

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules provides rules and procedures that allow a deliberative assembly to make its decisions efficiently, and with all due regard for the rights of the minority. Following the rules ensures a more fair and more achievable outcome without wasting time but remembering all the details of parliamentary procedure can be a tall order.

Keeping some quick reference material on hand when you enter a meeting will ensure you have the important information you need to effectively and democratically achieve the business of the assembly.

The presiding officer's script

The best presiding officers plan ahead. With an agenda and knowledge of the business at hand before the meeting, a plan can turn into a script like the following example that following Robert's Rules and will enable you to preside like a pro.

President's Scripted Agenda

July 1, 2013

Call to order:

3:00 p.m.

Rap the gavel one time (optional).

The meeting will come to order.

Approval or correction of minutes:

The secretary's draft of the minutes of the May meeting was sent to you last week, and a copy is in your meeting packet. Knowing you all to be judicious minute-readers, please let me know now if you found any errors.

Pause.

Are there any corrections to the minutes as distributed?

Take corrections until there are no more.

If there are no (further) corrections, the minutes stand approved as distributed (corrected).

The next order of business is officer reports.

Report of Officers

President's Report:

You have a copy of my written report, so I will review a couple of highlights and move on.

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer is absent this afternoon but furnished his report. Let us take a minute to review it. I hope I can answer any questions.

We have 281 dues-paid members, \$21,272 total cash accounts. You have in your meeting packets some financial reports for the period 1/1 to 5/31.

You have an itemized income and expense report covering our year to date in your materials along with an expense detail available; if you have any questions, I will be glad to try to answer them.

Handle questions:

No action is required on the treasurer's report. It will be filed for audit.

Before we continue, please allow me to report some committee appointments.

Report committee chairmen and membership appointments so far.

Executive Director's Report:

The chair recognizes Mr. Smith for a report.

Thank you, Mr. Smith.

There are a number of recommendations here and we will take them up one at a time.

Ask Secretary to read the first recommendation. Someone then should "move the adoption of the recommendation just read."

State the motion.

It is moved to adopt the recommendation just read. Is there debate?"

Handle discussion; put the question when ready by saying,

Those in favor say “Aye” [pause]

Those opposed say “No.”

The motion passes (fails) and the recommendation is (not) adopted.

The next order of business is standing committee reports.

Reports of Standing Committees

Membership Committee Chairman's Report:

The chair recognizes ____ for the membership committee report.

[Script for motions arising from the report]

Thank you ____.

Finance Committee Chairman's Report:

Your president is the current finance chairman and the treasurer's report given earlier covered everything.

Convention Committee Report:

Members, complete information from the last Convention that has not been finalized, and the Convention Committee will report at the next meeting.

Next order of business is reports of special committees.

Reports of Special Committees

Special Certification Committee Report:

The chair recognizes ____ for the certification committee report.

[Script and handle motions arising from this report]

Thank you.

Special Chapter Charter Revision Committee Report:

The chair recognizes ____ for the chapter charter revision committee report.

You have a written committee report. The committee recommends you adopt the following resolution.

Read the resolution.

The question is on the adoption of the resolution just read. Is there debate?

Handle debate, put the question, announce the result.

The motion passes, and the resolution is adopted.

New Business

Is there new business?

The Chair recognizes AB.

[AB makes motion, and it is seconded.]

It is moved and seconded to create a special committee of three members to be appointed by the president to report recommendations on requirements for annual continuing education credits for members.

Handle debate, put the question, announce the result.

Is there any further business to come before the meeting?

Announcements

We need to set the date for our next meeting. It looks like September 18 is the usual date. Shall we meet next at 3 pm on September 18? Hearing no objection, we will meet next on September 18 at 3pm here at the clubhouse.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting is adjourned. The time is 5:00 p.m.

Disruptive or Unruly Behavior

Robert's Rules of Order does include provisions for **limiting debate** and for handling members who are being **disruptive or unruly**, though it doesn't set an automatic "time limit" for speakers unless the group has adopted one.

Here's how it works:

Speaking Time Limits (Normal Debate)

- By default, under *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)*, each member **may speak twice on the same motion**, and **no longer than 10 minutes each time**, unless the assembly has set different limits.
- The assembly can **vote to reduce or extend** speaking times by adopting a **motion to limit or extend debate** (e.g., "I move to limit debate to two minutes per speaker").

If Someone Is Being Unruly or Disruptive

If a member's behavior becomes disorderly — interrupting, refusing to yield, or speaking off-topic — there are tools for the chair and the group to handle it:

1. The chair can call the member to order.

- Example: "The member is out of order. Please confine remarks to the motion on the floor."

2. If the behavior continues, the assembly can take disciplinary action:

- A **motion to require the member to leave** the meeting for the rest of the session (requires a majority vote).
- In severe cases, **formal disciplinary procedures** can be followed under Chapter XX of RONR.

In summary:

- Normal limit: 10 minutes per speech (unless changed).
- Assembly can set stricter limits.
- The chair may cut off an unruly speaker immediately for violating decorum.
- Persistent disorderly conduct can lead to removal or disciplinary action.

Setting Time Limits in Advance

To prevent issues before they start, the assembly can adopt a **motion to limit debate**, for example:

"I move to limit debate to two minutes per speaker, with no more than one speech per member on this motion."

This requires a **two-thirds vote**, because it restricts members' rights to speak.

Making and handling motions following Robert's Rules

In an organization that is following Robert's Rules, when that light bulb goes off in your head and you have a great idea, you make a motion to get your idea discussed and a decision made. Here are the eight steps required from start to finish to make a motion and get the decision of the assembly. Each step is a required part of the process. See also Robert's Rules on Basic Motions.

Step	What to Say
1. The member rises and addresses the chair.	"Mr./Madam Chairman."
2. The chair recognizes the member.	"The chair recognizes Ms. Gliggenschlapp."
3. The member makes a motion.	"I move to purchase a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for our president."
4. Another member seconds the motion.	"Second."
5. The chair states the motion.	"It is moved and seconded to purchase a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for your president. Are you ready for the question?"
6. The members debate the motion.	"The chair recognizes Ms. Gliggenschlapp to speak to her motion. . . ."
7. The chair puts the question, and the members vote.	"Those in favor of adopting the motion to buy a copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> for your president, say 'Aye.' [pause] Those opposed, say 'No.'"
8. The chair announces the result of the vote.	"The ayes have it, and the motion carries. A copy of <i>Robert's Rules For Dummies</i> will be purchased for your president."

Following the standard order of business

An easy way to remember the Robert's Rules standard order of business is with the mnemonic 3R-SUN — you can see it clearly in the following list. This list is a quick reference to make it easy for you to set up a basic agenda for your meeting.

1. Reading and approval of minutes
2. Reports of officers, boards, and standing committees
3. Reports of special (select and ad hoc) committees
4. Special orders
5. Unfinished business and general orders
6. New business