

NSTU GUIDE
TO
PARLIAMENTARY
PROCEDURE



NSTU

PARLIAMENTARY
PROCEDURE COURSE

Fundamentals of Parliamentary Procedures

1. *What is parliamentary procedure?*

It is a set of rules, often referred to as *rules of order*, for conducting business at official meetings of an organization. Various parliamentary authorities are available to organizations that provide guidance/rules for appropriate parliamentary procedure.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition (RONR 11th Ed.), is the parliamentary authority for most organizations including the NSTU. The NSTU also sets its own rules of order where it is reasonable to differ from Robert's.

2. *Why is parliamentary procedure important?*

Parliamentary procedures ensure and protect the democratic process of an organization. It protects the rights of the minority to be heard while ensuring the voice of the majority prevails.

It is important for members of an organization, in particular its leadership, to have a basic understanding of parliamentary procedure and rules of order.

The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to help facilitate the smooth running of a business meeting. It is not a goal in and of itself. It should not be used frivolously to impede the business of a meeting.

3. *What does a typical meeting agenda look like?*

Though a meeting agenda may take many forms, a typical agenda will follow a standard form. The agenda should provide the order of business generally followed by an organization that uses parliamentary procedure. A typical meeting agenda would be:

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Disposition of Minutes
4. Reports from Officers
5. Reports from Committees
6. Unfinished Business and General Orders
7. New Business
8. Announcements
9. Adjournment

4. *How do members participate?*

Members make motions. A motion is a proposal that the assembly take a position or action on an issue. Members have the right to:

- Present Motions (Make a Proposal) *"I move that..."*
- Second Motions (Express support for discussion of another member's motion) *"Second."*
- Debate Motions (Give opinions on the motion) *"I speak in favour of the motion, I think..."*
- Vote on Motions (Make a decision) *"All those in favour..."*

5. *What are the types of motions that can be considered during a meeting?*

There are five classes of motions which helps to define their order of precedence. The five classes are as follow:

1. Main Motions

These introduce subjects for consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions. For example: *"I move that we purchase..."*

2. Subsidiary Motions

These change or affect how the main motion is handled. (They are voted on before the main motion.) For example: *"I move to amend the motion by striking out..."*

3. Privileged Motions

These concern special or important matters not related to pending business. In general, they are considered before other types of motions. For example: *"I move we adjourn."*

4. Incidental Motions

These are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. They must be considered before the other motion. For example: *"I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of..."*

5. Motions that bring a question again before the assembly

These enable certain items to be reconsidered. In general, they are brought up when no business is pending. For example: *"I move to reconsider..."*

Key Questions to Consider When Making a Motion

1. *Is the motion in order?*

Your motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the correct time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous or against the by-laws or constitution of the organization.

2. *May I interrupt the speaker to make a new motion?*

For most motions it is not proper to interrupt a speaker once they have been acknowledged by the Chair. However, some motions are so important that the speaker may be interrupted to make them. An appeal of a Chair's ruling is one such example where if the issue is not addressed immediately then the opportunity to correct the issue is lost.

The original speaker will regain the floor after the interruption has been addressed.

3. *Do I need a second for my motion?*

Usually, yes. A second indicates that another member would also like to consider your motion. It prevents spending time on a question that interests only one person. There are a few exceptions to this rule in order to allow the minority to be heard.

4. *Is the motion debatable?*

Parliamentary procedure protects the right to free and full debate on most motions. However, some subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions are not debatable to allow for expediency where it should be possible to make a decision quickly.

5. *Can the motion be amended?*

Many motions can be changed by striking out or inserting wording, or both. Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion (be germane to the main motion). Many other motions are not amendable because there is no reason to have this ability, for example the motion to adjourn.

6. *What vote threshold is required to have the motion adopted?*

Most motions require only a majority vote (more than half the members present and voting). However, motions concerning the rights of the assembly or its members need a two-thirds (2/3) vote to be adopted. Certain motions may require only a minority vote to be adopted to allow for the minority's voice to be heard.

7. *Can the motion be reconsidered?*

Some motions can be debated again and a new vote taken to allow members an opportunity to change their decision. The motion to reconsider must come from the winning side.

How Do I Present a Motion for Consideration?

