

APPENDIX VI

A Practical Guide to Robert's Rules of Order

Purpose of Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order provides a fair and orderly process for conducting business meetings. Its purpose is to help the Intergroup:

- Consider one matter at a time.
- Give every member a reasonable opportunity to participate.
- Protect the rights of both the majority and the minority.
- Reach clear, informed decisions.
- Maintain an accurate record of actions taken.

Parliamentary procedure should support—not overshadow—the spiritual principles of A.A. It is a tool for organizing discussion, not for controlling members, silencing disagreement, or gaining a procedural advantage.

The Intergroup's bylaws, adopted policies, and established procedures take precedence over Robert's Rules. Robert's Rules applies only when those governing documents do not address the matter under consideration.

Basic Meeting Process

A typical item of business follows this sequence:

1. **Recognition:** A member waits to be recognized by the Chair before speaking.
2. **Motion:** The member states, "I move that...", followed by the proposed action.
3. **Second:** Another member seconds the motion, indicating that at least one other person believes it should be considered. A second does not necessarily mean support for the motion.
4. **Restatement:** The Chair restates the motion so everyone understands exactly what is being considered.
5. **Discussion:** Members discuss the merits of the motion. The maker of the motion is generally given the first opportunity to speak.
6. **Vote:** When discussion is complete, the Chair states the motion again and calls for the vote.
7. **Announcement:** The Chair announces whether the motion passed or failed and, when appropriate, explains the next action.

Only one main motion may be considered at a time. Discussion should remain focused on the pending motion.

Making and Discussing Motions

A motion should propose a specific action the Intergroup can take. Clear wording helps prevent confusion about what members are approving.

Example:

"I move that the Intergroup establish an ad hoc committee to review the bylaws and present recommendations at the October business meeting."

During discussion:

- Members should address their comments to the Chair.
- Each member should be allowed an opportunity to speak before anyone speaks a second time.
- Comments should address the proposal, not another member's motives or character.
- Personal remarks, interruptions, and side conversations should be avoided.

- Members may ask questions to understand the motion before voting.
- The Chair should remain impartial while presiding.

Discussion may continue as long as members have relevant information or viewpoints to share, unless the body votes to close debate.

Common Motions and Requests

Action	Suggested Wording	Second Required?	Debatable?	Vote Required
Introduce business	"I move that..."	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend by..."	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to a committee	"I move to refer this matter to..."	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone consideration	"I move to postpone this matter until..."	Yes	Yes	Majority
Close debate	"I move the previous question."	Yes	No	Two-thirds
Withdraw a motion	"I request permission to withdraw my motion."	No	No	General consent or majority
Request information	"Point of information."	No	No	No vote
Raise a procedural concern	"Point of order."	No	No	Chair rules
Take a brief recess	"I move to recess for..."	Yes	Limited	Majority
Adjourn the meeting	"I move to adjourn."	Yes	No	Majority

An amendment changes the wording of the pending motion. It may add words, remove words, or replace language. The amendment is discussed and voted on before returning to the main motion. If the amendment passes, the body then considers the main motion as amended.

A point of information is used to request factual information relevant to the pending business. It is not an opportunity to make a speech.

A point of order may be raised when a member believes the rules or proper procedure are not being followed. The Chair rules on the point and briefly explains the decision when needed.

Voting and General Consent

Unless the bylaws or an applicable rule requires otherwise, most motions are decided by a majority vote—more than half of the votes cast. Abstentions are not counted as votes cast.

Routine or noncontroversial matters may be handled by general consent. The Chair may state:

"If there is no objection, the minutes will be approved as presented."

If no member objects, the action is approved. If a member objects, the Chair proceeds with discussion and a formal vote.

The Chair should clearly announce the result of every vote. When the result is uncertain, a counted vote should be taken.

Minority Opinion and an Informed Group Conscience

A.A.'s group-conscience process calls for more than simply counting votes. Members should receive relevant information, have an opportunity to ask questions, and hear differing viewpoints before making a decision.

After a vote, the Chair may invite members who voted with the minority to share information or perspectives that were not previously considered. This is not an opportunity to repeat the entire debate. If the minority opinion presents significant new information, a member who voted with the prevailing side may move to reconsider the decision.

Members should avoid using parliamentary procedure to rush discussion when additional information may materially affect the outcome. At the same time, respectful disagreement does not require unanimous consent. Once the group conscience has been reached, members are encouraged to support the collective decision.

Role of the Chair

The Chair's responsibility is to facilitate the meeting fairly and efficiently. The Chair should:

- Follow the agenda and recognize speakers in an orderly manner.
- State each motion clearly before discussion and voting.
- Encourage participation while keeping discussion relevant.
- Apply the rules consistently and impartially.
- Clarify procedure when members are uncertain.
- Protect the right of the body to make its own decisions.
- Avoid using the position to influence the outcome of debate.

The Chair may pause the proceedings to explain a rule or help a member properly phrase a motion. When strict procedure would create unnecessary confusion, the Chair may use reasonable flexibility, provided the rights of members are protected and the will of the body is clear.

Guiding Principle

Robert's Rules should be applied with patience, common sense, and respect. The goal is not perfect parliamentary form. The goal is an orderly and inclusive process through which the Intergroup can arrive at an informed group conscience and carry out its primary purpose.