



# Point of Order

Simplified  
Parliamentary  
Procedures  
for Civitans

# Mission Statement



“To build good citizenship by providing a volunteer organization of clubs dedicated to serving individual and community needs with an emphasis on helping people with developmental disabilities”

## Order From:

Bring order to all of your meetings. For additional copies of this booklet, photocopy the form on this page and send or fax it to the Civitan International Supply House.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Club/District: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CL127 - Quantity \_\_\_\_\_ X \$3.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Charge My (select only one):

Bill my club  Bill my district  Visa  Mastercard

Discover

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Civitan International  
Post Office Box 130744  
Birmingham, Alabama 35213-0744  
(205) 591-8910  
1-800 CIVITAN  
Fax: (205) 592-6307  
E-mail: [civitan@civitan.org](mailto:civitan@civitan.org)  
Internet: <http://www.civitan.org/civ>

# Notes

---

## Point of Order

This is a simplified guide to parliamentary procedures. The complexity of parliamentary procedures is evidenced by the highly technical manuals currently offered in the marketplace.

*Point of Order* is a unique, easy-to-use parliamentary procedures manual, especially designed for Civitan International. It is designed for at-your-place convenience and is small enough to tuck into your purse or briefcase as a ready reference for business or board meetings at the club, district or international level.



**Recess**

A temporary intermission.

**Seconding a Motion**

A member seconds a motion to open it for debate.

**Suspend the Rules**

An incidental motion used in urgent cases to save time. The motion requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

**Table the Motion**

To delay or postpone action.

**Unanimous Ballot**

If bylaws permit, a ballot cast by the secretary for a candidate who is the only person nominated for an office when no objection is made. The chair customarily instructs the secretary to cast a unanimous ballot for the candidate. See page 406 of the 1990 edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

**Unfinished Business**

A matter carried over from an earlier meeting.

**Withdraw a Motion**

An incidental motion permitting a previous motion to be withdrawn. The motion is allowed only if the maker agrees to the withdrawal of her motion. Withdrawal must have a majority vote only if the motion was opened to debate.

**Yield the Floor**

To surrender the right to continue speaking so that another member may discuss his or her point.



**Order of Business**

The series of steps covered in a meeting from Call to Order to Adjournment.

**Pending Question**

Any motion on the floor.

**Plurality**

The largest number of votes received by a candidate in an election involving three or more candidates.

**Point of Order**

An objection raised by a member because of improper procedure or annoying remarks, requiring immediate ruling by the presiding officer.

**Previous Question**

A subsidiary motion calling for the close of debate and a call for a vote. The motion must be seconded and requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

**Privileged Question**

A request made by a member asking the presiding officer to deal with an emergency or other matters of general welfare.

**Pro and Con**

The arguments for and against.

**Pro Tem**

For the time being, acting during the absence of another.

**Question**

The business before the assembly.

**Quorum**

The number of members required to be present to transact business legally as specified in the bylaws.

**Receive a Report**

To listen to a report without taking official action; recognizing work done.

# Introduction

**“Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.”**

**General Henry M. Robert, author of *Robert's Rules of Order*.**

---

Parliamentary procedure ensures true democratic spirit in assembly. Properly following its laws and procedures enables an organization to establish order, protect the individual voice, and strengthen its very fiber. It is a method of systematically conducting discussion and reaching decisions fairly and justly. It guarantees the right of voice and vote with the majority always ruling. Parliamentary procedure serves as a catalyst for achieving group productivity.

The parliamentary law as written in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* has been chosen to govern all proceedings of Civitan districts and clubs throughout the United States as well as Civitan International. Those Civitan clubs located outside the United States may interpret the reference according to their customary rules of parliamentary procedure. It is important to note that parliamentary practice is subject to any special rules adopted by Civitans at the international, district, or club level.

It is commonly believed that only the chairman should be well versed in parliamentary procedure. Nothing could be further from the truth. Officers and members alike should assume an equal burden in ensuring the democratic process in assembly. Effective and productive meetings are dependent upon each member's knowledge of and ability to practice parliamentary law. To help achieve this goal, this manual discusses the basics of parliamentary law. It does not presume to replace the official and complete guide, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.



