

606 SOME ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

INTRODUCTION OF BUSINESS

All business should be brought before the group by a motion of a member, or by the presentation of a communication to the group. It is not unusual, however, to make a motion to receive the reports of committees or communications to the group; and in many other cases in the ordinary routine of business, the formality of a motion is dispensed with; but should any member object, a regular motion becomes necessary.

Before a member can make a motion or address the group upon any question, it is necessary that he obtain the floor; that is he must rise and address the presiding officer by his title, thus: "Mr. Chairman," who then announces the member's name. When two or more rise at the same time, the chairman must decide who is entitled to the floor, which he does by announcing that member's name. In making his decision he should be guided by the following principles:

1. The member upon whose motion the subject under discussion was brought before the group (or, in case of a committee's report, the one who presented the report), is entitled to be recognized as having the floor (if he has not already had it during that discussion) notwithstanding another member may have first risen and addressed the chair.
2. No member who has once had the floor is again entitled to it while the same question is before the assembly, provided the floor is claimed by one who has not spoken to the question.
3. As the interests of the group are best subserved by allowing the floor to alternate between those for and those against a point, the chairman, when he knows which side of a question is taken by each claimant of the floor, and their claim is not determined by the above principles, should give the preference to the one opposed to the last speaker.

After the floor has been assigned to a member, he cannot interrupt by calls for the question (It is a plain breach of order when a member has the floor for any one to call for the question or an adjournment; and the chairman should protect the speaker in his right to address the group), or by a motion to adjourn, or for any purpose, by either the chairman or any member, except (a) to have entered on the minutes a motion to reconsider; (b) by a question of order; (c) by an objection to the consideration of the question; (d) by a call for the orders of the day; or (e) by a question of privilege that requires immediate action.

In such cases the member, when he rises and addresses the chair, should state at once for what purpose he rises, as, for instance, that he "rises to a point of order."

NOTE ON OBTAINING THE FLOOR

The chair should not recognize a member who has risen and remained standing while another member is speaking, provided anyone else rises after the speaker has yielded the floor.

When a member obtains the floor and makes a debatable motion that is in order, if it is not immediately seconded, the chair should inquire if the motion is seconded (which can be done by any member, without rising or addressing the chair, simply saying, "I second it"), and the maker of the motion should then be regarded as having the refusal of the floor in preference to all other members. No motion made after his should be recognized until the chair has given ample time for members to respond to the invitation for a second, and if the motion is seconded, until after the maker of the motion, has had an opportunity to claim the floor. Motions to adjourn and to lay on the table are frequently made by persons who do not have the floor, and after another motion has been made, and while the maker of the latter motion is entitled to the floor. The chair should not recognize such motions.

A member submitting a report of a committee, or offering a resolution, does not lose the floor by requesting the Secretary to read the report or resolution, and the Secretary has not obtained the floor thereby, nor can the chair entertain a motion made by him, unless the member expressly yields the floor for the motion. As soon as the reading is finished the member who submits the report resumes the floor and moves its adoption, when the chair, after stating the question, recognizes the gentleman as having the floor. Of course motions that are in order when another has the floor could interrupt the member at any time.

OPENING A SUBJECT TO DEBATE

Before any subject is open to debate it is necessary, first, that a motion be made by a member who has the floor; second, that it be seconded; and third, that it be stated by the presiding officer. When the motion is in writing it shall be handed to the chairman, and read before it is debated.

This does not prevent suggestions of alterations before the question is stated by the presiding officer. To the contrary, much time may be saved by such informal remarks; which, however, must never be allowed to run into debate. The member who offers the motion, until it has been stated by the presiding officer, can modify his motion, or even withdraw it entirely; after it is stated he can do neither without the consent of the group. When the mover modifies his motion, the one who seconded it can withdraw his second.

Exceptions - A call for the orders of the day, a question of order, or an objection to the consideration of the question does not have to be seconded; and many questions of routine are not seconded or even made; the presiding officer merely announcing that, if no objection is made, such will be considered the action of the assembly.

PRINCIPAL MOTIONS

All Principal Motions, Amendments, and Instructions to Committees, should be in writing, if required by the presiding officer. Although a question is complicated, and capable of being made into several questions, no one member (unless there is a special rule allowing it) can insist upon its being divided; his recourse is to move that the question be divided, specifying in his motion how it is to be divided. Anyone else can move as an amendment to this, the division of it differently.

Division of a Question

This is really an amendment, and subject to the same rules. Instead of moving a division of the question, the same result can usually be attained by moving some other form of an amendment. When the question is divided, each separate question must be a proper one for the group to act upon.

THE DEBATE

After a question has been stated by the presiding officer, it is in the possession of the group for debate; the mover cannot withdraw or modify it, if anyone objects, except by obtaining permission from the group, or by moving an amendment.

