

New Jersey Future Business Leaders of America

# Parliamentary Procedure Guide



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# Table of Contents

<b>What is Parliamentary Procedure?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Basic Concepts</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>The Main Motion</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Secondary Motions</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Agenda: The Order of Business</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Sample Meeting Scenario</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Presiding Officer Tips</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Further Parliamentary Study</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Parliamentary Terms Defined</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## Note to the Reader:

I began studying parliamentary procedure during my freshman year of high school. I competed in Introduction to Parliamentary Procedure at the 2009 NJ State Leadership Conference, and I was humbled to receive second honors in that event. I had the chance to go on to compete nationally in Anaheim, California. Since then, I have been honored to become a state champion on FBLA Principles & Procedures. In March 2010, I was elected as New Jersey FBLA's State Parliamentarian. When I first began studying parliamentary procedure, I was beyond confused. I hope that this guide will be able to end confusion for anyone who is studying parliamentary procedure, or just sharpening up on their presiding officer skills.

-Evan Murphy

# What is Parliamentary Procedure?

*Parliamentary Procedure is a system of rules that are applicable to almost any type of meeting.*



The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to ensure meetings run smoothly. Through parliamentary procedure, the majority is allowed to rule while the rights of the minority remain protected. FBLA has adopted *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* as its official parliamentary authority.

Henry Martyn Robert, the author of FBLA's adopted parliamentary authority, was a general in the United States Army. He began researching parliamentary procedure after he was elected the chairman of a group. In the 19th century, there were only a few technical books available on the topic. Robert was inspired to create his manual after dealing with many frustrations resulting from the lack of information available. Making matters worse, the information that was available was conflicting. Today, *Robert's Rules of Order* is in its tenth edition.

# Basic Concepts

Only one thing can be discussed at any given time.

Although there is a system to put a motion aside for something more urgent, only one motion is allowed to be handled at any given time. For example, if a main motion is being debated and someone proposes an amendment, the debate should shift from the main motion to the merits of the amendment. Additionally, the same motion can not be made more than once in a single session.

A quorum must be present to conduct business.

A quorum is the minimum number of people that must be present at a meeting in order to conduct business properly. The rights of members who are absent from a meeting are protected. If a member chooses to abstain from voting, they are giving their consent to the decision made by the group.

Everybody is equal.

All voting members have equal rights. The majority rules but the minority has the right to be heard and is allowed to attempt to change the minds of the majority. Typically, an action that gives rights to the members requires a majority vote to pass while an action that takes away rights requires a two-thirds vote for adoption.

# The Main Motion

Main motions bring business before an assembly. They can be further subdivided into two categories: Original and Incidental.

Original main motions bring an entirely new subject before an assembly upon which action is desired.

An incidental main motion is a motion that is related to the business of an assembly, or its past or future action.

Handling a main motion involves the following six steps:

- 1) A member makes a motion.
- 2) Another member seconds the motion.
- 3) The chair states the motion, which formally places it before the assembly.
- 4) Members debate the motion.
- 5) The chair puts the motion to a vote.
- 6) The chair announces the result of the vote.



When making a motion, it is important that you agree with it, be precise, and use positive words to avoid confusion.

# Secondary Motions

Secondary motions are motions that can be made while a main motion is pending. There are three types of secondary motions.

Privileged motions do not relate to the main motion or pending business. Instead, they directly deal with the members and the organization. They typically have such urgency that they can interrupt the consideration of anything else. There are five privileged motions, an example being the motion to adjourn, which closes a meeting.

Privileged motions include:

- Fix the time to adjourn
- Adjourn
- Recess
- Question of privilege
- Call for the orders of the day

Subsidiary motions aid an assembly in treating or disposing of a main motion. They can only be made from the time a main motion has been made until the chair begins to take a vote. Seven motions are classified under this category, including the motion to amend, which can modify a pending motion before it is voted on.