**Ex Officio**

By virtue of the office.

**General Consent**

Refers to a request by the presiding officer on matters where dissent is not expected, such as approval of the minutes.

**House**

The assembly.

**Majority**

More than one-half (1/2) of the votes cast.

**Method of Voting**

An incidental motion providing for the type of vote desired on a motion, such as a vote by acclamation, roll call, standing, or other form of voting.

**Minutes**

The official record of the proceedings of the assembly.

**Motion**

A proposal requiring action by the assembly.

**New Business**

The business brought before the group for the first time.

**Obtaining the Floor**

Receiving the right to speak.

**Objection to Consideration of a Motion**

An incidental motion made to avoid the consideration of a motion that is undesirable or impractical. The motion is applied to the main motion and must be made immediately after the main motion is opened to debate and before any amendments are made. It requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

**On the Floor**

A motion is on the floor when it is being considered by the assembly.



# Glossary

---

## **Acclamation**

A voice vote by stating “Aye” or “No” where there is an uncontested issue or candidate.

## **Adjourn**

To end a meeting.

## **Adopt**

To pass or carry a motion.

## **Agenda**

A prepared list of items to be considered at a meeting.

## **Amendment**

A change or modification to a motion, constitution, or bylaw.

## **Appeal the Decision of the Chair**

An incidental motion made by a member who disagrees with the chairman’s decision. The motion is debatable if the pending question is debatable and requires a majority vote.

## **The Chair**

The presiding officer.

## **Close Debate**

To end discussion on a motion.

## **Debate**

To discuss a motion.

## **Division**

A recount of the vote by show of hands or by standing. It may be requested by any member.

# Responsibilities of the Presiding Officer

---

Although it is true that the presiding officer’s knowledge of parliamentary practice determines the smoothness and productivity of a meeting, it is also true that careful planning determines the meeting’s success. To expedite business, the presiding officer should:

- ◆ know and completely understand the organization’s bylaws, goals, and objectives,
- ◆ review the minutes of the previous meeting and be prepared to discuss postponed motions or unfinished business,
- ◆ be sure that all reports are prepared and that those presenting them will be in attendance and ready to report,
- ◆ prepare an agenda and distribute it to all members prior to the meeting.

The chairman (also referred to as “chair”) of any meeting should preside fairly and impartially; the power of an organization rests with its membership. The chair should not enter into discussion. The chair can vote to make or break a tie, in a ballot vote, and to change a two-thirds (2/3) vote if one vote could do this. The chair enforces decorum and ensures that personal vendettas are excluded from all proceedings. All remarks should be limited to the subject at hand and discussion should avoid the inclusion of a member’s personal motives and/or behavior. Of the chair’s many responsibilities, none is more important than guaranteeing the rights of the individual voice and encouraging free and open discussion. The minority vote is protected through the chair’s proper execution of parliamentary law.

During the meeting, the presiding officer should make self references to the “chair”, never using the pronoun “I”. Likewise, all officers should be referred to by title rather than by name. This practice establishes a proper line of authority and removes the temptation of using personal influence to affect a discussion’s outcome.



The chair is responsible for clarifying all action taking place; for making sure that members completely understand the proceedings. The chair repeats all motions before opening them to discussion or finalizing them with a vote. The strength of the group depends upon participation which, in turn, depends upon understanding.

If the presiding officer wishes to enter into debate, that officer must give the chair to the vice president or to an officer who has not yet entered into debate on the issue at hand. The presiding officer may return to the chair only after the issue has been settled by vote. This practice guarantees continued order during every discussion.

### General Consent

When handling routine business, the chair may choose to save time and eliminate frequent voting by utilizing general consent. General consent means that there apparently is unanimous approval. However, the chair must always ask if there is an objection before continuing. If an objection is raised, a vote must be taken. Examples of usage are:

- ◆ "If there are no objections, we will send a letter of appreciation to retiring board member, Barbara Jones." *(Pause. If there are no objections, the group has general consent and the letter will be sent.)*
- ◆ "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" *(Pause)*  
"Hearing none, the minutes stand approved as read."
- ◆ "Is there any further business?" *(Pause. If no one speaks, the group has general consent.)* "This meeting is adjourned."

