

Robert's Rules of Order

Role of meeting chair (in our case, the president)

1. Calling the meeting to order on time
2. Announcing the business before the group in the order noted on the agenda
3. Determining the presence of a quorum
4. Recognizing members who want to speak
5. Processing all motions
6. Expediting business
7. Ruling on points of order
8. Conducting the meeting in a fair and equitable manner

Notes:

- The goal of following Robert's Rules is to protect the rights of the minority, ensure legality and expedite business.
- Chair should remain neutral, not making motions and not debating. If chair participates in the debate, he or she should relinquish the chair's position until after the vote.
- When the meeting strays from the business item being addressed, the chair needs to bring the focus back to the specific motion, even if it means interrupting a speaker.

Making a motion is a six-step process:

1. Member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the motion, formally putting it before the group.
4. The members discuss the motion.
5. The chair puts the question to a vote.
6. The chair announces the results of the vote.

Debates and decorum

- After a motion is made, the floor is open for debate.
- The person making the motion has the right to speak first.
- Each speaker needs to be recognized by the meeting chair.
- Ideally, speakers should alternate between those in favor of a motion and those opposed.
- Each speaker is given a specific time limit to present his or her argument, usually 10 minutes. {Our meetings typically don't have the luxury of time, so this may be too long.}
- A longer time can be given, if approved by a two-thirds vote.
- A person who hasn't spoken out yet gets precedence over people who have already spoken to the motion.
- No speaker can speak more than two times.
- Maker of the motion (or the chair) calls for closure of the debate after everyone who wishes to speak has been heard. If someone calls the question before that, the group must vote on whether to end debate (no discussion). A two-thirds vote is required to end a debate.
- To keep the discussion focused on the motion, avoid discussing personalities of the people involved, questioning the motives of other members, making derogatory remarks, including name calling.