Subsidiary motions include:

- Lay on the table
- Previous question
- Limit or extend limits of debate
- Postpone to a certain time
- Commit
- Amend
- Postpone indefinitely

Incidental motions relate to the conduct of a meeting rather than a main motion.

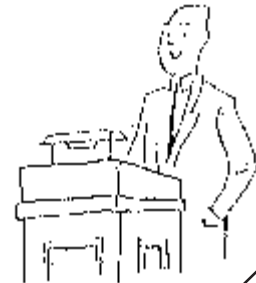
They may be offered at any time they are needed. An important incidental motion is a point of order. A member can call a point of order at any time they feel the rules are not being followed. The chair is required to make a ruling on all points of order.

# Agenda: The Order of Business

An agenda is a predetermined sequence of business to be covered at a specific meeting. Agendas are huge time-saving tools. The idea behind an agenda is to evaluate all business that needs to come up at a meeting and put each item in order of importance. Agendas should be prepared by the president or chairman of a group.

For FBLA's purposes, an agenda should follow the following order:

- I.** Call to order
- II.** Reading and approval of minutes
- III.** Reports of officers, boards, and committees
- IV.** Special orders
- V.** Unfinished business and general orders
- VI.** New Business
- VII.** Other - announcements, questions, etc.
- VIII.** Adjournment



If a meeting goes off-topic from an established agenda, a member has the right to call for the orders of the day, which is a privileged motion. This motion does not require a second and is not voted on. However, if a vote is taken in opposition to the motion and two-thirds oppose the call for the orders of the day, the agenda no longer has to be adhered to.

# Sample Meeting Scenario

Presiding Officer: Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes? Without objection, the minutes are approved as read. Is there any new business?

Member A: Mr. President!

Presiding Officer: Yes?

Member A: I move that our FBLA chapter hold a dodgeball tournament on April 1st for the benefit of the United Way.

Member B: Second!

Presiding Officer: The question before the meeting is whether or not our FBLA chapter should hold a dodgeball tournament on April 1st for the benefit of the United Way. Is there any discussion?

Member A: I believe that our chapter should conduct this event because many of our members need community service hours. Additionally, our chapter has worked with the United Way before and this event could strengthen our relationship with them.

Member B: I agree with the previous speaker, Mr. President. We could cover any costs of the event by charging admission and running a concession stand. All profits we make could go to the United Way.

Member C: I move to amend the motion by striking out United Way and inserting March of Dimes.

Member D: Second!

Presiding Officer: The question before the meeting is whether or not the motion on the floor should be amended by striking out the words United Way and inserting the words March of Dimes. Is there debate?

Member C: FBLA has had a partnership with the March of Dimes for several decades. I think our chapter has been neglecting this partnership and an event being held for the March of Dimes by our chapter is long overdue.

Presiding Officer: Is there any further discussion? The question before us is whether or not to strike the words United Way out of the motion and insert the words March of Dimes. All in favor, say aye.

Assorted Members: Aye!

Presiding Officer: All opposed, no.

Assorted Members: No!

Presiding Officer: The ayes have it, and the amendment is adopted. The question before the assembly is whether or not our FBLA chapter should conduct a dodgeball tournament on April 1st for the benefit of the March of Dimes. Is there any discussion?

Member D: Our chapter is attending a conference on April 1st, so I don't understand how this would work out.

Presiding Officer: Is there any further debate? All in favor of the motion, say aye.

Assorted Members: Aye!

Presiding Officer: All opposed, no,

Assorted Members: No!

Presiding Officer: The noes have it and the motion is not adopted. Our chapter will not have a dodgeball tournament on April 1st for the benefit of the March of Dimes.

# Presiding Officer Tips

*“Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.”*

-General Henry M. Robert

The qualities of a good presiding officer are based around credibility, neutrality, judgment, and fairness. Presiding officers are not allowed to enter debate. If they feel they must speak on an issue, they have to relinquish the chair. The same applies for voting; however, a presiding officer is allowed to vote in order to make or break a tie. A motion that has a tie vote does not get passed.