PRIVILEGED QUESTIONS

Privileged Questions, on account of their importance, take precedence over all other questions, and on account of this very privilege they are undebatable, except when relating to the rights of the group or its members, as otherwise they could be made use of to seriously interrupt business. They are as follows (being arranged in their order of precedence among themselves):

- To Fix the Time to which the Assembly Shall Adjourn, Adjourn
- Questions Relating to the Rights and Privileges of the Group or any of its Members.

MOTIONS AND THEIR ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

To fix the time to which the Assembly Shall Adjourn

This motion takes precedence over all others, and is in order even after the group has voted to adjourn, provided the chairman has not announced the result of the vote. If made when another question is before the group, it is undebatable; it can be amended by altering the time. If made when no other question is before the group, it stands as any other principal motion, and is debatable. The form of this motion is, "When this group adjourns, it adjourns to meet at such a time."

To adjourn

This motion (when unqualified) takes precedence of all others, except to "fix the time to which to adjourn," to which it yields. It is not debatable, it cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it; nor can a vote on it be reconsidered. If qualified in any way, it loses its privileged character, and stands as any other principal motion. The motion to adjourn can be repeated if there has been any intervening business, though it be simply progress in debate.

NOTE ON ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn cannot be made when another has the floor, nor after a question has been put and the assembly is engaged in voting, but it is in order after the vote has been taken and before it has been announced. In this latter case when the business is resumed, the vote should be announced.

No Appeal or Questions of Order should be entertained after the motion to adjourn has been made, unless the group refused to adjourn, and then they would be in order.

QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Questions of Privilege must not be confused with Privileged Questions ; the latter include the former, and several other questions. Disorder in the group, one member opening a window so as to cause a draft, endangering the health of others, charges made against the official character of a member, etc. are examples of questions of privilege.

Questions relating to the rights and privileges of the group, or any of its members, take precedence of all other questions, except the two preceding, to which they yield. If the question is one requiring immediate action it can interrupt a member's speech. When such a question is raised the chairman decides whether it is a question of privilege or not, from which decision an appeal can be taken by any two members.

It is not necessary that the group take final action upon the question of privilege when it is raised - it may be referred to a committee, or laid on the table, or it may have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. As soon as the latter is disposed of, the assembly resumes the consideration of the question which it interrupted.

WITHDRAWAL OF A MOTION

When a question is before the group and the mover wishes to withdraw or modify it, or substitute a different one in its place, if no one objects, the presiding officer grants the permission; if any objection is made, it will be necessary to obtain permission of the group to withdraw, etc. on a motion for that purpose.

SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

This motion is not debatable, and cannot be amended, nor can any subsidiary motion be applied to it, nor a vote on it be reconsidered nor a motion to suspend the rule for the same purpose be renewed at the same meeting, though it may be renewed after an adjournment, though the next meeting be held the same day.

The rules of the assembly shall not be suspended except for a definite purpose, and by a two-thirds vote; nor shall any rule be suspended, unless by unanimous consent, that gives any right to a minority as small as one-third.

The Form of this motion is, "to suspend the rules which interfere with," etc., specifying the object of the suspension.

SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

To Lay on the Table

This motion takes precedence of all other Subsidiary Questions, and yields to any Privileged or Incidental Question. It is not debatable, and cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it, nor can an affirmative vote on it be reconsidered. It removes the subject from consideration till the assembly vote to take it from the table.

Referring a Motion to a Committee.

The form of this motion is, " to refer the subject to a committee." When different committees are proposed they should be voted on in the following order: (1) committee of the whole, (2) a standing committee, and (3) a special (or select) committee. The number on a committee is usually decided without the formality of a motion, as in filling blanks: the chairman asks "Of how many shall the committee consist?" and a question is then put upon each number suggested, beginning with the smallest. The number and kind of the committee need not be decided till after it has been voted to refer the subject to a committee.

If the committee is a select one, and the motion does not include the method of appointing it, and there is no standing rule on the subject, the chairman inquires how the committee shall be appointed, and this is usually decided informally. Sometimes the chair "appoints," in which case he names the members of the committee and no vote is taken upon them; or the committee is "nominated" either by the chair or members of the assembly (no member nominating more than one except on general consent), and then they are all voted upon together, except where more nominations are made than the number of the committee, when they shall be voted upon singly.

Where a committee is one for action (a committee of arrangements for holding a public meeting, for example), it should generally be small, and no one placed upon it who is not favourable to the proposed action. But when the committee is for deliberation or investigation, it is of the utmost importance that all parties be represented on it, so that in committee the fullest discussion may take place, and thus diminish the chances of unpleasant debates in the assembly.

In ordinary assemblies, by judicious appointment of committees, debates upon delicate and troublesome questions can be mostly confined to the committees, which will contain the representative members of all parties.

