

Parliamentary Procedures

JCI Local and National Organizations throughout the world advocate for and practice parliamentary procedure for many reasons. Apart from the obvious advantages in leadership training and disciplined thinking that comes from concise debate and clearly led discussion, the introduction of parliamentary procedures gives an objective lesson in working democracy.



PHILOSOPHY

Parliamentary procedures ensure:

- **Orderly** meetings;
- **Opportunities** for all to be heard;
- **Decisions** by the majority;
- **Protection** for the minority.

There are many sets of rules guides to effective action in meetings. Each is designed to permit free discussion and free decisions. This guide on parliamentary procedures is based on *Robert's Rules of Order* and does not attempt to give a complete picture of parliamentary procedures, nor does it hope to cover every situation that can come up in a meeting. However, it will provide a good understanding of how proper meeting procedures can help your Local Organization in conducting its business sessions.

SPEAKING RIGHTS

Speaking is accomplished by obtaining the floor. One should rise and address the presiding officer. The one who should be recognized is the person who rises first after the floor has been yielded by the previous speaker. If more than one person properly requests the floor when debate is one, certain rules apply:

1. The maker of the motion is first even though the last to rise, so he can explain the motion.
2. No one gets a second chance until everyone has had one chance to speak.
3. The chairperson should try to alternate speakers among all sides of an issue.
 - **Speaking** is not usually in order until the presiding officer indicates who is entitled to speak. Once recognized, the speaker should first give his name and, if in a representative group, he should state whom he represents.
 - **Speaking** follows the making of a motion. If a report is presented, its reading precedes a motion. Following the motion, the reader of the report has the first opportunity to speak.
 - **Speaking** is limited in order to give everyone an opportunity to speak. The group can impose more or less restrictive rules.
 - **Speaking** can be stopped altogether by a motion. But this motion requires a two-thirds majority of those voting, so that a bare majority cannot prevent discussion and the minority can be heard.

THE MOTION

The motion is the means whereby the group takes action. It is a statement of what is to be done and how it is to be done. It should be carefully worded to prevent misunderstandings. The wording should clearly channel discussion to the important aspects of the proposal.

The motion is made by stating, "I move that the... (*name of the group*)... (*add what is to be done, by whom, when, how financed, etc.*)."

Normally, it should be seconded. This means the seconding person believes the motion should be discussed. On occasions, the purpose of a seconder is to ensure that the matter is at least of sufficient interest to be presented to the group, and thus the seconder prevents one person from wasting the group's time.

Parliamentary law is designed to insure that the group considers only one motion at a time. This prevents confusion and speeds action, and it is the presiding officer's duty to remind the group constantly which action is the main topic.

However, the requirements of getting a job done – and preventing a small but vociferous minority from keeping a group in session or wasting time on inconsequential matters – demand that certain motions receive precedence. These have specific objectives which deserve early consideration by the group.

When these motions are made, they immediately become the pending problem of the group and must be decided first. It is important to remember that only the motion with precedence is then before the group, even though any number of subsidiary, incidental, or privileged motions are, so to speak, on the floor.

Confusion will not result if the presiding officer keeps the group well informed and explain what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen next.

TYPES OF MOTIONS

The use of parliamentary forms over a period of time has resulted in the establishment of certain terminology which itself has specific parliamentary meanings. The terms often vary as to the group using them.

Lay on the Table: A motion to delay, to an indefinite time, consideration of a main motion by taking it figuratively from the floor, where action can be taken, and laying it on the table, where action cannot be taken. This helps to allow more time to consider the problem, yet does not set a definite time for reconsideration.

Take from the Table: A majority of voters who tabled the motion can later figuratively take the motion from the table and put it on the floor for discussion. When this is done, the motion comes back to the floor in the

same condition as it went on the table (with the same wording).

Main Motion: A motion to accomplish a part of the business of a group. All other motions are, in a way, procedural, while the main motions get the work done.

- **Examples:** Adopt a project, approve a report, create a committee, etc.

Subsidiary Motions: A motion generally designed to facilitate action on a main motion – a motion subsidiary to the main motion.

- **Examples:** To debate, amend, refer to a committee, lay on the table, etc.

Incidental Motions: These motions are incidental to the consideration of business and accomplish certain parliamentary purposes.

- **Examples:** Questions of order and appeal, suspension of the rules, objection to consideration of a question, etc.

Privileged Motions: A motion is privileged when it requires an immediate decision in regard to the subject matter to which it relates, rather than to the subject matter of another motion that may have been on the floor.

Amendments: Amendments are not always necessary, but if someone wishes to change a motion, he may move the adoption of an amendment. This can be done at any time during the discussion. The amendment can be further amended, and more amendments can be offered, but at any one time only the main motion, the amendment, or the amendment to the amendment, can be on the floor.

VOTING

After discussion has been completed, the vote should be taken. First a vote is taken on the amendment to the amendment (if any); then the vote is taken on the amendment (as either amended or as originally presented, depending on the previous vote); and finally on the main motion (as either amended or as presented, depending on the previous votes.)