Here are the steps followed when a motion is considered by an assembly:

1. The member addresses the Chair – *“Madame Chair, I wish to make a motion.”*
2. The Chair recognizes the member by stating the person’s name or title.
3. The member states the motion *“I move that...”*
4. The Chair calls for a seconder if not already provided by the mover *“Is there a seconder for the motion.”* Another member seconds the motion by stating *“I second.”* If there is no seconder, the motion is not considered.
5. The Chair repeats the motion – *“It has been moved and seconded that...”* The motion no longer belongs to the mover and seconder, it now belongs to the assembly. The motion can now be debated, amended, superseded, adopted, and/or withdrawn only at the will of the assembly.
6. The mover is allowed to speak first on the merits of the motion. The Chair calls on speakers in reasonable rotation, often keeping a speakers list if debate is fierce.
7. Speakers should begin their comments indicating their side – *“I speak for/against the motion.”*
8. A member may seek information on the topic by stating – *“Madame Chair – Point of Information...”*
9. Debate may be interrupted by a privileged, subsidiary, or incidental motion as long as it is in order.
10. The list of speakers is followed until three members have consecutively spoken for or against the motion. At this point the Chair seeks a speaker with an opposing view – *“The last three members have spoken for/against the motion. Is there a speaker against/for the motion wishing to speak?”*
11. To conclude debate, the Chair asks – *“Are there further speakers”* or *“Are you ready for the question?”* Seeing none, the Chair calls upon the mover to close debate.
12. The Chair calls for the decision by first restating the motion – *“It has been moved and seconded that...”*
13. The Chair conducts the vote.
14. The Chair reports the results of the vote to the assembly – *“The motion is carried/defeated.”*

There are Various Methods in Which to Conduct a Vote

The method of voting on a motion depends on the situation and the by-laws/rules of order of the organization. The organization may wish to use one method over another as it considers a particular vote. The vote may be conducted in one of the following ways:

1. *Voice Vote*

The Chair asks those in favour to say *aye*, *yes*, or *yea* then asks those opposed to say *no* or *nay*. The Chair decides if more have voted in the affirmative as opposed to the negative based on what has been heard.

2. *Show of Hands*

Members raise their hands to verify a voice vote, or as an alternative to it. The Chair asks those in favour of the motion to raise their hand then asks those against the motion to raise their hand. This does not necessarily require a count if it is obvious that more have voted one way as opposed to the other. It should not be used to record the vote.

3. *Roll Call Vote (or Vote by yeas and nays)*

In order to conduct a roll call vote on a main motion an incidental motion is required to set the manner in which to vote. During or prior to debate on a main motion a member would make the incidental motion to conduct a particular vote by roll call, if adopted the vote on the main motion would be conducted in this fashion. NSTU procedures allows for a roll call vote if one-fifth (1/5) of the members voting on the incidental motion vote in favour. A roll call vote is the only way in which an individual's vote may be recorded.

Each member of the assembly is called in alphabetical order by name and asked to vote, if the Chair is a voting member they are called last, each vote is recorded next to the individual's name. Members indicate their choice by replying *aye*, *yes*, or *yea* if they are in favour of the motion or by replying *no* or *nay* if they are opposed to the motion. Members may answer *present* or *abstain* to indicate their choice not to vote on the motion. Members may answer *pass* to indicate they do not want to vote at this time. Once the roll has been completed the person calling the roll should return to the members who indicated *pass* and ask if they wish to vote, at which time these members should reply with an affirmative, negative, or abstention.

4. *Ballot (or Vote by Secret Ballot)*

This is done when secrecy is desired. Members write their vote on a slip of paper. Scrutineers count the votes and report back to the assembly. A motion to destroy the ballots is in order following a ballot vote.

5. *General Consent*

When a motion isn't likely to be opposed, the chair asks, "*If there is no objection...*" Members show consent by their silence. If any single member says "*I object,*" the matter must be put to a vote.

6. *Electronic Vote*

A vote may be conducted by way of electronic keypad or on-line through an electronic ballot. The NSTU has provisions for electronic keypads at Annual Council and on-line ballots for elections.

There are a set of rules governing votes as follows:

1. A vote on a motion is conducted by the Chair at the end of debate by first restating the motion and calling for the vote.
2. The Chair only has a right to vote if a member of the assembly. Generally, the Chair does not vote on a motion unless it will change the result. The Chair should generally abstain from voting as a sign of neutrality. The Chair generally votes where a ballot is used to conduct the vote.
3. A majority vote is achieved where any number greater than half those who have cast a vote voted in favour.
4. A two-third (2/3) majority vote is achieved where any number greater than two-thirds (2/3) of those who have cast a vote voted in favour.
5. A plurality vote is typical for elections, a plurality is achieved where one candidate receives more votes than any other candidate on the ballot.
6. When a vote is conducted by secret ballot it is customary to have a motion for the destruction of ballots once the vote result is announced.
7. A single member can call to have a vote verified by calling "*Division.*" The Chair would declare "*Division of the Assembly has been called*" and would conduct a second vote by a means where votes can be counted. When a vote is being verified, individuals do not have to vote on the same side as they voted the first time.
8. If an individual member's personal interests are in conflict with a motion the individual should exit the assembly room during debate of the motion and the vote on the motion. This absence may be noted in the minutes as a demonstration that the individual was not involved in the decision.

