



ASSOCIATED STUDENTS INC.

California State University, Los Angeles

ROBERT'S RULES: THE BASICS

Robert's Rules of Order were first published in 1876 and it is the most commonly used system of parliamentary procedure in North America. It exists to facilitate the decision making process at meetings. Robert's Rules of Order are used to ensure that the discussion is clear, and that the rights of the majority and the minority are protected. It is important to note that the rules are not meant to disrupt or uphold a meeting, and the rules may be suspended if a member is using them for those purposes.

Parliamentary rules are formalized good behavior, designed to provide full and free discussion, and to enable the majority will to prevail while providing the minority a fair opportunity to become the majority. One question at a time must be considered, and the chair must keep members aware of the question before them. Members should address the chair. The maker of a motion is usually allowed to speak first. No speaker should be given the floor a second time while others await a first opportunity. When substantive debate occurs, the chair should endeavor to have a balance between the two sides of the debate.

Beginning at the Beginning

Agendas:

- Road maps for the Board, tells them where you are going to go.
- Road maps for the public, tells them what you are going to do.
- Conceived with your purpose(s) in mind; inform, problem solve, take action

Bylaws:

- Does yours tell you what to include in your agenda?
- Does yours tell you when to post your agenda?
- Does yours tell you when to post "action" agenda items?

Chair:

- Determines if there is a motion to be made
- "Recognizes" members wanting to make a motion
- Member "obtains the floor" and makes a motion
- The words move and offer also refer to this step.
- Another member seconds the motion (doesn't need to obtain the floor).
- The Chair states the question on the motion.
- Once the Chair has stated the question on the motion, the item is then "before the body" and is then open to debate or discussion.



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Motions:

- Motions should be well thought out before being introduced! Why? Because until the chair states the question, the maker has the right to modify as she/he pleases or to withdraw it completely. After the question has been stated by the Chair, the motion becomes the property of the Board and the maker can do neither of these things without unanimous consent of the Board or going through the amendment process.
- Motion is properly made only when the member has obtained the floor when no other question is pending and when business of the matter represented by the motion is in order.
- A motion that proposes action outside the scope of the organization's rights as defined in the bylaws is out of order.
- Without a "second" a motion dies on the floor. A second only indicates that the sender agrees that the motion should come before the committee, not that he/she necessarily agrees with the motion.
- Motions brought to the Board by a duly appointed or standing committee of the Board/organization, does not require a second from the floor.
- To modify the meaning of a motion, a subsidiary motion to amend is necessary after the question has been stated by the Chair. A majority vote adopts the amendment to the main motion.

More about the Process:

- Carrying out basic RR allows for amendments to be offered anytime during discussion once the member is recognized by the Chair.
- Amendments should be limited to minor changes or need clarifications and are subject to the acceptance of the maker of the motion.
- The member making the motion has the right to speak first in debate and the member making the second has the right to speak second in debate.
- Discussion/Debate is permitted only with reference to the pending motion.
- The Chair and/or parliamentarian should insure that peripheral items/information is excluded during debate.

Debate: How do you carry out the debate/discussion?

- The member making the motion has the right to speak first in debate and the member making the second has the right to speak second in debate.
- Discuss/Debate is permitted only with reference to the pending motion. The chair and/or parliamentarian should insure that peripheral items/information is excluded during debate.
- Create a speakers list at the beginning of the debate process. This will speed things up.
- Limit speakers to three minutes max, and then cut them off at 3.01.
- Chair exhausts the speakers list and puts the question.
- What about objections?



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Notes:

- Each member has the right to speak twice on the same question on the same day, but cannot make a second speech on the same question so long as any member who has not spoken on that question desires the floor.
- Once speaking on the same question twice on the same day, a member has exhausted his/her right to debate that question for the day.
- Debate must be confined to the merits of the pending question. Address your remarks to the Chair, maintaining a courteous tone, and avoid introducing personal notes into debate.
- The Chair should not enter into discussion of the merits of pending questions and does not interfere with the person speaking unless that person violates Board rules.
- The Chair cannot close debate so long as any member who has not exhausted right to debate desires the floor, except by order of the assembly, which requires a 2/3 vote.

