



**Robert's Rules
for Board Meetings
Global Australian Labradoodle Association
GALA**

Robert's Rules of Order is a lengthy manual of parliamentary procedure that governs most boards of directors, which was first created in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert as an adaptation of the rules and practices of Congress. With the latest versions of the manual totaling around 700 pages, a Robert's Rules of Order cheat sheet is useful for highlighting the most common processes used by today's boards.

To help simplify Robert's Rules of Order, we'll provide an overview of the following topics:

- The basics of Robert's Rules
- 6 categories of motions
- Steps for making a motion
- How to handle points of order
- Robert's Rules of Order cheat sheet
- Tips and reminders for board chairs

What are Robert's Rules of Order, and what is it used for?

Robert's Rules is a framework of codes and ethical rules that help groups conduct orderly meetings, allowing the majority to rule while ensuring minority voices are heard.

There are four primary types of motions in Robert's Rules of Order:

1. Main motions
2. Subsidiary motions
3. Incidental motions
4. Renewal motions

Robert's Rules of Order for meetings is the general standard for how nonprofit boards, committees, and other established groups govern discussions and decision-making. Most nonprofits and groups use Robert's Rules because it ensures order and fosters a productive environment.

Parliamentary procedure

A parliamentary procedure can be any set of rules and guidelines a group formally establishes to govern itself, with Robert's Rules of Order being the most common type.

The goal of the parliamentary procedure is to establish the order of discussion and ultimately reach an agreement on what to accomplish or how to move forward. By following established rules and guidelines, group members can reach consensus in a respectful, collegial manner.

Robert's Rules basics

New board members should learn the basics of Robert's Rules as soon as they join a board. Board members will follow the basic rules for decision-making at most meetings.

Here is a general outline of the essential elements of Robert's Rules:

- Motion – A member makes a motion to propose an action or make a decision by saying, "I move to...". Another member must second the motion by saying, "I second the motion." Once someone seconds the motion, the group votes. It passes by a majority vote or a quorum, depending on the rules in the bylaws.
- Amend a motion – Members use this process to change a motion and can do so by stating, "I move to amend the motion on the floor." Again, this motion must be seconded and voted upon.
- Commit – Members use this type of motion to transfer a motion to a committee. As with other motions, it must be seconded and voted on. Once it moves to committee, the committee presents a report on its motion at the next meeting.
- Question – Members say, "I call the question" to end a debate or discussion. The motion must be seconded and voted upon without further discussion. A call for the question requires a two-thirds majority vote to

pass. At this point, the members must immediately vote on the motion on the floor.

- Adjourn – This refers to moving to end the meeting. A member would say, “I move to adjourn,” and another member would second the motion. If the majority then votes to adjourn, the meeting is over.

If anything out of the ordinary arises, board members can review the rules during the meeting. When you store a copy of Robert’s Rules in your board management system, it is quickly and easily accessible if there is a question on proper meeting protocols.

Robert’s Rules of Order cheat sheet on the **next page**.

Robert's Rules of Order

Cheat Sheet

Action	What to Say	Can interrupt speaker?	Need a Second?	Can be Debated?	Can be Amended?	Votes Needed
Introduce main motion	"I move to..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by // (add or strike words or both)"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Move item to committee	"I move that we refer the matter to committee."	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Postpone item	"I move to postpone the matter until..."	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Object to procedure	"Point of order."	Yes	No	No	No	Chair decision
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Adjourn the meeting	"I move to adjourn the meeting."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Request information	"Point of information."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Overrule the chair's ruling	"I move to overrule the chair's ruling."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority

Action	What to Say	Can interrupt speaker?	Need a Second?	Can be Debated?	Can be Amended?	Votes Needed
Extend the allotted time	<i>"I move to extend the time by ____ minutes."</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Enforce the rules or point out incorrect procedure	<i>"Point of order."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Table a Motion	<i>"I move to table..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Verify voice vote with count	<i>"I call for a division."</i>	No	No	No	No	No vote
Object to considering some undiplomatic matter	<i>"I object to consideration of this matter..."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Take up a previously tabled item	<i>"I move to take from the table..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Reconsider something already disposed of	<i>"I move to reconsider our action to..."</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Consider something out of its scheduled order	<i>"I move to suspend the rules and consider..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Close the meeting for executive session	<i>"I move to go into executive session."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Personal preference - noise, room temperature, distractions	<i>"Point of privilege"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote

*A member may make a motion to reconsider something that was already disposed; however, the reconsidered motion may not be subsequently reconsidered. A motion to reconsider must be made during the same meeting and can extend to a meeting that lasts for more than one day.

