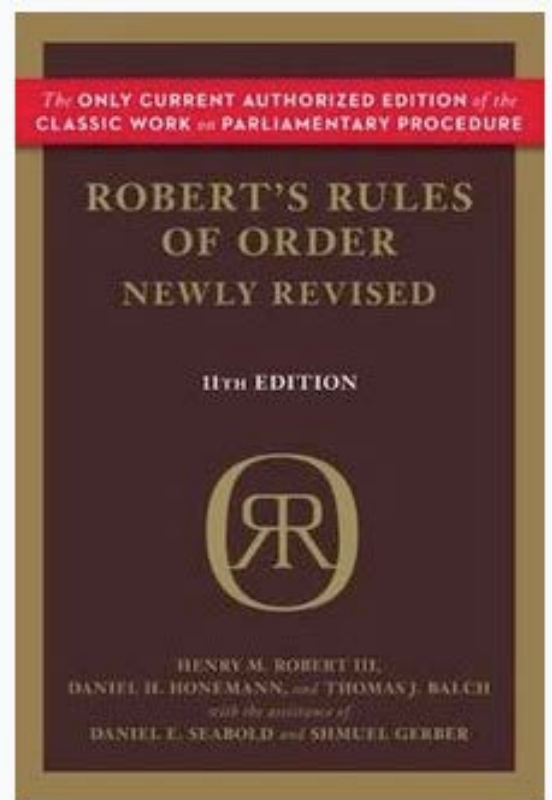




Basics of Robert's Rules of Order

Learning Objectives

- Learn the basics behind Robert's Rules of Order or "Robert's Rules" for short
- Understand how to use these rules to manage meetings



Cover of 2011 (11th) edition

Why do we need meeting rules at all?



GOALS

IT'S BEST TO AVOID STANDING DIRECTLY BETWEEN A COMPETITIVE JERK AND HIS GOALS.

Why do we need meeting rules?

- House of Commons rules in 1583:
 - One subject should be discussed at a time
 - Avoid personal attacks in the debate
 - Limit debate to merits of the question
 - Divide the question when some are for parts



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Origin of the “Rules”

- 1876 by U.S. Army officer Henry Martyn Robert
- Adapted the rules and practice of Congress to the needs of non-legislative societies

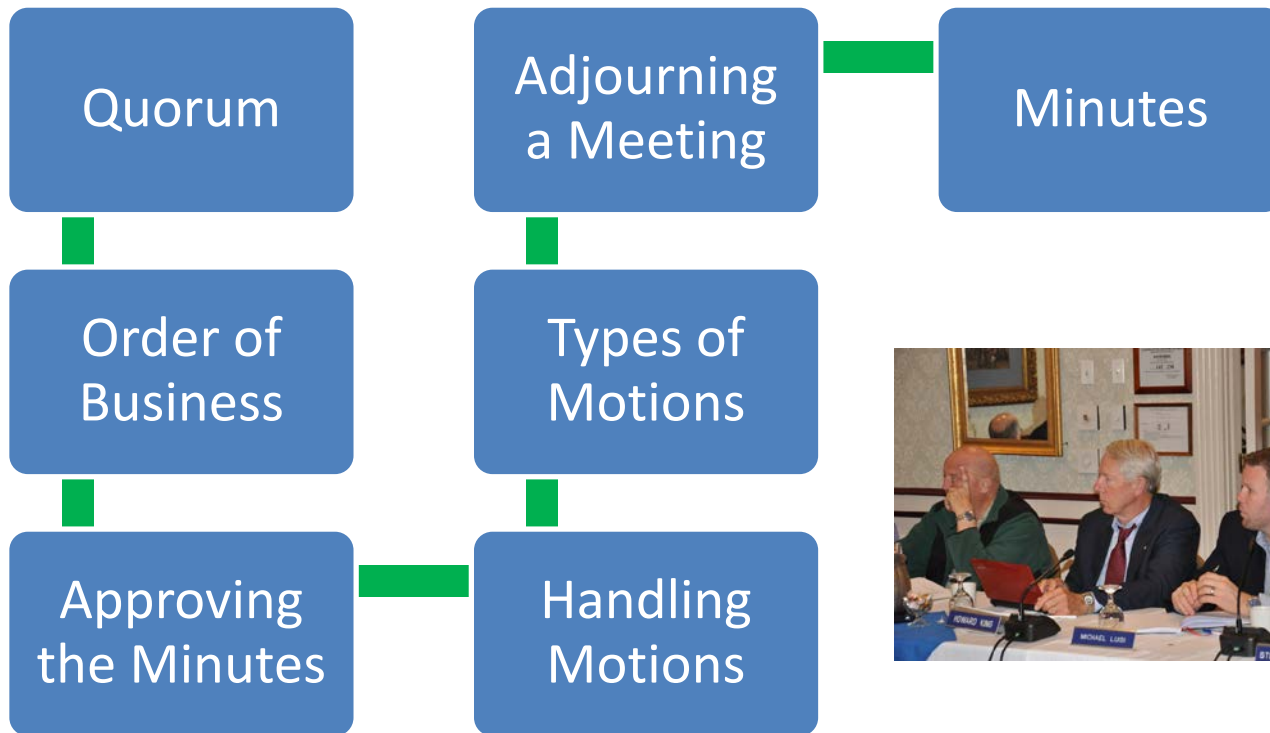


<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/robert.jpg>

Why Robert's Rules?

- Procedure for the orderly conduct of business by a deliberative assembly
- Every member is allowed to be heard
- Decisions are in favor of the majority
- Chair cannot steamroll

Running a Meeting



Quorum

- Majority of membership
- No quorum means no business can be conducted (no motions can be passed!)



