

## Fundamental principles of Robert's Rules of Order

1. Every member of the meeting has the right to speak once on an idea (if they wish) before anyone may speak a second time.
2. Every member of the meeting has the right to know what is going on at all times.
3. Only urgent matters may interrupt someone who is speaking or break into a queue.
4. The group discusses one idea at a time and makes a decision about that idea before going to the next idea. Any exception to this is extraordinary and requires a motion and a vote.
5. Any deviation from the rules is an extraordinary decision, made by the whole group.

## How to do some things in a meeting

New ideas are brought to the meeting by a report, an agenda item, or as new business. Each of these events creates a new main motion that is then up for discussion. The motion is discussed in an orderly fashion and then voted upon.

### 1. You want to tell people why they should vote for or against the motion.

- During the discussion period for the motion, join the queue of speakers. After being recognized by the chair, state your position (“I am for/against the motion because...”) and then make your case in a limited amount of time.
- If you wish to speak a second time, you may re-join the queue and wait until all those waiting have spoken once. Do not start a conversation with the chair or another speaker, which is rude to those waiting to speak. If you believe that a public conversation is necessary, ask for permission to break the rules from the chair and explain why it is so important to do so.
- If you are in the queue and concerned that you will be skipped, first consider whether it is urgent enough to interrupt other speakers. If so, say “Point of Order” or type **\*\*Point of Order** in the chatbox. Wait for recognition by the chair, and then point out the urgent problem. *“Point of Order” is a way of saying that the chair is breaking the rules of the meeting, so use it sparingly!*

### 2. You have a question about the facts behind a motion or something claimed by another speaker, or you wish to correct something said by another speaker.

- Join the queue of speakers. After being recognized by the chair, state your question or correct the previous speaker. The chair will decide whether to allow a conversation or not. You may not initiate a conversation yourself.
- Do *not* interrupt and say “Point of Information” because that is rude, disruptive, and time-consuming. See the proper use of “Point of Information” below.

### 3. You want to change the wording of the motion under consideration, or add or subtract from the motion without fundamentally changing the topic.

- Join the queue to speak. After being recognized by the chair, say “I move to amend the motion by” and then state that you want to add words to the motion, strike words from the motion, or strike and replace words. If the motion is a resolution, you may move to amend the resolution itself – adding, striking, or replacing words.
- Your motion to amend (if accepted by the chair) will be discussed. You should explain your reasons for making the change only after the motion is seconded and discussion begins. The amendment will be either accepted or rejected by a vote and then the discussion of whether to accept the main motion will continue.

4. **You want to avoid coming to a decision on the motion during this meeting** and instead give someone else the responsibility to study it further.
  - Join the queue to speak. After being recognized by the chair, say “I move to refer to a committee” and add details about which committee should study it and what the deadline for their report would be (as needed).
  - Your motion (if accepted by the chair) will be discussed. You should explain your reasons for making the change only after the motion is seconded and discussion begins. Others may move to change your motion (“move to amend”). If your motion passes by a majority vote, the idea will not ordinarily be discussed again at the meeting.
5. **You want to stop the discussion.** (also known as “call the question” or “previous question”)
  - Join the queue to speak. After being recognized by the chair, say “I move to close the discussion.” *Before doing so, please recognize that this will require a 2/3 vote (or unanimous consent) and may take longer than just listening to those who want to speak.*
  - Your motion must be seconded and there will be no discussion of the idea of closing discussion.
6. **You believe that the chair announced the results of a voice vote incorrectly.** (Unusual)
  - Do not wait for recognition from the chair. Say “I call for a division of the assembly” in a loud voice or type **\*\*Division** in the WebEx chatbox. (“Roll call vote” works too.) This will require a roll-call vote that is time-consuming but will establish an exact count. The roll-call vote is final.
7. **You are confused about the main motion or a procedure that is moving beyond discussion and need you need immediate clarification.**
  - Do not wait for recognition from the chair. Say “Point of Information” in a loud voice or write **\*\*Point of Information** in the chatbox). The chair will recognize you by name, ask you to state your question, and will then attempt to clarify the situation.
  - If there is a queue of speakers and you can follow the current discussion, consider joining the queue and speaking on your turn. If it looks like there will be a vote or some other motion before you can find out what’s happening, then interrupt by saying “Point of Information” out loud.
8. **You are concerned about an urgent situation that prevents the group from working together properly.** (Only for extraordinary situations)
  - Do not wait for recognition from the chair. Say “Question of Privilege” in a loud voice or write **\*\*Question of Privilege** in the chatbox. The chair will recognize you by name, ask you to state the problem, and will then attempt to resolve the problem.
  - If the problem is not urgent, join the queue to speak and wait for recognition and begin by saying “I have a question of privilege.” Then state the problem.

**If you want to propose something reasonable during a meeting**, you may join the queue and just ask the chair how to do it using parliamentary procedure. Some examples: stop talking about a motion temporarily and move it later in the day, depart from the agenda to discuss something specific, limit debate to a certain amount of time or number of speakers, reconsider a past decision, take a short break, or ask a smaller group to research and report back later the same day.

While you often have the right to force the group to vote on your proposal, please take the chair’s advice seriously. Finally, you may interrupt to appeal the ruling of the chair but you should be sure!