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Making a Motion

Board members must discuss one issue at a time to keep order in the boardroom. The board chair should only allow one person to speak at a time. Any member who wants to make a motion must request the floor —and be granted it — before speaking.

Robert's Rules classifies motions into the following categories.

Six categories of motions

1. Main motion: Introduces a new item
2. Subsidiary motion: Changes or affect how to handle a main motion (vote on this before the main motion)
3. Privileged motion: Brings up an urgent or essential matter unrelated to pending business
4. Incidental motion: Questions the procedure of other motions
5. Motion to table: Kills a motion
6. Motion to postpone: Delays a vote (can reopen debate on the main motion)

Robert's Rules of Order motion steps

1. Motion: A member rises or raises a hand to signal the chairperson.
2. Second: Another member seconds the motion.
3. Restate motion: The chairperson restates the motion.
4. Debate: The members debate the motion.
5. Vote: The chairperson restates the motion, and then first asks for affirmative votes, and then negative votes.
6. Announce the vote: The chairperson announces the result of the vote and any instructions.

TIP! If the board is in obvious agreement, the chairperson may save time by stating, "If there is no objection, we will adopt the motion to..." Then wait for any objections. Then say, "Hearing no objections, (state the motion) is adopted." And then state any instructions.

If a member objects, first ask for a debate, then vote, and then announce the vote.

Points in Robert's Rules of Order

Certain situations require attention during the meeting, but don't require a motion, second, debate, or vote. It's permissible to raise a point during a meeting when the chairperson needs to address the situation immediately. Board members can declare a Point of Order, Point of Information, Point of Inquiry, or Point of Personal Privilege.

- Point of Order: A member draws attention to a breach of rules, improper procedure, breach of established practices, etc.
- Point of Information: A member can ask for a point of information if they want more information on a motion. A point of information should not be used as a means for the person calling for a point of information to present information.
- Point of Inquiry: A member may use a point of inquiry to ask for clarification in a report to make better voting decisions.
- Point of Personal Privilege: A member may use a point of personal privilege to address the physical comfort of the setting, such as temperature or noise. Members may also use it to address the accuracy of published reports or the accuracy of a member's conduct.

**Note: A member may make a motion to reconsider something that was already disposed of; however, the reconsidered motion may not be subsequently reconsidered. A motion to reconsider must be made during the same meeting and may extend to a meeting lasting more than one day.*

Robert's Rules: Tips and reminders for chairpersons

Robert's Rules of Order were developed to ensure that meetings are fair, efficient, democratic, and orderly. A skilled chairperson allows all members to voice their opinions in an orderly manner, ensuring everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard. The following tips and reminders will help chairpersons run a successful, productive meeting without being overrun or running over others.

- Follow the agenda to keep the group moving toward its goals.
- Let the group do its work — don't over-command.
- Control the meeting flow by recognizing members who request to speak.

- Let all members speak once before allowing anyone to speak a second time.
- When discussions get off-track, gently guide the group back to the agenda.
- Model courtesy and respect, and insist that others do the same.
- Help to develop the board's skills in the parliamentary procedure by properly using motions and points of order.
- Encourage members to present motions positively rather than negatively.
- Give each speaker your undivided attention.
- Keep an emotional pulse on the discussions.
- Allow consensus to have final authority within the group.

Furthering your board's knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order

All board members should be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order, which they can find online and in bookstores, and this Robert's Rules of Order cheat sheet for 2023 is a handy resource for your board and all new members.

Now that we've covered the basics, a deeper understanding of Robert's Rules is essential. The next step is to learn how to handle abstentions for a more streamlined board procedure.

Robert's Rules of Order for meetings is an informative and fascinating topic. The more board members learn about how to use Robert's Rules, the more effectively they will govern, and effective governance is the hallmark of a quality board.