A presiding officer should share ownership of any given meeting. If members share in ownership of a meeting, they become responsible for running it. For example, members who feel that it is their meeting will be more likely to use peer pressure to help maintain decorum in the meeting. A presiding officer who does not share in ownership of the meeting will solely be held responsible for calling members to order. Additionally, presiding officers need to set the tone of respect for the members. FBLA did not become the premier student business organization in the world by not having members involved.

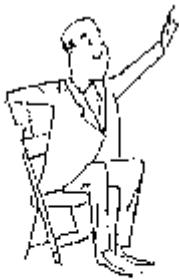
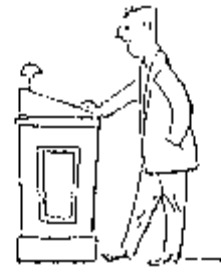
If you are a presiding officer who is running a meeting and can't remember what procedures to follow, ask yourself the following three questions:

- 1) What is the fairest thing to do in this situation?
- 2) What is the most logical answer to this problem? Keep in mind that *Robert's Rules of Order* is based off of logic.
- 3) What is the most efficient way of doing this? If you can accomplish something in two steps, don't take three!

## Further Parliamentary Study

If you're interested in studying parliamentary procedure further, you can visit the National Association of Parliamentarians' website at [www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org) and click on the NAP Online Store. The NAP Online Store offers a variety of study material for parliamentary procedure.

Also, check out the official *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* website at [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)



The National Association of Parliamentarians was organized in 1930 and now consists of nearly 4,000 parliamentarian members across North America. Over a decade ago, the NAP established a partnership with FBLA-PBL to assist with our organization's national parliamentary procedure competitions and to make the NAP's educational materials more easily available to students.

# Parliamentary Terms Defined

**Agenda:** an outlined plan of an entire business session; an order of business.

**Amend:** modify or change the wording of a motion before action is taken upon the motion itself.

**Assembly:** a body of people assembled for the transaction of business.

**Bylaws:** basic rules of a society which relate to itself as an organization.

**Chair:** the presiding officer; the place or station of the presiding officer.

**Ex Officio:** “from the office” or by virtue of the office or chairmanship. Bylaws frequently provide that the president shall be an ex-officio member of all committees except the nominating committee.

**Germane:** closely related; of the same subject matter. Example: an amendment must be germane to the motion to which it is applied.

**Meeting:** a single gathering of persons or members of an organization in one room or area (or, if authorized by the bylaws, a bringing together by videoconference or teleconference) for the purpose of transacting business. See *Session*.

**Minutes:** the record of the proceedings of an assembly. Sometimes referred to as the *journal*.

**Motion:** a formal proposal that certain action be taken, or that a certain statement express the sense, opinion, desire, or will of the assembly.

# Parliamentary Terms Defined

**Pending:** before the assembly. A motion is “pending” after it has been stated by the chair and until it is disposed of temporarily or permanently.

**Previous Notice:** announcement that a specific motion will be introduced at the next meeting; substance of the proposal should be described at least briefly; unless specified otherwise in the bylaws, must be made at the preceding meeting or included in the call of the meeting at which it is to be brought up.

**Question:** the business before the assembly; the motion as stated by the chair. See *Motion*.

**Quorum:** the number of members who must be present in order for business to be transacted legally. The quorum is a majority of all members unless the bylaws state otherwise.

**Recess:** an intermission taken by the assembly.

**Resolution:** a main motion usually of such importance and length as to be written; may or may not have a preamble setting forth the reasons for the resolution.

**RONR (10th ed.):** abbreviation of the current edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

**Session:** a meeting or series of meetings with a single order of business, agenda, or program.

**Vote:** a formal expression of the will, opinion, or preference of the members of an assembly in regard to a matter submitted to it.

**Yield:** give way to. A pending question yields to one of higher rank.