TO AMEND

This motion takes precedence of nothing but the question which it is proposed to amend, and yields to any Privileged, Incidental, or Subsidiary Question, except to Indefinitely Postpone. It can be applied to all motions except those in the list at the end of this section, which cannot be amended. It can be amended itself, but this "amendment of an amendment" cannot be amended.

An amendment may be inconsistent with one already adopted, or may directly conflict with the spirit of the original motion, but it must have a direct bearing upon the subject of that motion. To illustrate: a motion for a vote of thanks could be amended by striking out "thanks" and inserting "censure"; or one condemning certain customs could be amended by adding other customs.

An amendment may be in any of the following forms:

- (a) To "add" or "insert" certain words or paragraphs.
- (b) To "strike out" certain words or paragraphs, and if this fails it does not preclude any other amendments than the identical one that has been rejected.
- (c) To "strike out certain words and insert others," which motion is indivisible, and if lost does not preclude another motion to strike out the same words and insert different ones.
- (d) To "substitute" another resolution or paragraph on the same subject for the one pending.
- (e) To "divide the question" into two or more questions as the mover specifies, so as to get a separate vote on any particular point or points.

If a paragraph is inserted it should be perfected by its friends previous to voting on it, as when once inserted it cannot be struck out or amended except by adding to it. The same is true in regard to words to be inserted in a resolution, as when once inserted they cannot be struck out, except by a motion to strike out the paragraph, or such a portion of it as shall make the question an entirely different one from that of inserting the particular words, The principle involved is, that when the group has voted that certain words shall form a part of a resolution, it is not in order to make another motion which involves exactly the same question as the one it has decided. The only way to bring it up again is to move a Reconsideration of the vote by which the words were inserted.

FILLING BLANKS are usually treated somewhat differently from other amendments, in that any number of members may propose, without a second, different numbers for filling the blank, and these are treated not as amendments of one another, but as independent propositions to be voted on successively, the smallest sum and longest time being put first.

Nominations are treated in a similar manner, so that a second nomination is not regarded as an amendment of the first, but as an independent motion to be voted on if the first fails to receive a majority vote. Any number of nominations can be made, the chairman announcing each name as he hears it, and they should be voted for in the order announced until one receives a vote sufficient for election, which is a majority unless the By-Laws prescribe a different number.

The numbers prefixed to paragraphs are only marginal indications, and should be corrected, if necessary, by the clerk, without any motion to amend.

An Amendment to Rules of Order, By-Laws or a Constitution shall require previous notice and a two-thirds vote for its adoption.

The following motions cannot be amended:

To Adjourn (when unqualified)

All Incidental Questions

To Lay on the Table

For the Previous Question

An Amendment of an Amendment

To Postpone Indefinitely

To Reconsider

NOTE ON AMENDMENTS

A resolution is amended by altering the words of the resolution; an amendment is amended by altering the words of the amendment, that is by altering the words to be inserted or stricken out. The form of the motion cannot be amended, that is, a motion to adopt a resolution cannot be amended so as to substitute a motion to reject the resolution, as this alters the form, not the words of the resolution; a motion to "strike out A" cannot be amended by adding "and insert B," so as to read, "strike out A and insert B," which is another form of amendment, and is not an alteration of "A"; a motion to "insert B before the word C" in a resolution cannot be amended by substituting another resolution for the one pending, thus changing the form of the amendment and not simply altering "B," a motion to "insert B before the word C" cannot be amended by adding "and D before the word E," because the only thing that can be altered in the pending amendment of is "B," the other words being those that are necessary to describe what it is proposed to do with "B."

If the pending amendment is to "insert A B C D before F." it is in order to apply any form of amendment to "A B C D," and no amendment is in order that is not confined to simply altering those words, "A B C D."

When a member desires to move an amendment that is not in order at the time but affects the pending question, he should state his intention of offering his amendment if the pending amendment is voted down. In this way those who favor his amendment will vote in the negative, and if they succeed in killing it, then the new amendment can be offered.

THE QUESTION

The form of putting a question upon which the vote has been ordered to be taken by yeas and nays is similar to the following: "As many as are in favor of the adoption of these resolution will, when their names are called, answer yes (or aye); those opposed will answer no."

MOTIONS REQUIRING MORE THAN A MAJORITY VOTE

The following motions shall require a two-thirds vote for their adoption, all others requiring a majority, as the right of discussion, and the right to have the rules enforced, should not be abridged by a mere majority:

To Amend the Rules (requires previous notice also)

To Suspend the Rules

To Make a Special Order

To Take up a Question out of its Proper Order

An Objection to the Consideration of a Question

To Extend the Limits of Debate

To Close or Limit Debate

The Previous Question

Note on Motions requiring more than a majority vote.

Every motion in this list has the effect to suspend or change some rule or custom of deliberative bodies.

Judging from their form, this would be true of only the first two, but a closer examination will show that the others have a similar effect.

