

# Basic Parliamentary Procedure

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## Introduction

Research has proven that as much as 50% of the time in meetings is unproductive and that up to 25% is spent discussing irrelevant issues. Research has also proven that using a skilled facilitator can increase productivity by as much as 25%. Part of being a skilled facilitator is being well versed in basic parliamentary procedure and following a planned agenda.

## Target Audience

- a. EHC
- b. Adults

## Objectives

- a. Teach basic parliamentary procedure
- a. Teach importance of using an agenda
- b. Teach how to construct a proper agenda
- c. How to write a proper set of minutes

## Main Teaching Points

- a. **Why do we use Parliamentary Procedure?**
  - i. To facilitate the transaction of business
  - ii. To promote cooperation and harmony
  - iii. To ensure that all members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations
  - iv. Ensure the majority has the right to decide, but the minority has rights which must be protected as well
  - v. Rules that limit, guide and protect the individual
  - vi. Protect the rights of the minority
  - vii. It's not that the decision you make must be correct, but each decision you make must be correctly made.
  
- b. **Basic Principals of Parliamentary Procedure**
  - i. A quorum must be present at all times for the group to act and it should be defined by the by-laws, if not, then majority of membership. A. quorum is

minimum number of members necessary to conduct business (present throughout meeting) and determined by chair before meeting starts unless bylaws state a specific way. The bylaws should specify quorum for all types of meetings. If quorum ceases to exist during meeting only two motions are in order: a motion to recess until quorum returns or a motion to adjourn.

- ii. Only one question should be considered at any given time.
- iii. No member should speak until recognized by the chair.
- iv. The chair should maintain strict impartiality during discussion.
- v. Chair can vote if it will affect the outcome

**c. Presiding Officer**

- i. Stands when calling the meeting to order (in larger meetings)
- ii. Says, “ The meeting will come to order.”
- iii. Can approve the minutes without a motion
- iv. Can adjourn a meeting without a motion after asking for additional business and not hearing any or adjournment time is reached on an adopted agenda

**d. Procedure for handling a main motion**

i. Making the Motion:

Member rises and addresses the Chair, “Mr./Madam President or Chairperson.” Chair recognizes the member. Member states: “I move that \_\_\_\_\_ (states motion).” Someone seconds the motion (not necessary to stand or be recognized). “I second the motion.” If the motion comes as a recommendation from two or more members, the motion does not need a second. Chair states motion: “It has been moved by (name) and seconded that \_\_\_\_\_.” Chair then asks for discussion.

ii. Debate:

If debatable, every member has right to debate. Chair refrains from debate while presiding. Proposer of motion has first right of debate. Maker of motion has right to speak first, if properly recognized. Member can only speak twice on same question during the same day. Any motion that stops or limits debate requires a 2/3 vote. All debate must be related (germane) only to motion. The Chair says: “If there is no further discussion, the motion is \_\_\_\_\_(restate motion).”

iii. Vote:

The Chair says, “All those in favor of \_\_\_\_\_(the motion is stated) say ‘aye.’ Those opposed say ‘no.’ If motion requires 2/3 vote, ask for rising or by show of hands. Chair should always ask for those opposed. Result of the vote is stated by chair.

“The motion is carried” or “the motion is lost.” If counted vote, give number on both sides

**e. There are five classes of motions**

- I. Privileged Motions: Do not relate to pending business, related to the rights and privileges to the assembly or to its members and are not debatable.
- II. Subsidiary Motions assist in treating or disposing of a main motion, all require second and may or may not be debatable. Requires majority vote unless involving rights of others and then requires a 2/3. Most widely used is “Amend”
- III. Incidental Motions (non-ranked) are incidental to pending motions or business at hand and are not debatable.
- IV. Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly brings back a question that has already been considered. They require a second and may or may not be debatable.
- V. Main Motions bring before the assembly a question or business consideration. It is in order only when no other motion is pending. You can only have one main motion on the floor at any time. They require a second, debatable, usually approved by majority vote, unless some provision in bylaws require different vote

Note: Refer to the Chart on When a Motion is in Order for complete listing of motions in each class and the requirements of each.

**f. Amendments**

Only two amendments can be pending at any one time, a primary and a secondary. The primary is applied to the main motion and the secondary is applied to the primary amendment. Can have infinite number of secondary amendments as long as only two total amendments pending at any one time. You vote on amendments in reverse order, secondary then primary.

**g. Commonly Used Motions**

- i. Main Motion – brings an item of business to the floor for discussion
- ii. Motion to Amend – changed either the main motion or an amendment to the motion.
- iii. Call for the Question – a motion to stop debate and requires a 2/3 vote. It is not a motion to vote immediately, but to stop debate. Cannot be shouted out, but treated as any other motion.

- iv. Call for the Division of the House – questions the outcome of a voice vote when in doubt.
- v. Refer to a Committee – send to a committee for more study
- vi. To lay on the Table – move a motion out of the way for more pressing business. Is out of order if no other business is pending.
- vii. Withdraw a Motion – to remove a motion from consideration. Can be done at any time prior to voting, just handled differently.
- viii. Rise to a Point of Order – questions a situation pertaining to the rules.
- ix. Adjourn – ends the meeting.

**h. Minutes**

- i. Only record what was done, not everything that was said
- ii. Secunder of motion need not be recorded
- iii. Corrected at any time mistake is discovered, even years later
- iv. Good minutes are first line of defense in lawsuit

**i. Order of Business vs. an Agenda**

- i. Order of Business - Basic outline of business proceedings
- ii. Agenda - Schedule of the order of business, with details and should never be included in bylaws because you could not vote to immediately suspend the rules if in bylaws.

**j. Basic Agenda**

- i. Call to Order
- ii. Opening Ceremonies
- iii. Roll Call
- iv. Reading and Approval of the Minutes
- v. Report of Officers, Boards and Committees
- vi. Unfinished Business
- vii. New Business
- viii. Program
- ix. Announcements
- x. Adjournment

**Conclusion**

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its program to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Parliamentary procedure is not intended to hinder meeting but to make them run more efficiently. It is intended to ensure that all members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations. It is the rules that limit, guide and protect the individual and protects the rights of the minority viewpoint. The most important thing to remember is that the decision you make must be correct, but each decision you make must be correctly made. Following procedure can help prevent your organization from becoming involved in a lawsuit. It is also imperative your organization has a good set of bylaws and keep good minutes of what was done. In any lawsuit, two of the first documents requested by an attorney are the bylaws and the minutes.

### **Lesson Material**

- a. Handouts
  - i. Chart for determining when a motion is in order
  - ii. Procedure for Order of Business
  - iii. Proper form of Minutes
- b. PowerPoint
- c. Evaluation

### **Suggestions for Teaching**

- a. Use handouts and PowerPoint to become familiar with material.
- b. Order Pocket Guide to Parliamentary Procedure from the warehouse. Maximum 15 copies per order.
- c. Have participants complete the evaluation

This information is based on Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (October 2011).

Your individual bylaws may say something different than what is presented, which is OK, unless it is in violation of

ARK. CODE ANN.§4-33-101-1707

### **References**

Simplified Handbook of Parliamentary Procedure MP350  
Pocket Guide to Parliamentary Procedure MP475

Robert, Henry M.,III, D.H. Honemann, and T.J. Balch. 2011. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. DaCapo Press, Perseus Books Group, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1993: ARK. CODE ANN.§4-33-101-1707