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

To do this	Class of Motion	May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is required?	Can it be reconsidered?
Adjourn (21), end the meeting	P	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Adjourn (8, 10, 21), fix a time for adjourning	M	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
Agenda (10, 41, 59), adopt an agenda	M	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority or (2/3) ¹	Negative vote only
Agenda (35, 41, 59), amend an adopted agenda	M/B	No	Yes/No ²	Yes	Yes	(2/3) or Unanimous Consent ²	Negative vote only
Rescind or Amend (35), as in a previously adopted motion	M/B	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority or (2/3) ³	Negative vote only
Recess (10, 20), take a recess while No Business Pending/ Business Pending	M/P	No	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Majority	No
Reconsider (37), as in to reconsider a previously adopted motion ⁴	B	No	Yes	Yes, if original debatable ⁴	No	Majority	No
Question of Privilege (10, 19), to address a concern (noise, guests present in closed session, etc.)	P	Yes ⁵	No, unless raised as a motion	No	No	Chair decides	No
Amend (12), suggest an amendment to a pending motion	S	No	Yes	Yes, if original debatable	Yes	Majority	Yes
Amend an Amendment (12), suggest an amendment to an amendment ⁶	S	No	Yes	Yes, if original debatable	No	Majority	Yes
Division of Question (27), divide question into two or more parts for clarity	I	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
Previous Question (16), end debate by calling for a vote	S	No	Yes	No	No	(2/3)	Yes
Limit or Extend Limits (10, 15), as in limits on debate	S	No	Yes	No	Yes	(2/3)	Yes
Table (17), lay on the table	S	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Negative vote only
Take from Table (34), restart debate on a previously tabled motion	B	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Postpone Question (14), to a certain time	S	No	Yes	Yes ⁷	Yes	Majority	Negative vote only ⁸
Postpone Indefinitely (11), drop the question without a vote	S	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Affirm. vote only

To do this	Class of Motion	May you interrupt the speaker?	Do you need a second?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	What vote is required?	Can it be reconsidered?
Commit (13), refer to a committee	S	No	Yes	Yes ⁷	Yes	Majority	Yes ⁹
Discharge a Committee (36), take back from committee before report	M/B	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority or (2/3) ¹⁰	Negative vote only
Appeal (24), as in ruling of Chair ¹¹	I	Yes ¹¹	Yes	Yes ¹¹	No	Majority	Yes
Division of Assembly (29), call for a verification of vote result	I	Yes	No	No	No	Single member	No
Nominations and Polls (31), as in close nominations	I	No	Yes	No	Yes	(2/3)	No
Nominations and Polls (31), as in reopen nominations	I	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Negative vote only
Point of Order (23), call for Chair to address violation of rules	I	Yes	No	No ¹²	No	Chair decides ¹²	No
Suspend Rules (25, 59), work outside of rules of order ¹³	I	No	Yes	No	No	Majority or (2/3) ¹³	No
Voting (10, 30, 44, 45, 46), motions related to voting except nominations	I	No	Yes	Yes/No ¹⁴	No	Majority ¹⁴	Yes
Withdraw a Motion (33), as in end debate, discard motion	I	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority	Negative vote only

Note: **Bolded** numbers in parenthesis indicate section of RONR (11th edition) for greater detail

Classes: M – Main, P – Privileged, S – Subsidiary, I – Incidental, and B – Bring back

- Typically majority, two-thirds (2/3) if in session and in conflict with set program.
- If the Chair suggests the amendment no seconder is required, Chair asks for consent, if any member objects a vote is required. If suggested by an attendee of the meeting a seconder is required and a two-thirds (2/3) vote is required to adopt.
- The NSTU has specific rules as does Robert's Rules.
- Mover and Secunder must be from the prevailing side of the original vote. There is a limit in terms of time. If debate is allowed it should be limited to the merits of the question.
- Generally, should be of an urgent matter to interrupt a speaker or debate.
- Though Robert's allows for this, it is generally not advisable as it tends to add confusion to the debate.
- Debate must be limited to merits of the question, should not go into main motion.
- Negative vote may be reconsidered up to the time the question comes before the assembly again.
- Can only be reconsidered up until the time the committee begins consideration of the matter.
- Two-thirds (2/3) vote required unless notice is given at a previous meeting in which case a majority vote suffices.
- Only applies to a ruling of the Chair. May interrupt a speaker, must be made at the time of the ruling, and if any debate or business has intervened it is too late. Debatable unless it relates to: transgression in rules, priority of business, or undebatable question or undebatable question is pending.
- Explanation is allowed but debate is not. Chair makes a ruling or may allow the assembly to vote, in which case a majority vote.
- Cannot be used to suspend By-Laws or the Constitution. No rule protecting a minority can be suspended in the face of a negative vote as large as the minority. Rules related to parliamentary procedure require a two-thirds (2/3) vote, other rules require a majority vote.
- Debatable if no question is pending. NSTU rules allow for setting a roll-call vote with one-fifth (1/5) minority vote.



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