

## Robert's Rules of Order

Where do these rules come from?

Robert's rules were devised by Henry Martyn Robert, an Army Officer, in 1876. He was asked to preside over a meeting and realised he had no idea what to do. The subsequent meeting was somewhat disastrous, and so he decided to write his own rules of order for meetings. Hence, Robert's rules were born. Where else are the rules used?

The rules are formed from the basis of the rules of the House of Representatives and Congress, which is obviously from the USA, but which were, in turn, developed from the antiquated British parliamentary system. Many clubs and societies around the US also use the rules, however, they are not so well known in the rest of the world. Why do WCCS use Robert's rules?

This I can't answer &ndash; I suspect it was suggested at the first or second meeting of WCCS as a means to maintain order amongst a rabble of rowdy students! I do know (from one of our tutors who attended WCCS in 1990) that the rules were in use then. If someone from Logan can provide the answer, please let us know!!

Parliamentary procedure is a system of rules that allow members to know what they can expect from each other in an orderly, fair, and efficient way. The procedures are based on two universally accepted democratic principles which balance the interests of the individual and of the group. Every member has equal rights and obligations. The officers and members must deal with each other in good faith and with fairness. The majority rules. Assured of fairness for all, and recognizing that unanimity is impossible, each member agrees in advance to accept the will of the majority to facilitate decision making. This is, in effect, an unqualified grant of trust and confidence. What are the rules?

WCCS does not use all of Robert's rules. These are far too in-depth and we have too much other study to do &ndash; remember?! Instead, we use an abridged version. This is available from the folder of each congress. Amazon.com do a version called Robert's rules in plain English, by Doris P Zimmerman, for about USD \$7.00 or GBP £4.50, which is probably the easiest version to get your head around. The main points used by WCCS are listed below. Discussion

Only members and guests recognized by the Chair may speak. Motions and Voting

Generally, before any item can be discussed, there should be a motion made and seconded. Once a motion has been seconded, discussion will follow. After discussion, one of four things can happen:

- There can be a vote on the motion.
- The motion can be amended (second required). Then there can be discussion on the amendment. The amendment can be voted. If the amendment passes, the motion automatically passes. If the amendment fails, the motion still stands and can be discussed until voted.
- The motion can be tabled (second required). There can be no discussion on a motion to table--a vote must be taken immediately. If the vote is to table, no further discussion can take place on the motion.

There may be no action on the motion--therefore it becomes old business at a future meeting. Amendments

Amendments are suggested changes to the motion before the body. They must be germane (which means they must have something to do with the motion being discussed). There can even be an amendment to an amendment, but that's all. Amendments have to be seconded. Once before the group, discussion is limited to the amendment in question. The group votes on a the last amendment proposed and works its way back to the main motion. To amend, a motion a member says, "I move to amend the motion by \_\_\_\_." Withdraw a Motion

When you have made a motion and want to withdraw it, you say, "I withdraw my motion," and that's it -- unless discussion has started on your motion. Then it is the property of the body and can only be withdrawn by a motion to permit withdrawal which requires a second, is neither debatable nor amendable, and requires a majority vote. Of course, if no one objects, a motion may be withdrawn at any time. Refer to a Committee

When you want to have a smaller group go over what is being discussed before further action, you say, "I move we refer this matter to \_\_\_\_." The motion requires a second, is debatable and amendable only as to which committee will handle the matter, and requires a majority vote.

Business may be referred to an existing group, i.e. executive committee, advertising committee, weight room committee, etc.; or to an ad hoc committee, which is a committee especially established for a specific purpose and exists until the matter is resolved; or to the committee of the whole (which is a way of saying that the group can consider the matter informally). Usually a matter is referred to the committee of the whole when there is need to discuss a matter before the introduction of a motion. The same effect can be achieved by moving to consider the matter informally or by moving to table the discussion until another time. Limit Debate

When you want to limit debate to a certain amount of time or to a certain number of additional speakers, you say, "I move we limit debate to \_\_\_\_ [a specified number of speakers on each side or a specific time]." If there is more than one part to the proposal being considered, you should specify whether you want to limit debate to just one item under discussion or to all discussion on the main question. The motion requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote. (The same special restrictions for the motion to end debate hold for the motion to limit debate.)      End Debate

When you want to end debate and put the question being discussed to an immediate vote, you say, "I move we end debate." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, is not amendable, and requires a 2/3 vote. If there is more than one part of the proposal being discussed, i.e., there are amendments, or other motions to refer to a committee, or to postpone, etc., you should specify whether you are moving for a vote on the item under immediate consideration or on all matters pertaining to that question.

If there is no objection, the chairman may end debate on his own or at the suggestion of a member. However, if there is an objection from any member, a motion is required to end debate. In WCCS the phrase "I would like to call the question" is often used instead of a move to end debate. The difference between calling the question and ending debate is that calling the question is considered a vote of acclimation. In other words, no vote is necessary unless there are objections to ending debate.

### Adjourn

When you want to end the meeting, you say, "I move we adjourn." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, and must be put to an immediate vote. It requires a majority vote for passage. Adjournment ends the meeting. Any unfinished business is then considered old business at the next meeting. This is usually undertaken by the WCCS chair when a scheduled break is to be taken.      Recess

When you want to suspend the meeting, take a break, or just hold off until a specific time before the next regular meeting, "I move we recess until \_\_\_\_." The motion requires a second, is debatable only as to the time of the resumption of the meeting, and requires a majority vote. The only acceptable amendment is on the time of the resumption of the meeting. Again, this is undertaken by the WCCS chair, usually at the end of a day's business.      Terminology

Robert's rules has a very specific terminology, which can be confusing at first. To help you out, the table below has most of the terminology you will need to use, and when to use it!