

## PARLIAMENTARIAN MOMENT

Today, Robert's Rules of Order is adopted by more organizations than any other governing process or procedure. While originally an American creation, Robert's Rules of Order has influenced parliamentary procedure worldwide and is used by various organizations, including governmental bodies, nonprofits, and homeowner associations.

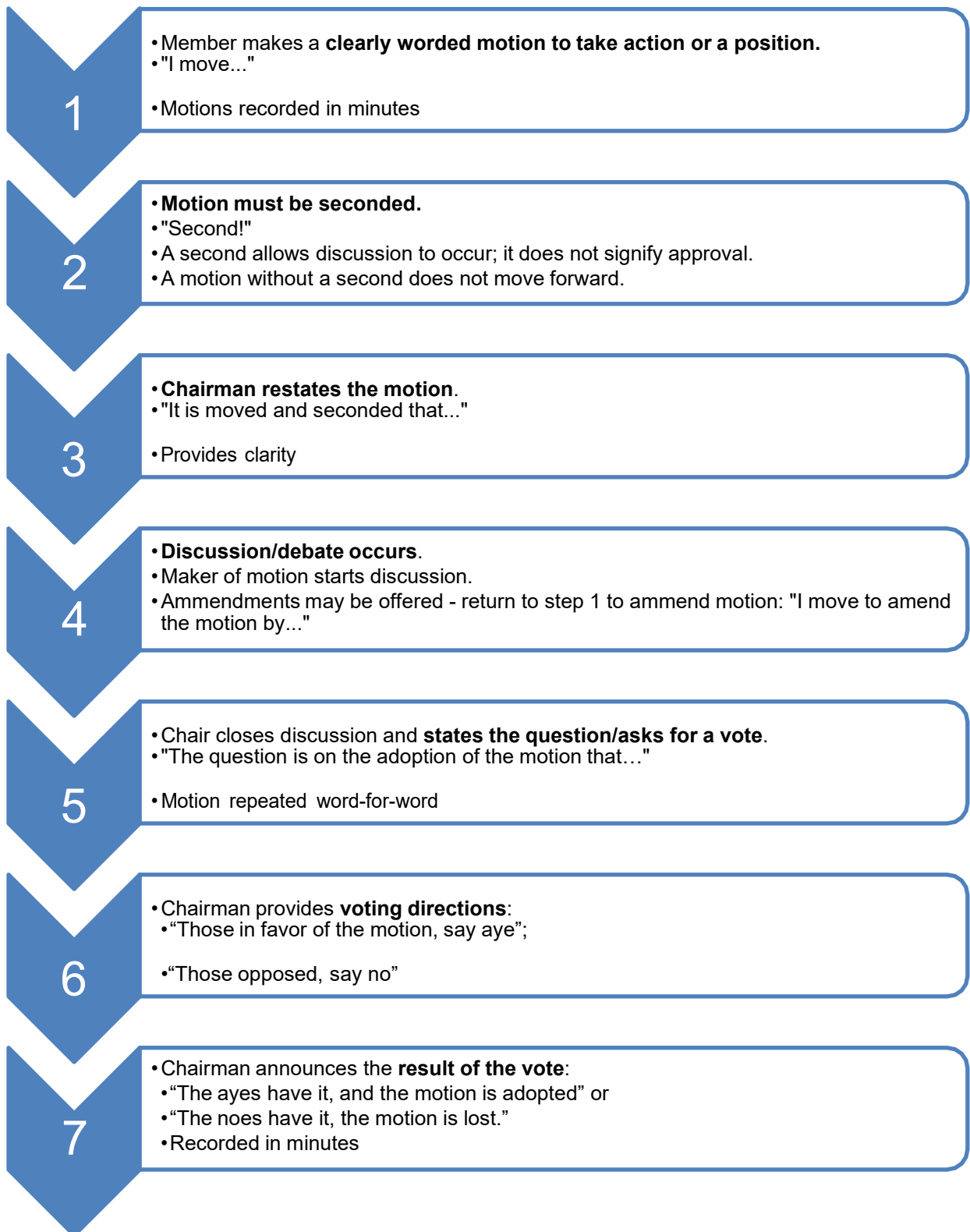
Almost 150 years ago, Robert's Rules of Order was first published by U.S. Army officer Henry Martyn Robert. This first edition spanned 176 pages and was intended to be a brief and simple guide for the average meeting-goer.