Order of Business | Suggested by Robert's Rules

1. Reading the Minutes from previous meeting
[and their approval]
2. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees
3. Reports of Special Committees
4. Special Orders
5. Unfinished Business and General Orders
6. New Business
7. Adjourn

Order of Business | The Minutes

- Reading of minutes may be waived (thank goodness!!)
- Usually approved at beginning of next scheduled meeting
- Minutes not official until approved!
- A formal motion to approve minutes of a previously held meeting usually not needed; approval can be handled by unanimous consent.
 - "Are there any corrections to the minutes?"
 - "Are there any further corrections?"
 - "There being no further corrections, the minutes stand approved as read [or as corrected]."

Handling of Motions | Making!

1. The member making the motion must obtain the floor (i.e., be recognized by Chair), and state the motion.
2. Unless a chair of a committee consisting of more than one individual is making the motion, another member must second the motion.
3. The Chair states the motion and then asks: "**Is there any discussion [or debate]**." At this point – the group owns the motion!
4. When debate is concluded (and proposed amendments disposed of), the Chair "**calls the question**" (restating the motion, as amended).

Handling of Motions | Voting!

5. A vote is taken using appropriate methods (e.g., voice, hand raising, standing, or roll call).

Or

5. The Chair, if no opposition is apparent, may ask: "**Are there are any objections to the motion?**" If no one objects, motion passes by "**unanimous consent**" or "**with no opposition.**"
5. The Chair announces outcome of vote and states what action will be taken as a result of the vote.

Handling of Motions | Other things to know...

- Seconding means more than one member believes motion should be discussed.
- A motion made by a committee chair does not need a second (unless it's a committee of one!).
- The person who makes a motion has first opportunity to speak.
- Up until Chair "**puts the question**" to the assembly (i.e., formally states the motion proposed), the motion may be perfected to improve its clarity or intent, or withdrawn by the proposer.
 - After the Chair formally states the motion, it may be amended or withdrawn only by a motion from the floor.
 - The motion is owned by the group.

Handling of Motions | Other things to know...

- An amendment to a main motion can only be amended once (i.e., an amendment to an amendment).
- Each member can speak only twice on any motion.
- In voting on motions:
 - The chair may vote to break a tie causing a vote to pass, or create a tie causing a vote to fail.
 - The chair does not have to vote to break a tie.

Handling of Motions | Other things to know...

- Motions are handled slightly different in committee meetings:
 - A member may speak an unlimited number of times during debate.
 - The Committee Chair may make motions, speak in informal debates, and vote on motions.
 - Motions need not be seconded.
 - Informal discussions of subjects are permitted with no motions pending.
 - If a proposal is perfectly clear to the committee members, a vote can be taken without a formal motion.

Types of Motions



The basic motion called a “**main motion**” - intent is to bring business before assembly.

“**Subsidiary**” motions - intended to assist in handling the main motion (amend, postpone to a time and date certain, table, and refer to a committee)

“**Privileged**” motions - not associated with main motion but can be introduced while main motion is pending because of matters that require immediate attention (adjourn, recess, and point of order)

Types of Motions

- No motion is necessary to receive a report from an officer or a committee
- A motion to “**amend**” must be germane (related) to the main motion
- No more than two levels of amendments can be pending at the same time. The secondary amendment must be decided before the primary amendment and then the main motion, as amended or not.

Example: Amending a Motion

- Main motion – “**Hold our traditional holiday party on Christmas Eve.**”
 - Amendment: Insert “**beginning at 5PM**” after “**Eve**”
 - Amendment to the amendment: Insert “**and ending at 11PM**” after “**5 PM**”
- If the second amendment is passed, then the amendment to the main motion becomes: Insert “**beginning at 5PM and ending at 11PM**” after “**Eve.**”



Types of Motions

- If the motion and its associated amendments are referred to a committee or postponed, no further votes are necessary until motion once again comes before the assembly.
- The subsidiary motion “**division of the question**” (call for a separate vote on each part of a motion or resolution) causes the motion to be subdivided into two or more issues to be decided individually.
- If a member wishes to kill a motion and avoid a direct vote on it, the proper mechanism is not to “table” the motion, but to move to “**postpone indefinitely.**”

Types of Motions

- If a member wishes to defer consideration of a motion, the motion to “**commit**” or “**refer to a committee**” can be used, or the motion to “**postpone to a time or date**,” such as later in the same meeting or to a future meeting.
- A motion to “**table**” for consideration at a later time during the session can be used if additional information is likely to be presented later in the same meeting that may affect the vote. At that designated time, a motion to “**remove from the table**” allows continuation of the debate.

Types of Motions

- Moving the “**previous question**” or moving to “**call the question**” is to immediately close debate and cease amendments.
 - This motion must be seconded, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote to pass.
 - The maker of motion must first be recognized by the Chair and cannot simply call out the request from the floor.



Adjourning

- A meeting is not closed until Chair states that the meeting is adjourned.
- When there appears to be no further business in meeting, and all the topics on agenda have been addressed, a motion to adjourn is not necessary.
- Motion to fix the time to adjourn can be made at any time during the meeting.
- Recess is a short break in a meeting after which business is resumed at point it left off.

Recording Minutes

- The purpose of keeping minutes is to create a written record of what was done at the meeting.
- Motions recorded in minutes should reflect exact wording when vote was taken or when presiding officer declared unanimous consent.
 - Minutes should also record numbers of those in favor voting in favor of the motion and those opposed.
 - Not necessary to record the number of abstentions, since they do not influence the outcome of the vote.
- In addition to what Robert's Rules require, meeting minutes may contain list of attendees and major points made during discussions of motions.



Questions?

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