion is a proposal that the assembly take certain action, or that it express itself as holding certain views. It is made by a member's obtaining the floor and saying, "I move that" (which is equivalent to saying, "I propose that"), and then stating the action he or she proposes to have taken.
3. Once a motion is made by a member who has obtained the floor; it must be seconded (with certain exceptions); and then re-stated by the chair or presiding officer.
4. The motion is then discussed by the membership in preparation for voting.
5. Voting: Today we are going to vote by a show of hands. **ONLY COOPERATIVE MEMBERS MAY VOTE.** A majority of the votes cast is sufficient for the adoption of any motion that is in order, except those which require a two-thirds vote.
6. It is a general rule that no one can vote on a question in which he has a direct personal or pecuniary interest.
7. When there is evidently no opposition, the formality of voting can be avoided by the chair asking if there is any objection to the proposed action, and if there is none, announcing the result. The action thus taken is said to be done by general consent, or unanimous or silent consent.
8. A voting member may call the "previous question" to end debate and take a vote by obtaining the floor and making the motion, "I move the previous question" and the body then votes on whether to close debate and take a vote. The object of the previous question is to bring the assembly at once to a vote on the immediately pending question and on such other pending questions as may be specified in the demand.