

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary procedure is a consistent framework of regulations that oversee the operations of various organizations. These regulations serve to safeguard the rights of all participants, emphasize courtesy toward all members, and ensure impartial treatment. While it's not mandatory to be well-versed in every rule, possessing a fundamental understanding can greatly facilitate the efficient conduct of meetings. It's advisable to keep copies of the PTA's Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order on hand during meetings for easy reference.

Parliamentary procedure mandates that all participants acknowledge the will of the majority and show respect for the opinions of the minority. The President, as the duly elected leader, is tasked with executing the PTA's will rather than imposing their own agenda upon it. It's crucial to remember that authority resides in the office, not in the individual holding it. All members hold equal status within the organization. No one has the right to do anything that prevents others from seeing or hearing the presiding officer or speaker. During meetings, no one has the right to converse, move about, or stand, except to address the presiding officer. If several members rise at the same time to claim the floor, the chair recognizes one and the others shall be seated immediately to be called upon as soon as possible if time permits.

A **motion**, also known as an "action," is a formal proposal presented to an organization, suggesting that it take specific actions or express particular viewpoints. The purpose of a motion is to introduce a matter for consideration during a meeting. There are six distinct steps involved in making a motion:

1. **Gaining the floor and stating the motion:** A member stands and respectfully addresses the chair by using the appropriate title. The chair acknowledges the member who wishes to speak. The member is then allowed to say their motion, such as "I move that..."
2. **Seconding the motion:** Another member must second the motion, indicating that more than one person is interested in the topic by stating, "I second the motion." Motions initiated in committees do not need a second.
3. **Restating the motion:** The chair formally restates the motion to the assembly which can be modified or edited.
4. **Discussion (or debate):** All comments and arguments should be directed towards the chair. This discussion alternates between pro and con speakers until no one wishes to speak or until someone moves to end the debate early. To end the debate, a member can say, "I move the previous question." This motion requires a second, is not open for debate itself, and necessitates an affirmative two-thirds vote.
5. **"Putting the Question" or Taking the Vote:** The chair reiterates the motion, specifies the voting method, and calls for both affirmative and negative votes.
6. **Announcing the results:** The chair announces the outcome of the vote (passed or failed) and explains the action the assembly will take based on the vote's result.

Motions should be presented in a clear and concise manner, focused on a single main idea. The appropriate language for initiating a motion is either "I move that" or "I move to." The individual proposing the motion usually initiates the discussion. In exceptional circumstances, the presiding officer can engage in discussion but must temporarily step down from the chair during the debate and voting process. The President is permitted to cast a vote on a pending question when their vote could potentially make or break a tie or alter the outcome. Additionally, the President may vote when an anonymous ballot is used to maintain confidentiality and to not influence others. The minutes record the person's name who made the motion but not the name of the second.

# ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

All meetings, regardless of their formality, encompass certain fundamental components essential for their effectiveness. One crucial element is the agenda, which sets the sequence of topics to be addressed. It is imperative to adhere to the agenda, addressing and concluding each item before moving on to the next one, as this promotes clarity and efficiency. Employing parliamentary procedure is essential to safeguard the rights of participants while facilitating productive discussions on the meeting's agenda. In the case of PTA meetings, they are governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised as noted in the Bylaws.

Establish a consistent meeting schedule that accommodates the availability of both General Membership and Board of Directors, enabling individuals to plan effectively. Consider the possibility of arranging meetings on multiple dates or at different times to enhance attendance. Consult with neighboring PTAs, feeder schools, and community stakeholders to align schedules for better coordination.

The individual serving as the presiding officer should arrive punctually, possess a thorough understanding of the organization's Bylaws and parliamentary protocols, maintain composure, exhibit tactfulness, show appreciation, extend courtesy, embrace a charitable demeanor, and present themselves in a well-groomed manner. The President, or in the President's absence the Vice-President, assumes the role of the presiding officer. This individual officially starts the meeting at the designated time and proceeds with the agenda. The President utilizes an impersonal reference as "the chair" as the presiding officer in formal gatherings of the General Membership. In this capacity, the President refrains from participating in the substantive discussion and avoids expressing personal opinions. Instead, they facilitate the orderly conduct of business within the group. In smaller gatherings, such as meetings of the Executive Committee, the President may actively participate, and the adherence to parliamentary procedure may be less strict.

**Preparing the Agenda:** According to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, the Secretary is authorized to create the agenda. Nevertheless, many Presidents do it themselves. Prior to compiling the agenda, review the minutes from the preceding meeting to identify any unresolved business. Consult with officers and committee chairs to determine if they have reports to present. Ensure that the names of individuals scheduled to speak are included on the agenda. Refrain from calling upon anyone who lacks a report to present.

**Quorum:** In accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, a quorum represents the minimum count of eligible voting members required for the legal conduct of business. Quorum for both BOD and Executive Committee meetings is 50% of the total Board roster plus one, or a majority. Do not count anyone more than once even if they hold multiple positions on the BOD. Quorum for General Membership Meetings is in the Bylaws. To establish quorum, every meeting should have the membership roster available and employ a sign-in sheet to document that quorum was met. There is a sample sign-in sheet in the Secretary Toolkit.