



Robert's Rules of Order – A Quick Guide to Motions and Voting

Motions are statements that describe a proposed action or decision. Although the formality of Robert's Rules can seem cumbersome, the process of making motions ensures that no decision is accepted without the opportunity for discussion and a vote.

Typically the motion making process progresses as follows:

A member of the group proposes a motion: "I move that..."

- Motions require that a second member of the group agrees to consider the proposal to ensure that the proposal is meaningful to more than one person.

A member of the group chooses to second: "I second" or "I second for discussion" if you want to be clear that you are not in support but want to entertain a conversation about the proposal.

- Without a second the motion will die.

Once the group has had a chance to speak in favor or against the motion, the Chairman will lead a vote.

Types of Motions

Main motion - A motion must be made and seconded to initiate discussion on an issue (a limited amount of discussion may be allowed at the discretion of the Chairman prior to a motion being made). Motions are projected onto a screen for all to see before being voted on.

Substitute motion - Used to propose an alternative action to the main motion. Up to one main and two substitute motions may be on the floor at one time. If a substitute motion passes, it does away with the prior motions. If it fails, the previous motion comes back up for consideration.

Friendly amendments - These are editorial changes that may be allowed if nobody objects. However, any member may object and deny such requests.

Call the question - A motion to end debate and vote on the motion at hand. If seconded and passed, the main motion is then voted on. If no second or fails, discussion continues. (The Chair can choose to end debate.)

Motion to table - Non-debatable. If seconded, discussion ends and must be voted on immediately. A subsequent motion to take from the table is required to reopen discussion.

Motion to reconsider - Can only be made by a member on the prevailing side of a previous vote. If seconded and passed, it rescinds the previous vote and brings the motion back for discussion.

Methods of Voting

- **Adopt by consensus:** If there is no opposition or only one or two opposed
- **Voice vote:** Ayes vs. nays
- **Show of hands:** Keep hands raised until Chair and staff have completed counting
- **Roll call vote:** Only used if requested by a voting member
- **Secret ballot:** Only used to elect Chair and Vice-Chair