

The Tau Beta Pi Association

Robert's Rules of Order

Professional Development Session

INTRODUCTION

The first edition of Robert's Rules of Order was published in 1876. Today's most widely used parliamentary authority in the United States is named after General Henry M. Robert (1837-1923), a U.S. Army Engineer. The current version (and official parliamentary authority for Tau Beta Pi) is Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition.

Robert's Rules provide a standard set of parliamentary procedures and laws that when used correctly, result in meetings that are effective and fair. Robert's Rules is appropriate for groups of any size. A **deliberative assembly** is the body of people to which parliamentary procedure applies. An assembly of delegates is known as a **convention**. The **meeting** is the event where business is conducted by the assembly. A **session** is one or more meetings which make up a complete unit of business (e.g. business meetings of a convention).

The purpose of this document is to give a basic understanding of your rights as a delegate, and to give you the information and tools you will need to conduct business for Tau Beta Pi.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Under Robert's Rules, the rights of the majority, the minority, individuals, absentees, and all of the above together are highly regarded.

Rights of the Majority. The will of the assembly is decided by the **majority** ("more than half"). Most matters are resolved by a majority vote.

Rights of the Minority. The minority has the right to full and free discussion. Only two-thirds or more of those present and voting can deny this right.

Individual Rights. Members' basic rights include the right to attend fair and timely meetings, introduce business items, debate, and vote. Members may also question the results of a vote, appeal, point out violations of the rules, and ask questions related to procedure and pending business.

Absentee Rights. A minimum number of members, a **quorum**, must be present before the assembly can conduct valid business transactions. Business transactions are recorded so that absentees know what happened at the meeting.

All of the Above. By adhering to Robert's Rules, the assembly maintains the greatest amount of freedom and self-governance, while preserving the rights of all.

OFFICERS

The Chair. The presiding officer, also known as **the chair**, follows the meeting's order of business, enforces the rules, responds to inquiries, makes rulings, and protects the assembly's fundamental rights. The chair generally will not vote or participate in debate in order to remain impartial. The chair is impersonal, referring to himself/herself as "the chair" during the proceedings.

Secretary. The **secretary** keeps the **minutes**, which are the official record of what was done at the meeting. The secretary reads the minutes from the previous meeting when part of the order of business.

Parliamentarian. The **parliamentarian** is an impartial consultant who serves a purely advisory role on matters of parliamentary procedure.

BASICS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

The meeting begins with the chair's call to order. The chair follows an **agenda** which lists the proper order of business.

In general, a member must first seek recognition by the chair before being allowed to speak. Only one member may speak at a time. All remarks are made to/through the chair.

A **motion** is a formal proposal by a member that the assembly take certain action. Motions shall not violate federal/state/local laws, an organization's corporate charter/constitution/bylaws, or the rules of order. Most motions require a **second** from another member, meaning the member agrees that the motion should be considered. Discussion is not allowed unless a motion is pending. A pending motion is also referred to as a **question**. Only one question can be considered at a time.

Main Motion. A **main motion** is the most basic form of motion and brings business before the assembly. To make a main motion, use the form "I move to... / I move that..." After a second, the chair states the main motion and opens debate. After debate the chair puts the question to a vote.

Basic Rules of Debate.

- For each debatable motion, members are limited to a certain number of speeches and time for each speech.
- Members must first be recognized by the chair before participating in debate. The maker of the motion gets the right to debate first.
- Stick to the subject, otherwise the chair will rule the remarks out of order.
- Debate the issues and not personalities. Avoid referring to other members by name (use their title, e.g. "the delegate from ___") and do not personally attack them.

Voting. When putting a motion to a vote, the chair chooses a voting method based on the type of vote required. The assembly may also order the voting method.

- Voice vote – if the motion calls for a majority vote, the chair will say, "... those in favor of the motion, say aye. Those opposed, say no," after which the chair announces the result.
- Rising vote – if the results of a voice vote may be unclear, the chair will say, "... those in favor of the motion will rise (Pause). Be seated. Those opposed will rise (Pause). Be seated."
- Counted vote – the votes are counted with the actual number of votes in favor/opposed recorded.
- Ballot vote – used if the assembly wishes to vote secretly
- Results – if there are enough required votes in the affirmative, the motion is adopted/carries/passes. If not, the motion is lost/is defeated/fails.

Secondary Motions. **Secondary motions** can be in order while other motion(s) are pending, depending on which motion is made. All secondary motions must be disposed of before the main motion. A partial list of secondary motions are included in this section.

- **Fix the time to which to adjourn** – sets an adjourned meeting
 - "I move that when this meeting adjourns, it adjourn to meet at..."
- **Adjourn** – ends the meeting
 - "I move to adjourn."
- **Recess** – orders an intermission without closing the meeting
 - "I move to recess for [x]."
- **Raise a question of privilege** – raise a question affecting the privileges of the assembly or personal privilege. Relates to comfort, noise, environment etc.

- “I rise to a question of privilege affecting the assembly.”
 - “I rise to a question of personal privilege.”
- **Call for the orders of the day** – orders the assembly to follow the agenda
 - “I call for the orders of the day.”
- **Lay on the table** – puts the question aside temporarily so that a more urgent matter can be taken up. It is out of order to use lay on the table to kill a motion.
 - “I move to lay the pending questions on the table.”
- **Previous question** – closes debate (if adopted).
 - “I move the previous question.”
- **Limit or extend limits of debate** – changes number/length of speeches, places time limits on debate
 - “I move that debate be limited to...”
- **Postpone to a certain time (or Postpone definitely)** – takes up the matter later on in the meeting or during the next meeting
 - “I move to postpone the main motion to the next meeting.”
- **Commit (or Refer)** – orders a committee to consider the motion and report recommendations back to the assembly
 - “I move to refer the pending questions to the [name of committee]...”
- **Amend** - proposes a change to the wording of a motion by adding, inserting, striking out, or striking out and inserting. Amendments must be **germane** (relevant to what it seeks to amend). Amendments can be amended, but only two amendments can be pending at a time. The amended motion still requires its own vote for adoption.
 - “I move to amend by striking out ‘X’ and inserting ‘Y’.”
 - “I move to insert [something] in front of [something else].”
 - “I move to add [some wording].”
- **Postpone indefinitely** – kills a main motion without a direct vote on it
 - “I move to postpone the main motion indefinitely.”
- **Appeal** – disagree with the chair’s ruling
 - “I appeal from the decision of the chair.”
- **Consider by paragraph or seriatim** – considers each paragraph separately
 - “I move to consider the resolution by paragraph.”
- **Division of the assembly** – order a rising vote
 - “Division!”
- **Division of a question** – divides a motion containing several parts into separate questions, if each part can stand on its own
 - “I move to divide the question by...”
- **Request for information (or Point of information)** – ask a question relevant to the business at hand which is not a parliamentary question
 - “A point of information, please.”
- **Parliamentary inquiry** – ask the chair a question about parliamentary procedure
 - “A parliamentary inquiry, please.”
- **Point of order** – point out a breach in the rules
 - “Point of order!”
- **Suspend the rules** – suspend rules that interfere with the proposed action
 - “I move to suspend the rules which interfere with...”
- **Objection to consideration of a question** – prevent a controversial subject from being considered
 - “I object to consideration of the question.”
- **Reconsider** – bring back a matter that was already voted on. Must be moved by a member of the prevailing side.
 - “I move to reconsider the motion pertaining to [state motion].”
- **Take from the table** – bring back a motion for consideration that was previously laid on the table
 - “I move to take from the table the motion related to [state motion].”