2014 ABA BAR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE REFRESHER

• Quorum

• Agenda

• Processing a Motion

• Precedence of Motions

• Meaning of Votes

• Script of a Motion

• Rules for a Small Committee/Board

• Basic Characteristics of a Motion
QUORUM

The number of voting members who must be present for business to be transacted legally.

AGENDA

The following is the agenda for organizations that are governed by Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised:

I. Approval of minutes
II. Reports of:
   A. Officers
   B. Boards
   C. Standing Committees
   D. Special Committees (select, ad hoc, task force, etc.)
III. Special Orders (orders from the governing documents)
IV. Unfinished Business (not old business)
V. New Business
**PROCESSING A MOTION**

1. **A Member Makes a Motion**
   a. The member words the motion properly: I move that (followed by specific statement of proposed action)
   b. The member who made the motion has the first right to speak on the motion
   c. The member who made the motion can not speak against the motion, but may vote against it
   d. The presiding officer has the right to request that the motion be in writing, unless the rules indicate otherwise. NCR paper on hand at each meeting will aid in this process

2. **Another Member Seconds the Motion**
   a. Motion that comes from a committee does not need a second
   b. In seconding a motion, a person may only be agreeing that the issue should be discussed and decided upon
   c. If there is no second, the presiding officer tells the assembly that the motion dies for lack of a second

3. **The Chair States the Motion, Therefore Formally Placing It Before the Assembly**
   a. Do not overlook this step. It is crucial because:
      i. At the completion of this step, ownership of the motion is transferred from the individual who made the motion to the members present
      ii. After this step, the motion belongs to the body, not an individual
   b. Proper restatement of the motion by the presiding officer:
      i. Helps make sure everyone has heard the motion, exactly as it was proposed, and
      ii. Helps keep everyone on target as to the exact wording of the motion to be debated
   c. If the presiding officer is unclear about the exact wording, there are two places the presiding officer can go to for assistance:
      i. Use the NCR copy of the motion paper provided by the maker of the motion
      ii. Ask the secretary to read the motion

4. **The Members Debate the Motion**
   a. During this time the motion is
      i. considered pending and
      ii. can have secondary motions applied to it
   b. Assignment of the floor: While a motion is open to debate, the first person to rise and address the chair shall be assigned the floor by the chair. Cases where the floor should be assigned to a person who may not have been the first to rise and address the chair are:
      i. If the member who made the motion has not yet spoken on the question,
      ii. When the person seeking the floor has not already spoken on the same motion on the same day; and
      iii. In cases where the chair knows the opinions of the persons seeking the floor, then the assignment should alternate between those favoring and those opposing the question
c. During debate, there are some motions that are improperly used. If that occurs, assist the
maker of the motion to help make it a proper motion.
i. “I move to table this motion until . . .”
   (1) Can not table until a specific time. The intent is probably the motion to
       Postpone Definitely.
   (2) Differences between Postpone Definitely and Table:
       (a) Table is not debatable, Postpone Definitely is debatable.
       (b) Table must be brought back by a motion to Take from the Table.
           Postpone Definitely automatically comes up when the time of
           postponement arrives.
   (3) If the member uses this terminology, simply treat the motion as a motion to
       Postpone Definitely.
       (a) Member: “I move to table this motion until next weeks meeting”
       (b) Another Member: “Second”
       (c) Presiding Officer: “It has been moved and seconded that we
           postpone this motion until next weeks meeting. Is there any
           discussion.
ii. “I move to table this motion so that we can kill this issue.”
   (1) Presiding Officer should rule this motion out of order and then suggest that
       the proper motion is to Postpone Indefinitely.
   (2) Differences between Table and Postpone Indefinitely:
       (a) Table is not debatable. Postpone Indefinitely is debatable.
       (b) The motion to Postpone Indefinitely prevents the issue from
           coming up again at this meeting. The motion to Table does not.
iii. “I call the question” or “Question”
   (1) These are two versions of the same motion. The intent of this motion is to
       close debate on this motion and move immediately to the vote.
   (2) If the motion is to “Call the Question on this and all pending questions”
       then the effect is to close debate and require movement to the vote on the
       pending motion and all other pending motions. (E.g. On the amendment
       and on the main motion.)
   (3) The member may not simply yell out this motion. Like all other motions,
       the maker must wait to be recognized.
   (4) This motion must go through all of the steps of a motion with the
       following uniqueness:
       (a) It is not debatable
       (b) Because it takes rights away from the members, it requires a two- thirds
           vote.