Voting: Chair calls for the affirmative vote.

Members Vote:

- By Voice: Appropriate for majority votes only. Voice votes often inconclusive.
- Show of Hands: Members raise their hand to show their position.
- Roll Call Vote: Any member may request a roll call vote in order to ensure that her/his position on the question will be duly noted in the minutes as part of the vote results. Roll call conducted, individual voice votes.

Declaration of Result:

- Chair announces the results as per bylaw determination for majority or 2/3 rules on the item question.
- Chair gives the count before announcing the prevailing side.
- Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.
- Statement indicating the effect of the vote, or ordering its execution if appropriate.

Notes:

- In all manners of voting, a member has the right to change his/her vote up to the time the result is finally announced. After that, he/she can make the change only by unanimous permission of the Board.
- The Chair generally votes only to break or make a tie. Such votes either create a majority or delete a majority.
- The Chair generally votes only to break a tie or delete/create a 2/3 vote for adoption/loss.



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Applying Basic Principles of Robert's Rules of Order on a Sample Agenda

Associated Students, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, July 5, 2017
3:30-6:00 p.m.
U-SU Board Room 308AB

I. **Call to Order**—(Indicates when the meeting actually started).

The chair person calls the meeting to order with the following statement: “The meeting will now come to order at _____.” The chair states the time the meeting started (i.e. Call to Order at 3:30 pm).

II. **Roll Call**—(The Recording Secretary will read off the names of individuals who should be at the meeting).

The Recording Secretary should have a list of committee members that should be present at each meeting. In every meeting the Secretary should read off the committee members’ names to ensure that quorum is met and proper minutes are kept.

III. **Approval of Agenda**—(In this section the Chair will ask for a motion to approve the agenda—the topics that are to be discussed for the particular meeting).

The chairperson will ask if any of the members have any additional matters that should be placed on the agenda. After these have been taken care of, the chair person should call for a motion to adopt the agenda.

If any controversy should arise on whether to include or exclude a particular section of the agenda, then it should be made in the form of a motion.

Motion to amend the agenda requires a two-thirds majority.

IV. **Approval of Minutes**—(The Chair will ask for a motion to approve the minutes. The minutes should be a summary of discussion for the previous meeting).

The minutes should be handed out prior to the meeting. If not the minutes will have to be read at the meeting. A formal motion should be made to approve the minutes. A member



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should move “that the minutes of the (date) meeting be approved as printed.” If there are no changes a chair should say,

“There being no errors, I declare the minutes of the (date) meeting approved as printed.” IF there is a mistake in the minutes, the Recording Secretary should make the correction or addition. The motion will then read, “...approved as amended.”

V. **Open Forum**—Open Forum is a time for students and campus community members to speak to the Board of Directors regarding issues that need to be brought to that committee’s attention, or addressed by the appropriate representative of Associated Students, Inc. Please be advised that the Board of Directors is not allowed to take action upon these items in Open Forum. The proper procedure in order for the Board to take action on a particular item is to introduce the item in the Executive Committee, which are held the Tuesday’s on an off board meeting week. The Executive Committee would then decide whether to agendaize the item, as per Education Code: 8992, for the Board of Directors meeting.

VI. **Old Business**—(any business that was postponed from previous meetings or pending when the last meeting adjourned is called “old” or “unfinished” business).

It is advisable that the chairperson provides the members of a history of this business before discussion begins or he/she may call upon someone with special information to do so.

VII. **New Business**—(all new items for consideration)

When “old” business has been disposed of, the chairperson will say, “New business is now in order.”

VIII. **Reports**—Refer to your Bylaws and Codes and Procedures.

IX. **Adjournment**—(ending the meeting)

The motion to adjourn is a privileged motion that is neither amendable nor debatable. A second is required and the motion should be put. If it is passed, the chair should announce formally that the meeting is adjourned.