The chairman of any Civitan group is responsible for protecting the equal rights and privileges of its members. Instituting proper parliamentary procedures guarantees every Civitan the right to make a motion, speak on an issue, nominate officers, run for office, and vote. An effective chairman is a reflection of a strong organization.

## Ending the Meeting

A motion to adjourn is a privileged motion which requires a second and a vote of the majority. Any member may move to adjourn the meeting and, once passed, the chair calls the meeting adjourned. The meeting may also be adjourned by the presiding officer using general consent. "If there is no objection (pause), the meeting is adjourned."

Standard parliamentary procedure is guided by common sense and courtesy. To assist and guide the organization through complex parliamentary problems, every group should identify a parliamentarian. However, uniform familiarity with the basics of parliamentary laws and practices will only serve to enhance productivity, efficiency, and promote general good will among the entire membership.





## The Vote

---

Parliamentary law protects the minority opinion by giving a single vote to each member. Votes may be taken by voice, show of hands, standing, secret ballot, roll call vote where members respond when their name is called, or secret roll call vote where members sign their names.

### Majority Vote

Elections and most motions require a majority vote which is defined as the majority of the votes cast, *not* the majority of members present since some members may choose not to vote on a particular question. Some motions require two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast in order to pass. When electing three or more candidates, the assembly may choose, if provided for in the bylaws, to vote by plurality which elects the nominees with the greatest number of votes.

### Calling for a Recount

When a vote by acclamation fails to clearly show whether the vote was affirmative or negative, any member may call for a *division*. Calling for a division is a request to take an additional vote on the question by a standing vote.

## The Meeting

---

### Quorum

Before a meeting may be called to order, a quorum must be present. A quorum is the minimum number of members required to transact business. Having a quorum present protects the organization from allowing a few to transact business without the consent of the majority. According to Civitan bylaws, a quorum at the club level equals a majority of the membership (50% plus 1). A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum at special Civitan club meetings.

### Agenda

The order of business is defined by the agenda. To encourage productivity and efficiency, all members should be aware of the agenda prior to the meeting. The sample agendas which follow should be used only as guides in preparing and tailoring an agenda for the business to be conducted at a particular meeting. Agenda items may be rearranged for continuity or to add impact. Members may be encouraged to suggest rearrangement of the agenda as a part of the presiding officer's call to order.

### Sample Agenda for Monthly Board Meeting

- ❖ Call to order, president
- ❖ Minutes of previous meeting, recording secretary
- ❖ Report of treasurer
- ❖ Communications, corresponding secretary
- ❖ Action on recommendations for membership
- ❖ Reports from committees; discussion of recommendations
- ❖ Club performance review
- ❖ Formulation of recommendations from the board to the membership
- ❖ Unfinished business
- ❖ New business
- ❖ Adjournment



### Sample Agenda for Business Meeting

- ❖ Call to order, president
- ❖ Minutes of previous meeting, recording secretary
- ❖ Report of treasurer
- ❖ Communications, corresponding secretary
- ❖ Report of board actions and recommendations
- ❖ Reports of standing committees
- ❖ Reports of special committees
- ❖ Unfinished business
- ❖ New business
- ❖ Initiation of new members
- ❖ Adjournment

### Sample Agenda for Program Meeting

- ❖ Call to order, president
- ❖ Invocation (optional)
- ❖ Introductions (those seated at the head table and guests present)
- ❖ Program
- ❖ Initiation of new members
- ❖ Special business
- ❖ Benediction (optional)
- ❖ Adjournment

### Call to Order

The presiding officer always calls the meeting to order. Meetings should begin on time and end at a reasonable hour. The agenda should be carefully followed and all business should be transacted in an orderly fashion.

