

The Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

1. **THE RIGHTS OF THE ORGANIZATION SUPERSEDE THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.** The organization has the right to make its own rules which then must be observed by all members. Should a conflict arise between the rights of a member and the right of the organization to do its business, the rights of the organization prevail.
2. **ALL FULL MEMBERS ARE EQUAL AND THEIR RIGHTS ARE EQUAL.** Those rights are:
 - to attend meetings;
 - to make motions and speak in debate;
 - to nominate;
 - to vote;
 - to hold office.
3. **A QUORUM MUST BE PRESENT TO DO BUSINESS.** A quorum is the number of members who must be present to legally transact business. The number is usually stated in the bylaws. In a committee or a small board, the quorum is the majority of its members. The purpose of a quorum is to prevent an unrepresentative group from taking action in the name of the organization.
4. **THE MAJORITY RULES.** This rule is basic to the democratic process. The minority has the right to be heard, but once a decision has been reached by a majority of the members present and voting, the minority must then respect and abide by the decision.
5. **SILENCE IS CONSENT.** Those members who do not vote agree to go along with the decision of the majority by their silence.
6. **TWO-THIRDS VOTE RULE.** Typically, a two-thirds vote is necessary whenever you are limiting or taking away the rights of members or whenever you are changing something that has already been decided.
7. **ONE QUESTION AT A TIME AND ONE SPEAKER AT A TIME.** No motion is in order which does not directly relate to the question under consideration. In addition, once a member has been recognized, he has been granted "the floor" and another member may not interrupt him.
8. **DEBATABLE MOTIONS MUST RECEIVE FULL DEBATE.** The presiding officer may not put a debatable motion to vote as long as members wish to debate it. Debate can only be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the members present.
9. **ONCE A QUESTION IS DECIDED, IT IS NOT IN ORDER TO BRING UP THE SAME MOTION OR ONE ESSENTIALLY LIKE IT AT THE SAME MEETING** - Such motions should be ruled out of order. (Note: There is a special class of motions which do bring a motion back to the group, called restorative motions.)
10. **PERSONAL REMARKS IN DEBATE ARE ALWAYS OUT OF ORDER.** The presiding officer must rule all personal remarks out of order. Debate must be directed to motions and not motives; principles and not personalities.

***Note: This excerpt is from, "ROBERT'S RULES IN PLAIN ENGLISH" Copyright 1997, DORIS P. ZIMMERMAN.