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Key Terms

Quorum:

A minimum number of members who must be present at the meeting before business can be legally transacted. Please refer to the Bylaws of your particular committee.

Motions: Main, Subsidiary, and Privileged

Main Motions:

Main motions are the basis of all parliamentary procedure and provide a method of bringing business before the assembly for consideration and action. A main motion ranks lowest in the order of precedence. When the main motion has been stated by one member, seconded by another member, and repeated for the meeting by the chair, the meeting cannot consider any other business until the motion has been disposed of, or until some other motion of higher precedence has been proposed, seconded and accepted by the chair. Once the motion has been seconded, it becomes property of the meeting; the mover and the seconder cannot withdraw the motion unless the meeting agrees. The chair can ask if the meeting objects to the motion being withdrawn. If no one objects the chair will announce: "the motion is withdrawn."

Subsidiary Motions:

Subsidiary motions are those that may be applied to another motion for the purpose of modifying it, delaying action on it, or disposing of it. Incidental motions must be dealt with immediately.

1. **Postpone indefinitely:** This motion is not to postpone, but to suppress or kill a pending main motion. Such a motion can be made at any time except when a speaker has the floor. If passed, the motion kills the matter under consideration. It requires a seconder, and it may be debated.
2. **Amend:** An amendment is a motion to change, to add words to, or to omit words from, an original motion. The change is usually to clarify or improve the wording of the original motion and must, of course, be related to the original motion. An amendment cannot interrupt another speaker, it must be seconded, and it is debatable. The chairperson should allow full discussion of the amendment, being careful to restrict debate to the amendment and not the original motion, and should then have a vote taken on the amendment only, making sure the members know they are voting on the amendment, not the original motion. If the amendment carries new discussion is created on the new motion. New amendments may be proposed, provided that they do not alter or nullify the amendments already passed. Finally the meeting will vote on the "motion amended" or if all amendments are defeated, on the original motion.



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3. **Refer:** When it is obvious that a meeting does not have enough information to make a wise decision, or when it seems advisable to have a small group work out the details, a member may move: "That the question be referred to the _____ committee." A motion to refer cannot interrupt another speaker; it must be seconded, and is debatable. The motion to refer can also be amended and requires a majority vote. If a motion to refer is passed, the committee to which the matter is referred should report on the question at a subsequent meeting. The motion may carry a timeline on reporting.
4. **Postpone to a Certain Time:** If a meeting prefers to consider a main motion in the same meeting or at a subsequent one, it can move to postpone a motion to a certain time, which is specified in the motion to postpone. Such a motion can be moved regardless of how much debate there has been on the motion it proposes to postpone. A motion may be postponed definitely to a specific time or until after some other items of business have been dealt with. If another item of business is being discussed at that time, the chairperson should present the postponed motion immediately after the other business has been concluded. A motion to postpone to a definite time may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded and is debatable. If the postponement is to a later time in the same meeting, the effect is to amend the agenda of that meeting and the motion therefore requires a two-thirds majority vote.
5. **Limit or Extend Limits of Debate:** A motion to limit debate changes the normal rules of debate. It could, for example limit the time of the whole debate, such as "I move that the debate on this motion be limited to 15 minutes," or it might limit the time taken by each speaker. A motion to limit or extend time of debate may not interrupt speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable and can be amended. Requires two-thirds majority vote.
6. **Previous Question:** This tactic is used to close debate on a question. It is usually made at a time when the debate has been long and repetitious. A member rises (or raises their hand) and says: "I move the previous question." Or A motion to put the previous question (that is, to vote immediately on the motion being debated) cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, and is not amendable. It requires a two-thirds majority vote. This requirement is important in protecting the democratic process. Without it, a momentary majority of only one vote could deny to the other members all opportunity to discuss any measure the "majority" wanted to adopt or to defeat. If the motion to put the question passes, the chair immediately proceeds to call a vote on the question that was being debated. If the motion is defeated, debate on the motion before the meeting continues as if there had been no interruption. The motion to put the previous question is the only proper method of securing an immediate vote. Members who call, "Question!" in an attempt to get the chairperson to call the question immediately should be ruled out of order. The only situation, in which members may properly call, "Question!" is in reply to the chairperson when he/she asks the meeting, "Are you ready for the question?"



