

# SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS'

## Guide to Common Parliamentary Procedures and Language

Understanding primary proceedings as a board member requires familiarization with parliamentary procedures and language, specifically Robert's Rules of Order, which outline the framework for conducting meetings. These rules enable board members to actively participate by asking questions, proposing limits on debate, and redirecting discussions that stray from the agenda. With a solid understanding of these procedures, you can advocate for fairness, guarantee equal speaking time for all members, and spot inconsistencies in how rules are applied. This knowledge not only enhances your effectiveness on the board but also makes a more structured and respectful atmosphere during meetings.

### BASIC RULES



**Only one subject may be before a group at one time** Each item is proposed as a motion, requires a "second," and is restated by the chair before voting.



**"Negative" motions are generally not permitted** Motions should propose positive actions. If the action is undesired, vote it down unless denial needs justification.



**Only one person may speak at any given time** Robert's Rules dictate a speaker order. The mover speaks first and last for clarity and rebuttal.



**All members have equal rights** Each speaker must be recognized by the chairman prior to speaking. Each speaker should make clear his or her intent by stating, "I wish to speak for/against the motion" prior to stating an argument.



**Full and free debate** Everyone has the chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice.



**Rights of minority, will of majority** Minority views are heard, but decisions reflect the majority's will.

### MOTIONS

Business is brought before the school board by motions, a formal procedure for taking actions. To make a motion, a member must first be recognized by the chairman or president of the board. After the member has made a motion (and after the motion is seconded if required), the chair must then restate it or rule it out of order, then call for discussion. Most motions require a second, although there are a few exceptions.

*\*Important to note exact wording of motions and amendments is important for clarity and recording in the minutes. If it's complex, the motion should be written down for the chair to read.*

**Robert's Rules of Order provides for four general types of motions: main motions, subsidiary motions, incidental motions, and renewal motions.**

### Main Motions

The most important are main motions, which bring before the board, for its action, any particular subject. Main motions cannot be made when any other motions are before the group.

### Subsidiary Motions

- **Tabling** Postpones discussion until a majority vote resumes it. Requires a second and is not debatable or amendable.
- **Previous question or close debate** Ends debate and moves to a vote. Requires a second, is not debatable, and needs a two-thirds majority.
- **Limit/extend debate** Sets or adjusts time limits for discussion as needed.
- **Postpone to a definite time** Delays discussion to a specific date and time.
- **Refer to committee** Assigns the matter to a committee for further study and reporting.
- **Amendment** Modifies a motion to make it more acceptable. Requires a second, is debatable, and is voted on before the main motion.
- **Postpone indefinitely** Defeats a motion without direct rejection. Requires a two-thirds vote to reconsider later.

### Incidental Motions

Incidental motions are housekeeping motions which are in order at any time, taking precedence over main motions and subsidiary motions. These motions include:

- **Point of order** Highlights rule violations. Requires the chair to rule on immediate consideration.
- **Appeal from the decision of the chair** Allows the board to overrule the chair's decision. Requires a second, limited debate, and a majority vote.
- **Parliamentary inquiry** Asks if an action is in order. Not a motion. Point of information Offers relevant information to the group without debate.
- **Division of assembly** Requests precise vote counting (e.g., hand-raising). Requires no second, vote, or debate.
- **Request to withdraw a motion** Mover needs majority approval to withdraw a motion.
- **Suspension of the rules** Allows exceptions to formal rules with a two-thirds vote. Requires a second but is not debatable or amendable.
- **Object to consideration of a question** Blocks an improper motion. Requires a two-thirds vote if not ruled out by the chair.

### Renewal Motions

Once the board has taken action, renewal motions require the group to further discuss or dispose of a motion. The motions include:

- **Reconsider** When the board needs to discuss further a motion that has already been defeated at the same meeting. A majority of the board must approve taking additional time to debate the motion again. The motion can be made only by a person who previously voted on the prevailing side. Contrary to another popular misconception, the motion may be brought up again at a subsequent meeting. If the moderator does not believe the group's wishes have changed, however, the motion can be ruled out of order, subject to an appeal from the decision of the chair.
- **Take from the table** Unless the original motion to table directed that the motion be brought back at a specific date and time, a majority of the board must pass a motion to take from the table. Such a motion is non-debatable.
- **Rescind** When the board wishes to annul an action, a motion to rescind is in order at any time. If prior notice has been given to the board that this action will be considered, the motion to rescind can pass with a simple majority vote; however, if no prior notice has been given, the vote requires a two-thirds majority.

### QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Finally, there are a few questions of privilege that are in order at any time and must be disposed of prior to resuming discussion on the matter at hand:

- **Fix the time for next meeting** This is in order at any time, including when a motion to adjourn is pending. Second required, not debatable, and amendable.
- **Adjourn** To bring the meeting to a halt. Second required, not debatable, and not amendable. Alternatively, instead of a motion, the chair can ask if there is any further business. If there is no response, the chair can say, "Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned."
- **Recess** A temporary break in the meeting; should state a time at which the meeting will resume. Second required, not debatable, and not amendable.
- **Point of privilege** A matter that concerns the welfare of the board. Can be raised even when another person is speaking. No second, not debatable, and no vote required.
- **Call for the orders of the day** A demand that the board return to the agenda. Can be taken when another person is speaking, no second required, not debatable, and no vote required.

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Common School Board Meeting Proceedings	Board Member's Statements	Requires Second?	Motion Open for Debate?
Adjourn a meeting before the business is completed	"I move that we adjourn."	✓	✗
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until..."	✓	✗
Table an item / suspend further consideration of an issue until later in the meeting	"I move we table ____until... (specifically state when later in the meeting)."	✓	✗
Take up a previously tabled matter	"I move; we take from the table ... (specifically name the item that was tabled)."	✓	✗
End debate on any issue	"I move the question." <b>Or</b> "I move the previous question."	✓	✓
Study an issue further	"I move we refer this matter to a committee." <b>Or</b> "I move the superintendent to study this issue further and provide the Board with a thorough report on said study."	✓	✓
Introduce business / make a primary motion	"I move that..." <b>Or</b> "I make a motion to..."	✓	✓
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..." <b>Or</b> I make a motion to amend _____ by... (be specific)."	✗	✗
Object to procedure/object to how something is being conducted / object to misuse of Robert's Rules of Order	"Point of order... (be specific with your objection)."	✗	✗
Postponing a motion	"I move; we postpone until ..."	✓	✓

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