However, after its publication, Captain Robert received numerous letters from readers inquiring about situations not specifically addressed in the first edition. This type of correspondence led to the publication of more robust editions. The current 12<sup>th</sup> edition has 816 pages.

Wow, this is a long way from simple meeting formats! As your Parliamentarian, I can tell you honestly I don't know what is in all of those 800+ pages. We try to keep our Assembly meetings simple. I like to think of them as Bob's Rules of Order. We use them to prevent our meetings from going off-topic, maintain decorum, and protect the rights of both the majority and minority.

The rules are not one-size-fits-all. They can be adapted to fit the needs of different types of meetings, whether large or small. Rules aren't one-size-fits all. Problems are common when large meetings behave too informally, or small meetings behave too formally. Rules should be like clothes—they should fit the organization they are meant to serve.

Most parliamentary manuals provide that board meetings and membership meetings are conducted differently. Large meetings must be fairly formal. However, formality can hinder business in smaller bodies. As a result, *Robert's* recommends less formal rules for small boards and committees.



## Roberts Rules of Order – Simplified

### Guiding Principle:

Everyone has the right to participate in discussion if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time.

Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.

Only one thing (motion) can be discussed at a time.

A **motion** is the topic under discussion (e.g., “I move that we add a coffee break to this meeting”). After being recognized by the Chair, any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table. A motion requires a second to be considered. Each motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely).

### How to do things:

#### You want to bring up a new idea before the group.

After recognition by the Chair, present your motion. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for discussion, or consideration.

#### You want to change some of the wording in a motion under discussion.

After recognition by the Chair, move to amend by

- adding words,
- striking words or
- striking and inserting words.

#### You like the idea of a motion being discussed, but you need to reword it beyond simple word changes.

Move to substitute your motion for the original motion. If it is seconded, discussion will continue on both motions and eventually the body will vote on which motion they prefer.

#### You want more study and/or investigation given to the idea being discussed.

Move to refer to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee.

#### You want more time personally to study the proposal being discussed.

Move to postpone to a definite time or date.

#### You are tired of the current discussion.

Move to limit debate to a set period of time or to a set number of speakers. Requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote.

#### You have heard enough discussion.

Move to close the debate. Requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote. Or move to previous question. This cuts off discussion and brings the assembly to a vote on the pending question only. Requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote.

You want to postpone a motion until some later time.

Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.

You believe the discussion has drifted away from the agenda and want to bring it back.

Call for orders of the day.

You want to take a short break.

Move to recess for a set period of time.

You want to end the meeting.

Move to adjourn.

You are unsure that the Chair has announced the results of a vote correctly.

Without being recognized, call for a "division of the house." At this point a roll call vote will be taken.

You are confused about a procedure being used and want clarification.

Without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The Chair will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

You have changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side.

Move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

You want to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.

Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote is required.

You may INTERRUPT a speaker for these reasons only:

- to get information about business – **point of information**
- to get information about rules – **parliamentary inquiry**
- if you can't hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. – **question of privilege**
- if you see a breach of the rules – **point of order**
- if you disagree with the Chair's ruling – **appeal**

<b>Quick Reference</b>					
	<b>Must Be Seconded</b>	<b>Open for Discussion</b>	<b>Can be Amended</b>	<b>Vote Count Required to Pass</b>	<b>May Be Reconsidered or Rescinded</b>
Main Motion	√	√	√	Majority	√
Amend Motion	√	√		Majority	√
Kill a Motion	√			Majority	√
Limit Debate	√		√	2/3 <sup>rds</sup>	√
Close Discussion	√			2/3 <sup>rds</sup>	√
Recess	√		√	Majority	
Adjourn (End meeting)	√			Majority	
Refer to Committee	√	√	√	Majority	√
Postpone to a later time	√	√	√	Majority	√
Table	√			Majority	
Postpone Indefinitely	√	√	√	Majority	√