

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Parliamentary procedure *is* utilized in group meetings. The group may consist of as few as two persons to upwards of hundreds or thousands of persons. No matter the size of the group, parliamentary procedure is the best means of controlling discussion in order that all may have a fair opportunity to express their positions.

The first step in the order of business at a group meeting is the call to order. The chairperson calls the meeting to order by saying, "The meeting will please come to order." (Some organizations have an invocation, which would immediately follow the call to order.) A roll call, conducted to establish the presence of a quorum, is optional with each organization.

The second step in the order of business is the reading and approval of the minutes. The chairperson will say, "The secretary will please read the minutes of the last meeting." If a member finds fault with the minutes, he/she may correct them by addressing the chair and stating his objections. If the members agree that the minutes are a true account of the last meeting, the secretary will write the word "approved" at the end of the minutes along with the date and his/her signature.

The third step in the order of business consists of the reports of officers.

The fourth step in the order of business consists of the reports of standing and special committees.

The fifth step in the order of business is unfinished business.

The sixth step in the order of business is new business.

The seventh step in the order of business is announcements. This step takes place after all of the new motions have been disposed of under the sixth step at which time the floor is open for any member to make an announcement concerning any matter.

The eighth and final step in the order of business is adjournment. Many organizations have a fixed time for ending their meeting. If the time for adjournment has arrived, a motion to extend the time of the meeting is appropriate.

Making A Motion

Proposed action from a member of the group is called a "motion". A motion that proposes some new action is sometimes called an "original main motion."

The first step in gaining the right to speak in a business meeting is to address the chairperson. A member addresses the chair by saying, "Mr. Chairman" or "Madam Chairman." When the chairperson has heard this, or the member has been "recognized," he/she knows that a member wishes to speak. Upon being recognized, a member has the floor or the right to speak.

The proper way to state a main motion is to introduce it with the three words, "I move that..."

After a main motion has been made, a second is required to show that one other member approves of having the matter considered. It is not necessary to gain recognition in order to second a motion nor does a second to a main motion necessarily indicate approval of the motion itself. A person seconds a motion by simply saying, "I second the motion."

After the main motion has been seconded, the chairperson will open the floor for debate on the motion. Besides being used for argument about the main motion, the debate period can also be used for amending the motion, which is a formal change or modification of a main motion.

The motion before the group at any one moment is sometimes called the Question. After the debating and amending period is over, the chairperson will ask the group if they are ready to vote "on the question." If the group is ready to vote, they will join in a general chorus of "Question." Upon receiving this approval, the chairperson will state the question (or motion) again, before the vote is taken. The chairperson will say, "The question (or motion) is..."

There are two other commonly used ways to close or end debate. A member may move the previous question, or a member may simply call the question. Both of these are motions and, as such, require a second. They also require a two-thirds majority for passage. There is no debate on either of these motions. A defeated motion returns debate to the floor. Note: During periods of inactive discussion, a member might simply call out "question." To this the chair responds, "The question has been called for. If there is no further discussion, we shall vote." A simple "call for the question," however, is not forcing: and as long as there are members who wish to speak, the chair is obliged to keep the motion open to debate. Only a motion to close debate properly made, seconded, and passed by a majority of two-thirds should force the organization to terminate discussion.