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7. **Table:** Sometimes the meeting wants to lay a main motion aside temporarily without setting time for resuming its consideration but with the provision that the motion can be taken up again whenever the majority so decides. This is accomplished by a motion to table or to lay on the table. The effect of the motion to table is to prevent action from being taken on the main motion. Rather than pass or defeat a motion, a meeting will sometimes choose to “bury” it by tabling. A motion to table may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable and requires majority vote.

Privileged Motions:

Do not relate to the pending business, but have to do with special matters of immediate and overriding importance that, without debate, should be allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else. Privileged motions are such that, while having no relation to the pending question, are of such urgency, or importance that they are entitled to immediate consideration; relate to members, and to the organization, rather than to particular items of business. They take precedent over any Main Motion.

1. **Orders of the day:** Means the agenda or the order of the business. If the order of the business is not being followed, or if consideration of a question has been set for the present time and is therefore now in order, but the matter is not being taken up, a member may call for the orders of the day, and can thereby require the order of business be followed, unless the meeting decides by a two-thirds vote to set the orders of the day aside. Such a motion can interrupt another speaker, does not require a seconder, is not debatable and is not amendable. If the chair admits that the agenda has been violated and returns to the correct order no vote is required.
2. **Question or Point of Privilege:** If a situation is affecting the comfort, convenience, integrity, rights or privileges of a meeting or of an individual member (for example: noise, inadequate ventilation, introduction or a confidential subject in the presence of guests, etc.), a member can raise a point of privilege, which permits him/her to interrupt pending business to make an urgent statement, request or motion. If a motion is made it must be seconded. A Point of Privilege may also be used to seek permission of the meeting to present a motion of an urgent nature.
3. **Recess:** A member can propose a short intermission in a meeting, even while business is pending, by moving to recess for a specified length of time. A motion to recess may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable and can be amended (for example, to change the length of the recess), and requires a majority vote.
4. **Adjourn:** A member can propose to close the meeting entirely by moving to adjourn. This motion can be made and the meeting can adjourn while business is pending, providing that the time for the next meeting is established by a rule of the association or has been set by the meeting. In



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such a case, unfinished business is carried over to the next meeting. The motion to adjourn may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable, and requires a majority vote. If the motion to adjourn has been made, but important matters remain for discussion, the chair may request that the motion to adjourn be withdrawn. It can be withdrawn only with consent of the meeting. It is important to note that a motion to adjourn terminates the meeting.

Incidental Motions:

These motions are incidental to the motions or matters out of which they arise. Because they arise incidentally out of the immediately pending business, they must be decided immediately, before business can proceed.

1. **Point of Order:** This motion permits a member to draw the chair's attention to what he/she believes to be an error in procedure or lack of decorum in debate. The member may say: "point of order" and the chair should recognize the member who will then state the point of order. The effect is to require the chair to make an immediate ruling on the question involved. The point of order can interrupt another speaker, does not require a seconder, is not debatable and is not amendable.
2. **Voting Methods:** A member can move that a vote be taken by roll call, raising hands, or ballot. Such a motion may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is amendable and requires majority vote.
3. **Request and Inquiries:** A member can ask for clarification or to withdraw or modify a motion
 1. **Point of information:** A question about the facts affecting the business at hand is directed to the chair or through the chair to another member.
 2. **Request to Withdraw or Modify a Motion:** Until the chair has accepted the motion, the motion remains the property of the mover, who can withdraw it or modify it as he/she chooses. Once the motion is property of the meeting, a member may withdraw or modify the motion with the consent of the meeting. A majority vote is required to withdraw or modify a motion.

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