d. Debate must be limited to the specific motion that is pending.
i. The specific aspects covered in the motion are open to debate, not the whole
   subject area.
ii. If the members begin wondering away from the subject area, a nice way to bring
    them back on task is: “Is there any further discussion on [specifically state the
    subject]?”
5. **The Chair Puts the Question to a Vote**
   a. This should include restatement of the motion to be voted on. This restatement serves as a reminder of what the membership is voting on.
   b. Even in obvious votes, the presiding officer should call for votes for and votes against the motion. The only exception here is with courtesy resolutions (e.g., the resolutions at the end of the convention that thank everyone who worked on the convention.)
   c. If the presiding officer requests that those voting in favor of the motion indicate with an affirmative response, the presiding officer should not call for negative votes with a call for “same sign.” E.g., “All those in favor say ‘aye’, those opposed, same sign.”
   d. The presiding officer should be very comfortable with being able to determine the results of the vote. If in doubt, it is the duty of the chair to verify the vote beyond reasonable doubt, and to the satisfaction of the members.

6. **The Chair Announces the Results of the Vote**
   The content of a complete announcement of the results of the vote includes:
   a. Announcement of which side has the necessary votes, and is thus the prevailing side. In a counted vote, the presiding officer should first give the count before announcing the prevailing side.
   b. Declaration as to whether the motion is adopted or lost.
   c. A statement indicating the effect of the vote.
   d. Where applicable, announcement of the next item of business.

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**PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS**

**PRECEDENCE OF MOTION**

1. Fix time to which to adjourn
2. Adjourn
3. Recess
4. Raise a question of privilege
5. Call for orders of the day
6. Lay on the table
7. Previous question
8. Limit/extend limits of debate
9. Postpone definitely
10. Commit or refer
11. Secondary amendment
12. Primary amendment
13. Postpone indefinitely
14. Main motion
MEANING OF VOTES

Majority – More than half of the votes cast

Two Thirds – Two times the number of yes votes as no votes

Plurality – A method of voting in which the candidate or proposition receiving the largest number of votes is elected or selected.

Abstain – To refrain from voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOTING EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000 members in the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 members present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 members vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the members present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the entire membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the members present and voting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Presiding officer votes: In all other methods of voting other than a ballot vote, the chair only votes when his or her vote affects the results. Numerical examples would help here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOTE REQUIRED</th>
<th>YES VOTES</th>
<th>NO VOTES</th>
<th>PRESIDING OFFICER VOTE YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yes – affects results</td>
<td>No - fail without vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>No – pass without vote</td>
<td>Yes – affects results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Thirds</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes – affects results</td>
<td>No - fail without vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Thirds</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No - pass without vote</td>
<td>Yes – affects results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SCRIPT OF A MOTION**

**MEMBER:** I move that . . .

**CHAIR:** Is there a second to the motion? [This statement is eliminated if a member calls out “second” or if the motion is made on behalf of a committee.]

**MEMBER:** I second the motion

**CHAIR:** It is moved and seconded that... Is there any discussion? [Since the maker of the motion has first right to speak on the motion, the chair should call on the maker of the motion first.]

**MEMBERS:** Discussion occurs [It is during this time that a motion is considered pending and secondary motions may be applied to it.]

**CHAIR:** Is there any further discussion? Are you ready for the question? [Pause] The question is on the adoption of the motion to [clearly restate the motion]

**VOICE VOTE:**
All those in favor, say aye. [Pause for response]
All those opposed, say no. [If the chair is in doubt of the results of a voice vote, then the chair should state "The chair is in doubt, therefore a rising (or counted) vote will be taken." Then proceed with a counted vote.]

**RISING VOTE:**
Those in favor of the motion, please stand. [Pause] Please be seated. Those opposed to the motion, please stand. [Pause] Please be seated

**SHOW OF HANDS VOTE:**
All those in favor of the motion, please raise your right hand. [Pause] Please lower your hand. Thank you. Those opposed to the motion, please raise your right hand. [Pause] Please lower your hand. Thank you

**BALLOT VOTE:**
Please mark your ballots clearly, fold them one time, and hand them directly to a teller

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**
The clerk will now call the roll
CHAIR: **ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOTING RESULTS:**

UNCOUNTED VOICE, RISING OR SHOW OF HANDS VOTE: The affirmative has it, the motion is adopted, we will [state the effect of the vote] and the next business in order is . . .

OR

The negative has it, the motion is defeated and [state the effect of the motion]

COUNTED MAJORITY VOTE:
There are _____ votes in the affirmative and _____ votes in the negative. There is a majority in the affirmative and the motion is adopted. We will [state the effect of the vote] and the next business in order is . . .

