

Basic Robert's Rules

Things to Know

- A. Only one main motion can be pending at a time
 - 1. A main motion is necessary before any discussion can be had on anything.
 - 2. Secondary motions can be made while a main motion is pending

- B. Members take turns speaking
 - 1. In debate, members do not cross talk, or talk directly to each other when another member is speaking
 - 2. No member may speak on a main motion a second time until all members have had the opportunity to speak
 - 3. No member may speak on a main motion more than twice

How to make a Main Motion

- 1. Stating Motion- Introduction of idea- "I move that..." or "I move to..."
Ex. I move that the circuit print all unit director badges in black and white.
- 2. Motion needs a Second- another member simply needs to respond second
- 3. Chair (President) restates motion-wording used here becomes official wording of motion
Ex. It is moved and seconded that the circuit print all unit director badges in black and white. Is there any discussion?
- 4. Discussion begins
- 5. Following discussion motion is put to a vote
- 6. Chair (President) will announce the outcome

Secondary Motions-listed from highest to lowest in rank

- 1. Table the Motion-set aside to take care of other business first-usually due to an emergency
- 2. Call the previous question-ends debate and moves motion immediately to a vote
- 3. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate- used to change preset limits to discussion
Ex. I move that discussion be limited to two minutes per speaker
- 4. Postpone to a certain time
Ex. I move that we postpone the motion until the next meeting
- 5. Refer to a Committee-lets the committee investigate prior to voting
Ex. I move to refer this motion to a committee so that they may investigate the savings of printing unit director badges in black and white
- 6. Amend-changes a motion

Ex. I move to amend the motion from black and white to red and white.

Four ways to amend a motion

1. insert words within a motion
2. add words to the end of a motion
3. strike out words
4. strike out and insert words

7. Postpone Indefinitely-kills a main motion

Do abstention votes count?

Answer:

The phrase “abstention votes” is an oxymoron, an abstention being a refusal to vote. To abstain means to refrain from voting, and, as a consequence, there can be no such thing as an “abstention vote.”

In the usual situation, where either a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required, abstentions have absolutely no effect on the outcome of the vote since what is required is either a majority or two thirds of the votes cast. On the other hand, if the vote required is a majority or two thirds of the members *present*, or a majority or two thirds of the entire membership, **an abstention will have the same effect as a “no” vote. Even in such a case, however, an abstention is not a vote and is not counted as a vote.** [RONR (11th ed.), p. 400, ll. 7-12; p. 401, ll. 8-11; p. 403, ll. 13-24; see also p. 66 of RONRIB.]

Must debate on a motion stop immediately as soon as any member calls the question?

Answer:

It is a fairly common misconception that, after debate has continued for some time, if any member shouts out “Question!” or “I call the question!” debate must immediately cease and the chair must put the pending question to a vote. This is simply not the case. Any member who wishes to force an end to debate must first obtain the floor by being duly recognized to speak by the chair, and must then move the *Previous Question*. Such a motion must be seconded, and then adopted by a two-thirds vote, or by unanimous consent. It is not in order to interrupt a speaker with cries of “Question” or “Call the Question,” and even if no one is speaking, **it is still necessary to seek recognition.** [RONR(11th ed.), p. 202; see also pp. 35-37 of RONRIB.]