

Parliamentary Procedure Simplified based on Robert's "Rules of Order"

The last time I checked, there were quite a few motions each of which has a Classification and Rank of Precedence. A Main Motion is the idea or resolution upon which the assembly is working. You can only have one such main idea before the assembly at any one time. The Main Motion has the lowest rank of precedence primarily because all the other motions either apply to the main motion or they are of such immediate importance to the assembly that they must be voted on at once regardless of what else is before the assembly.

There are 4 classes of Motions: privileged, incidental, subsidiary and main. These motions are arranged in their rank of precedence, the one at the bottom is lowest ranking and the top is the highest. Although there are some exceptions, as there always are with any set of rules, any motion can be moved when a motion below it in precedence is before the assembly. Conversely, no motion can be moved if a motion above it in precedence is before the assembly. We all know that the more participants there are in a group, the easier and quicker things can tend to disorder. These rules of order are designed to progress the work of the assembly, not to bog it down in bureaucratic technicalities. Thus, with a smaller group, it is generally easier to progress the business at hand with a relaxation of absolute formalities while understanding that things need to progress in a fair and equitable fashion with all points of view having the opportunity to be expressed.

Now a Main Motion that is on the floor before the assembly can be modified by introducing an Amendment to it. After discussion, the proper way to deal with the situation is to first vote on the amendment. If it fails to pass, then the original main motion still stands and it is then voted on to pass or fail. If the Amendment passes, then the main motion is then amended and that is then put to a vote. So things don't get too bogged down and confusing on the floor, there can only be a maximum of one main motion, with one proposed amendment, with only one proposed amendment to that amendment, and no more. One then should deal with the amendment to the amendment first. If it fails, then another could introduce another amendment to the amendment. In any case, the chair has the group work its way back up to vote on the main motion, whether it is the original or having been somehow modified by the process. Once that either passes or fails, then a new main motion on another item can be brought to the floor.

Here is a general order of privilege:

- **To Fix the Time of the Next Meeting**
- **To Adjourn (or To Recess)**
- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary!
- **Call for the Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously "laid on the table" - state the motion to take from the table

- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to "**Close Debate**" if preferred
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly

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- ECIA 2014