OR
There are _____ votes in the affirmative and _____ votes in the negative. There is less than a majority in the affirmative and the motion is defeated [state the effect of the vote] and the next business in order is . . .

COUNTED TWO-THIRDS VOTE:
There are _____ votes in the affirmative and _____ votes in the negative. There is a two-thirds vote in the affirmative and the motion is adopted. We will (Give the effect of the vote] and the next business in order is . . .

OR
There are _____ votes in the affirmative and _____ votes in the negative. There is less than a two-thirds vote in the affirmative and the motion is defeated (state the effect of the vote]

CHAIR: The next business in order is . . .
RULES FOR A SMALL BOARD/COMMITTEE – no more than 12 members present

• It's not necessary to rise in order to make a motion or when seeking recognition by the chair, raising the hand is adequate

• There is no limit on the number of times a person may speak

• The presiding officer does not have to leave the chair when making a motion or when participating in debate

• Motions to close or limit debate are in order in a board meeting, but not in order in a meeting of a committee

• Motions do not need to be seconded

• Rules that apply only to committees, of any size, except executive committee which follows the rules of a board:
  
  o A motion can be reconsidered, regardless of when the motion was made

  o A motion can be reconsidered by anyone who did not vote on the losing side (so a member who was not present can move to reconsider, as can a member who abstained)

  o If the motion to reconsider is made at a later meeting, it requires a two-thirds vote without notice, or a majority vote if all committee members who voted with the prevailing side are present or have been notified”
BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTIONS ©
Nancy Sylvester, MA, PRP, CPP-T www.nancysylvester.com

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn</td>
<td>Sets the time for a continued meeting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adjourn</td>
<td>Closes the meeting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recess</td>
<td>Establishes a brief break</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Raise a Question of Privilege</td>
<td>Asks an urgent question regarding rights</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ruled by chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Call for Orders of the Day</td>
<td>Requires that the meeting follow the agenda</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lay on the Table</td>
<td>Puts the motion aside for later consideration</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Previous Question</td>
<td>Ends debate and moves directly to the vote</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Two-thirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate</td>
<td>Changes the debate limits</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Two-thirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Postpone to a Certain Time</td>
<td>Puts off the motion to a specific time</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Commit or Refer</td>
<td>Refers the motion to a committee</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Amend an amendment (Secondary Amendment)</td>
<td>Proposes a change to an amendment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Amend a motion or resolution (Primary Amendment)</td>
<td>Proposes a change to a main motion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Postpone Indefinitely</td>
<td>Kills the motion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. MAIN MOTION</td>
<td>Brings business before the assembly</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Is debatable if the motion is made while no question is pending
2 Unless no question is pending
3 Majority, unless it makes the question a special order
4 If the motion it is being applied to is debatable

Note: Motions above are in the Order of Precedence of Motions. Based on Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition
# BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTIONS ©


*The Guerrilla’s Guide to Robert’s Rules*

Nancy Sylvester, MA, PRP, CPP-T   [www.nancysylvester.com](http://www.nancysylvester.com)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Point of Order</strong></td>
<td>Requests that the rules be followed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ruled by chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appeal from the Decision of the Chair</strong></td>
<td>Challenges a ruling of the chair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Depends⁴</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suspend the Rules</strong></td>
<td>Allows the group to violate the rules (not bylaws)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Two-thirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objection to Consideration</strong></td>
<td>Keeps the motion from being considered</td>
<td>Yes⁶</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Two-thirds⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division of the Question</strong></td>
<td>Separates consideration of the motion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division of the Assembly</strong></td>
<td>Requires a standing vote</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Inquiry or Request for Information</strong></td>
<td>Allows a member to ask a question about the business at hand</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Responded to by chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Withdraw a Motion</strong> (after stated by the chair)</td>
<td>Removes a motion from consideration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Depends⁸</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take from the Table</strong></td>
<td>Resumes consideration of a motion that was laid on the table</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reconsider</strong></td>
<td>Considers a motion again</td>
<td>Yes⁹</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Depends⁹</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted</strong></td>
<td>Repeals a previously adopted motion or amends it after it has been adopted</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Depends¹¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 If the motion it is being applied to is debatable
5 Majority in negative required to reverse chair's decision
6 Yes, until debate has begun or a subsidiary motion other than Lay on the Table has been stated by the chair
7 Two-thirds against consideration sustains objection
8 Yes, if motion is made by the person requesting permission; no, if made by another member
9 When another member has been assigned the floor, but not after he or she has begun to speak
10 Only if the motion to be reconsidered is debatable
11 Requires a) a majority with notice, b) two-thirds, OR c) majority of entire membership