

Robert's Rules of Order for Search Committees

Robert's Rules of Order is a lengthy manual of parliamentary procedure that governs most boards, which was first created in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert as an adaptation of the rules and practices of Congress. With the latest versions of the manual totaling around 700 pages, this page on Robert's Rules of Order is meant to highlight processes for Search Committees.

What are Robert's Rules of Order, and what is it used for?

Robert's Rules is a set of codes and rules of ethics that helps groups hold orderly meetings that allow the majority to rule while allowing minority voices to be heard.

There are four primary types of motions in Robert's Rules of Order:

1. Main motions
2. Subsidiary motions
3. Incidental motions
4. Renewal motions

Parliamentary procedure

A parliamentary procedure can be any set of rules and guidelines a group formally establishes to govern themselves, with Robert's Rules of Order being the most common type.

The goal of the parliamentary procedure is to organize discussions and reach group consensus in a respectful, collegial manner.

Robert's Rules basics for Search Committees

- **Motion** – A member makes a motion to propose an action or make a decision by saying, "I move to...". Another member must second the motion by saying, "I second the motion." Once someone seconds the motion, the group votes on the motion. It passes by a majority vote.
- **Amend a motion** – Members use this process to change a motion and can do so by stating, "I move to amend the motion." Again, this motion must be seconded and voted upon.
- **Question** – Members say, "I call the question" to end a debate or discussion. The motion must be seconded and voted upon without further discussion. A call for the question requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass. At this point, the members must immediately vote on the motion on the floor.
- **Adjourn** – This refers to moving to end the meeting. A member would say, "I move to adjourn," and another member would second the motion. If the majority then votes to adjourn, the meeting is over.

Making a Motion

Search Committee Members should discuss one issue at a time to keep order in the meeting. The Search Committee Chairperson should only allow one person to speak at a time. Any member who wants to make a motion must request and be granted the floor before speaking.

Robert's Rules classifies motions into the below categories.

6 categories of motions

1. **Main motion:** Introduces a new item

2. **Subsidiary motion:** Changes or affect how to handle a main motion (vote on this before the main motion)
3. **Privileged motion:** Brings up an urgent or essential matter unrelated to pending business
4. **Incidental motion:** Questions procedure of other motions
5. **Motion to table:** Kills a motion
6. **Motion to postpone:** Delays a vote (can reopen debate on the main motion)

Robert's Rules of Order motion steps

1. **Motion:** A member rises or raises a hand to signal the Search Committee Chairperson.
2. **Second:** Another member seconds the motion.
3. **Restate motion:** The Search Committee Chairperson restates the motion.
4. **Debate:** The Search Committee Members debate the motion.
5. **Vote:** The Search Committee Chairperson restates the motion, and then first asks for affirmative votes, and then negative votes.
6. **Announce the vote:** The Search Committee Chairperson announces the result of the vote and any instructions.

If the Search Committee is in obvious agreement, the Search Committee Chairperson may save time by stating, "If there is no objection, we will adopt the motion to..." Then wait for any objections. Then say, "Hearing no objections, (state the motion) is adopted." And then state any instructions.

If a Search Committee Member objects, first ask for a debate, then vote, and then announce the vote.

Robert's Rules: Tips and Reminders for the Search Committee Chairperson

Robert's Rules of Order was developed to ensure that meetings are fair, efficient, democratic and orderly. A skilled Search Committee Chairperson allows all members to voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard. The following tips and reminders will help Search Committee Chairpersons run successful and productive meetings without being run over or running over others.

- Follow the agenda to keep the group moving toward its goals.
- Let the group do its work — don't over-command.
- Control the flow of the meeting by recognizing members who ask to speak.
- Let all members speak once before allowing anyone to speak a second time.
- When discussions get off-track, gently guide the group back to the agenda.
- Model courtesy and respect and insist that others do the same.
- Properly use motions and points of order.
- Encourage Search Committee Members to present motions positively rather than negatively.
- Give each speaker your undivided attention.
- Keep an emotional pulse on the discussions.
- Allow a consensus to have the final authority of the group.