### Minutes

The recording secretary is responsible for presenting the minutes of the previous meeting. Minutes of Civitan meetings need not be read. Civitan guidelines allow minutes to be printed in the club newsletter or distributed to all members as they arrive and to be approved "as presented." The chair must give all members an opportunity to correct the minutes as presented.

In Order When Another Speaker Has the Floor	Requires Speaker Permission	Requires A Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj.
Yes	No	No	No	No	None
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maj.
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	None
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	None
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	None
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj.
No	No	No	No	No	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	No	Maj.
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3



## Table of Motions II

MOTION	PURPOSE
<b>Main Motion</b>	To introduce new business
<b>Incidental</b> (no priority of rank)	
Point of Order	Enforce parliamentary laws
Appeal the Decision of the Chair	Reverse decision of the chair
Parliamentary Inquiry	
Point of Information	
Division of Assembly	Verify accuracy of a vote
Close Nominations	
Reopen Nominations	
Method of Voting	
Request to Withdraw a Motion	
Suspension of Rules	Allow action contrary to the rules
Objection to Consideration of a Motion	Avoid discussion of a question that is irrelevant or objectionable
<b>Renewal</b>	
Reconsider	Try to secure a new vote; must be raised by a person against the previous action
Take from Table	Bring up a motion previously tabled
Discharge a Committee	When a committee has failed to report; when the assembly desires to proceed without further aid from committee or wishes to drop the matter

It is important to note that minutes are a record of what is done not what is *said* and should include the following information:

- ◆ Name of organization
- ◆ Kind of meeting (i.e. regular, special, etc.)
- ◆ Date, time, and place of meeting
- ◆ Names of presiding officer and secretary
- ◆ Approval of previous minutes and any corrections to them
- ◆ Recommendations of committee reports and action taken
- ◆ All motions carried or lost and the names of the members who made them (*omit withdrawn motions*)
- ◆ Hour of adjournment
- ◆ Signature of secretary

### Treasurer's Report

The treasurer is responsible for presenting a treasurer's report. The treasurer's report need not be read, but may be printed in the club's newsletter or distributed to all club members at the beginning of a club meeting. Unlike the minutes of a meeting, however, the treasurer's report is received by the membership rather than accepted or approved.

### Committee Reports

Committees having reports should be listed under appropriate categories. Those without reports should not be listed. Committee reports are *received* as presented. If the committee recommends action, the chairman of the committee should make the motion to implement the necessary recommendation(s). A special committee automatically disbands upon the completion of its work and the presentation of its final report. No motion is required for dissolution, but the chair should recognize and thank the committee members for their efforts.



# Taking Action

## Making a Motion

To bring business before the assembly, a member must first be recognized by the chair. Using the words, "I move...", the member states the matter of business with a motion. All motions must be seconded by a member who need *not* be recognized by the chair. The chair may ask, "Is there a second?," but may *never* ask someone to second the motion on the floor. Seconding a motion does not imply a member's support, but rather indicates that the member wishes to see it open to debate. Without a second, the motion is not before the assembly. Once before the assembly, a motion becomes the *question*. Immediately following the second, the chair must repeat the question on the motion to clarify the issue for all members. The floor is then open to discussion, and the chair should first recognize the person who made the motion.

Main motions may be made only when there is no other business on the floor. Only one motion may be considered at a time, and it is always debatable and amendable.

## Amending a Motion

Amendments to the main motion are subsidiary motions and may be applied in the following ways:

- to add to the main motion,
- to insert in the main motion,
- to strike out of the main motion, or
- to strike out and insert in the main motion.

The amendment must be seconded and voted on in the same fashion as any motion. Discussion of an amendment must always be centered around the amendment itself rather than the main motion. Although a motion may be amended many times in succession, only two (2) motions to amend are allowed on the questions at the same time.

In Order When Another Speaker Has the Floor	Requires Speaker Permission	Requires A Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	No	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Maj.
Yes	No	No	No	No	None
Yes	No	No	No	No	None
No	No	Yes	No	No	Maj.
No	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj.
No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Maj.



