

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

Eight Steps in Processing a Main Motion

- Step 1:** Member rises and addresses the chair when nothing is pending.
“Mr. President.” Or “Madame President.”
- Step 2:** Chair recognizes member by nodding at the member or stating his name. “Mr. Williams.”
- Step 3:** Member states his/her motion. “I move that we have a canned food drive.”
- Step 4:** Another member seconds the motion (without recognition). “Second.”
- Step 5:** Chair states the motion and places it before the assembly for discussion. “It is moved and seconded that we have a canned food drive. Is there any discussion?”
- Step 6:** Members have the right to get recognition and debate the motion. During debate subsidiary motions (i.e. amendments) may be introduced to help the assembly make a final decision.
- Step 7:** When discussion is finished the Chair puts the question to a vote. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that we have a canned food drive. Those in favor, say AYE.” (Pause.) “Those opposed, say NO.” (Pause.)
- Step 8:** Chair announces the results of the vote. “The AYES (NOES) have it; the motion is adopted (lost); we will (not) have a canned food drive; the next business in order is ...”
- #### Methods of Voting
- **Unanimous Consent** – no member objects to a proposal that meets with general approval; a vote of silent agreement.
 - **Voice Vote** – regular method of voting on any motion that does not require more than a majority vote; most common form of voting.
 - **Rising Vote** – method used when a two-thirds vote is required for adoption; is also used when a member calls for a division of the assembly.
 - **Show of Hands or Voting Cards** – an alternative method for a rising vote.
 - **Counted Vote** – can be ordered by the chair when it appears a voice vote is unclear and it can be ordered by a majority vote of the assembly.
 - **Ballot or Roll Call Vote** – can be ordered by a majority vote of the assembly and is required if specified in bylaws.

The 13 Ranking Motions – motions lower on the list cannot be made if anything higher is pending.

1. **Fix the time to which to adjourn:** This motion is used to set the time for another meeting to continue business of the session. It does not adjourn the present meeting or set a time for its adjournment.
2. **Adjourn:** This is a motion to close the meeting.
3. **Recess:** A short interruption which does not close the meeting. After recess, business resumes at exactly the point where it was interrupted.
4. **Raise a question of privilege:** This device permits a request or a motion relating to the rights of either the assembly or an individual to interrupt business and, because of its urgency, be brought up for possible immediate consideration.
5. **Call for the order of the day:** By the use of this motion, a single member can require the assembly to follow the order of business or agenda, or to take up a special order that is now due to come up, unless two-thirds of the assembly wish to do otherwise.
6. **Lay on the table:** This motion is used to place the pending motion aside when something of an urgent nature arises and needs the immediate attention of the assembly.
7. **Previous question:** This is simply a motion to end debate, allow no further subsidiary motions on the pending motion, and take a vote. It must be seconded, no debate is allowed, and a 2/3 vote is needed to close debate.
8. **Limit or extend limits of debate:** This motion can reduce or increase the number and length of speeches permitted or limit the length of debate on a specific question.
9. **Postpone definitely:** Should be used if the body needs more time to make a decision or if there is a time for consideration of the question that would be more convenient. The postponement cannot be beyond the next session in a group that meets regularly.
10. **Commit or refer to a committee:** This motion sends the main motion to a committee for further examination and refinement before the body votes on it.
11. **Amend:** The intent of this motion is to modify the pending motion before it is voted on.
12. **Postpone indefinitely:** This motion, in effect, kills the main motion for the duration of the meeting without having to take a vote on it.
13. **Main motion:** a formal proposal for consideration and action.

Introduction to Parliamentary Procedure

Meetings held in The American Legion are governed by Robert's Rules of Order. To become an expert in parliamentary procedure can require years of study. You don't have to be an expert to participate in a meeting. Below are presented some of the basic motions and the rules that apply to them. Look for what you want to do in the "To Do This" column, preface your motion with "You Say This" column, and the various requirements for the motion and how it is acted upon follow under the various columns.

"To Do This:"	"You Say This:"	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Do You Need Second?	Is It Debatable?	Can It Be Amended?	What Vote Needed?	Can It Be Reconsidered?
Adjourn Meeting	"I move that we adjourn."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Call An Intermission	"I move that we recess for..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
Complain About Heat, Noise, Etc.	"I rise to a question of privilege."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No (usually)
Temporarily Suspend Consideration of an Issue	"I move to table the motion."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
End Debate/ Amendments	"I move the previous question"	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No ¹
Postpone Discussion for a Certain Time	"I move to postpone the discussion until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Give Closer Study of Something	"I move to refer the matter to committee."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes ²
Amend a Motion	"I move to amend the motion by..."	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Majority	Yes
Introduce Business	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes

Motions Listed Above Are In Order of Precedence

That means that motions that are higher up the list will be acted on before those below it on the list. For instance, if you have a motion that is being debated and someone wants to complain about the noise in the room (A Question of Privilege) that will be answered before debate continues. Or, if someone makes an amendment to a motion, the amendment is voted on before the motion it amended.

The Motions Below Are In No Order

"To Do This:"	"You Say This:"	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Do You Need Second?	Is It Debatable?	Can It Be Amended?	What Vote Needed?	Can It Be Reconsidered?
Protest Breach of Rules or Conduct	"I rise to a point of order."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote ⁴	No
To Vote on a Ruling of the Chair	"I appeal from the chair's decision."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes
Suspend Rules Temporarily	"I move to suspend the rules so that..."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
Avoid Considering an Improper Matter	"I object to consideration of this motion."	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 ⁶	-- ⁷
Verify a Voice Vote by Having Members Stand	"I call for a division." or "Division"	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Request Information	"Point of information."	Yes	No	No	No	No Vote	No
Take Up a Matter Previously Tabled	"I move to take from the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Reconsider a Hasty Action	"I move to reconsider the vote on..."	Yes	Yes	-- ⁸	No	Majority	No

Notes:

¹ Unless vote on question is not yet taken.

² Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.

³ Only if the motion to be amended is debatable.

⁴ Except in doubtful cases.

⁵ A majority vote in negative needed to reverse the ruling of the chair.

⁶ A 2/3 vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of main motion.

⁷ Only if the main question or motion was not, in fact, considered.

⁸ Only if the motion to be reconsidered is debatable.