

RobertsRules.org | Robert's Rules of Order - Summary Version

For Fair and Orderly Meetings & Conventions

Provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies require all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action!

The assembly rules - they have the final say on everything!
Silence means consent!

- Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state Mr./Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order! Must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!
- Debate can not begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote!
- Before the motion is stated by the Chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.
- The "immediately pending question" is the last question stated by the Chair! Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone
- The member moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to preference to the floor!
- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once!
- All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations!

When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes occur!

The Rules

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: "I should like to ask the (speaker) a question."
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble can not be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has

carried or is pending

- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "Close Debate" if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into "Committee of the Whole" - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly's own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified

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Conflict Management

Tips for Effective Conflict Resolution

Adapted from National PTA leadership materials (July 2003)

Conflict is often defined as a situation in which there are opposing viewpoints or direct competition among participants. Conflict is a fact of life. It is unavoidable. PTAs often experience conflict because the diverse membership brings to the association personality differences, divergent viewpoints, and varied backgrounds.

Not all conflict is bad. There can be no change without conflict. Conflict is the stimulus that produces creativity. Good conflict can stimulate thinking, open discussion, develop communication skills, and eventually produce a decision.

**The difference between good conflict and destruction conflict is
the management of that conflict!**

Effective conflict resolution is the result of good management techniques used by a perception leader who understands the people and the group climate in which he/she works. A good leader will recognize that he/she has certain responsibilities in managing conflict.

These responsibilities include:

- 1) Listening
- 2) Restating what you think you heard
- 3) Expressing emotions honestly
- 4) Avoiding personal conflicts
- 5) Developing reconciliation skills

When the conflict is over, it is time to resume regular activities, and the group must come back together as a team.

Throughout the conflict situation, a good leader will:

- 1) Preserve the dignity and self-respect of all involved. A good leader will keep the group focused on issues, not personalities.
- 2) Listen with neutrality, and try to see the situation from every perspective.
- 3) Accept the fact that other's behavior styles cannot be changed.
- 4) Allow individuals to express their independent point of view. Once all views have been share, the leader must help the group come to consensus on a decision.
- 5) Relax! By maintaining his/her cool, the leader can set a positive climate in which reasonable decisions can be made.

Problem Solving Tips:

Conflict in PTAs usually revolves around three areas:

- 1) Individual conflicts
- 2) Problems relating to association activities
- 3) Outside groups in opposition to PTA policies/positions

Common PTA Problems

Some of the most common issues include:

- PTA versus other parent groups
- PTA involvement in school issues
- Improper accounting of funds
- Nominating and election procedures
- Personality clashes

These concerns, as well as most local unit conflicts, can often be avoided if the leadership takes the following steps:

- Be knowledgeable about PTA, its mission, vision, and values, programs, legislative policies, and organization.
- Be familiar with the bylaws and standing rules. Have copies distributed to board members and available to any member who wishes a copy.
- Follow the nonpartisan, noncommercial, and nonsectarian policies.
- Be informed about the issues.
- Do not violate the rights of members. Allow ample time in meetings for discussion of the issues. Encourage speaking and voting.
- Do not let personality clashes interfere with the work of PTA. Leaders must develop skills to work with all types of people. Respect the opinions of others.
- Cooperate and communicate regularly with the principal and other school administrators
- Remember, we are here to advocate for children!

Always refer to PTA bylaws when selecting the nominating committee, holding an election, conducting an audit, etc. Consulting bylaws can assure proper procedures and help your PTA avoid conflict situations!

Six Steps to Problem Solving

- 1) **Identify the problem.** Mention actual people, places, and things in clear statements. Each problem should describe two things: what the situation is now, and the target – ideal situation – that is not being reached.
- 2) **Brainstorm the solutions.** Ask the group to think of as many alternatives for resolving the problem. Quantity - not quality - counts here. No ideas are discarded. All ideas are welcome.
- 3) **Select the most promising alternatives.** (Usually 3 to 5) by discussion and consensus.
- 4) **Set priorities and design an action plan.** Decide by consensus which conclusion should be first, second, etc. Base the priority rankings on facts, resources available to carry out the action, urgency of the problem addressed, and attainability of the solution. The action plan should contain a clear description of the action to be taken, specific dates for each action to occur, assignment of group or person to carry out each action.
- 5) **Carry out action plan.** Do not delay. A problem calls for immediate attention.
- 6) **Evaluate action.** Establish criteria for gauging how well the plan is working. Continual review of progress is critical. A final report from the group should be in writing.

Chairing a Tough Meeting

There are times when a PTA is faced with issues that ignite strong feelings from its membership and members of the community. Conducting a meeting involved with these issues can be extremely tough for the local PTA leadership.

Here are some tips for dealing with a potentially explosive meeting:

Before the Meeting:

- Sit down with the appropriate officers and pre-plan the meeting to allow maximum participation from all points of view.
- Check PTA sources for existing positions on issues to be discussed.
- Prepare an agenda for the meeting.
- Carefully study Robert's Rules of Order on meeting procedures, motions, etc.

During the Meeting:

- Have on hand a copy of the local unit bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Establish ground rules. Conduct the meeting as formally as possible.
- If the group is willing, special rules for this meeting can be agreed on at the outset, such as the number of times a person may speak to any one item, time limits for all speakers, etc.
- As the chair, you have the privilege to overlook recognizing a speaker who may be dominating the floor in favor of others who may not have spoken.
- Should the group continue to disagree in such a way that a committee study is warranted, the chair should not hesitate to solicit a motion to charge a committee. Those who have expressed strong feelings on the issue should be given the responsibility of justifying those feelings by being a part of the study group.
- Check your bylaws for any limitations or obligations concerning the unit's activity.
- Appear calm and patient even if you are distressed.
- Be polite, but forceful.

Whatever happens, keep your perspective by maintaining neutrality as the chair. Keep your sense of humor!