# Table of Motions I

MOTION	PURPOSE
<b>Privileged</b>	
1. Fix the Time to which to Adjourn	Set time to continue meeting
2. Adjourn	End the meeting
3. Recess	Provide intermission time for rest, meals, etc.
4. Question of Privilege	Obtain action immediately regarding personal privilege or privilege of the assembly
5. Call for the Orders of the Day	Demand that group conforms to agenda
<b>Subsidiary</b>	
6. Table the Motion	Delay consideration
7. Previous Question	Stop debate and bring question to a vote
8. Limit/Extend Limits of Debate	Regulate length of discussion
9. Postpone Definitely	Delay action to a specific time
10. Refer to Committee	Place question temporarily in the hands of the committee to investigate, recommend, or take action
11. Amend	Change or modify the motion
12. Postpone Indefinitely	Decline a motion without bringing it to a vote

A primary amendment refers directly to the main motion. The secondary amendment should refer *only* to the primary amendment without any reference made to the main motion. Motions should be voted on in reverse order with those made last settled first.

## Limiting Debate

Discussion on a motion should be conducted in an orderly fashion with the chair frequently repeating the question to ensure group understanding of the issue. When a member feels the question has been sufficiently discussed, the member can *move the previous question* which ends debate. This action requires a second and two-thirds (2/3) vote in order to pass. If passed, the chair must then repeat the question on the floor and call for a vote.

## Requesting Informal Discussion

If the assembly chooses to discuss a motion informally, a member may move to do so in a *committee of the whole*... whereupon all may enter into informal discussion. This motion must be seconded and debated with a vote of the majority to pass. A time limit should be incorporated into the motion. If passed, the presiding officer vacates the chair and appoints another member to the chair. Informal discussion may continue until time has expired or until a member moves that *we rise and report*. The assembly then returns to its former proceedings with the chair once again assuming its leadership role and action taken on the motion. The minutes of the committee of the whole are temporary and are not entered into the minutes of the assembly.



## Reconsidering a Vote

A member may move to reconsider the vote on the main motion at any time in the same meeting in which the vote was taken. In order to make this motion, the member must have voted with the majority on the main motion. A motion to reconsider allows for a member's change of heart regarding the decision of the majority. This motion requires a second, is debatable, and needs the vote of the majority. The member should state: "having voted on the prevailing side, I move to reconsider the vote on ."

## Appointing Committees

Often, the assembly requires the services of a committee to temporarily handle the question. A member may move to *refer to committee*, a subsidiary motion. The motion is debatable and amendable. In determining the committee and its purpose, the motion should consist of the following four (4) elements:

- ◆ Number of committee members
- ◆ Method of selection
  - ◆ volunteers
  - ◆ appointment by president
  - ◆ nominated by president
  - ◆ nominated from the floor and elected, if necessary
  - ◆ named by the maker of the motion
- ◆ Type of report
  - ◆ information
  - ◆ recommendations
  - ◆ motion for action
  - ◆ perform a task
- ◆ Time to report committee findings

If the above information is not included in the original motion, the chair should request the maker to modify the motion to include the various elements so that amendments are avoided.

## The Law of Motions

---

In parliamentary law, motions are ranked with some motions yielding to others. The order of rank is:

### 1. Privileged Motion

Refers to action of the entire assembly. Privileged motions take precedence over all pending questions, are not debatable, and a vote must be taken without discussion. Motions to "recess" and "fix the time to which to adjourn" are amendable.

### 2. Subsidiary Motion

Are ranking motions and refer to other motions, usually the main motion, with the purpose of altering, postponing, or temporarily disposing. Subsidiary motions help expedite business and must be seconded and voted upon.

### 3. Main Motion

Introduces a matter of business for consideration of the assembly.

### 4. Incidental Motion

Relates, with few exceptions, to the main question in such a way that it must be decided before business can proceed.

### 5. Renewal Motion

Used to return a motion to the floor.

The table on the following pages offers a brief overview of motions, their purpose and requirements. Note that motions continue to be ranked within both the Privileged Motion and Subsidiary Motion sections.

