



Principled Presiding

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE POINTERS

The change of administrations is always an exciting time for everyone as we eagerly look forward to the growth that will come with new leadership and new ideas. While new leaders are always wise to honor those who came before them and upon whose shoulders they stand, it is also important to keep in mind that you were elected because your club wanted your ideas and your input. You were put in a leadership position because you are valued for who YOU are and what YOU have to contribute. If this is your first time serving as a President of your club, if you have served multiple times, or if you are not a president but simply want to learn so that when you become president you can do a good job, Roberts Rules of Order provides wonderful skills making it possible for you to pull out of your bag of tricks just the skills you need to do the job.

Roberts Rules of Order has been selected as the procedural authority by most clubs simply because it is so good at helping to solve problems often even before they arise. Procedural rules are simply are that: rules telling you the method of how you should govern. Of course, there is more to being president than simply knowing the governing rules. You provide all the content of leadership.

An easy way to think of the role of Roberts Rules of Order is to compare vacation planning with leadership planning. Once you have decided on the goals you want to accomplish for your administration (your destination), Roberts Rules of Order serves as the mode of transportation you need to take to get there. This sometimes means that to arrive at your destination you are not always able to take the quickest route, it will always be the safest route. While it may be far easier to ignore the rights of the minority and pretend that every single person in your club thinks exactly as you do, you joined a club because you expressed interest in people other than yourself. Taking the safe route helps ensure that all the members of your club will arrive at your planned destination with you rather than losing them along the road. Knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order will help you plan the steps you need to take to help map out the journey on which you take your club so that everyone arrives at your desired destination happy, healthy and pleased at having had such an excellent captain at the helm.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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- Halting the Hum of meeting disruptions.
- Leadership Loyalty



ADMINISTRATION PLANNING

Knowing the rules that govern your organization is important for leaders and members alike. Upon being elected to office, one of the first tricks a leader can do is to take out a copy of the bylaws and standing rules that govern your club and district and write down any dates or deadlines you are required to meet under the rules governing your organization. This sounds a lot harder and more time consuming than it really is and will save loads of problems for the remainder of your administration. This should serve as the skeleton to the map of your journey to your destination. Keep these dates handy and mark them on your calendar since

observing these dates is in large part the essentials of performing your job. Your bylaws are what give you the authority to govern and if these dates are important enough for your club to include them in the bylaws or standing rules, your members believe them important to observe.

Being prepared by planning your administration means you will have fewer chances to be inconvenienced in the future by being caught unaware of a task you are expected to perform.

The right to lead depends on the consent of those who are to be governed. Rules serve to limit this right.

SCRIPTED AGENDAS

As you plan for your meeting and prepare your agenda to distribute to members, don't forget to prepare a scripted agenda for yourself, your parliamentarian and your recording secretary. A scripted agenda sounds very much like what it is: an actual script you will be following to run the meeting that follows the full agenda. It includes details such as the names of people being introduced and all items of business you want to cover.

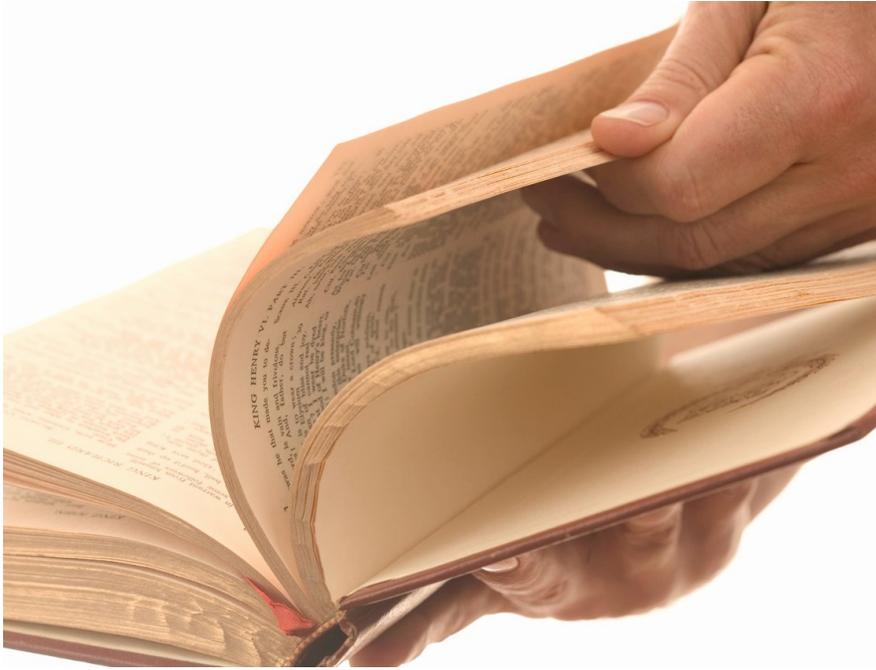
It is important to prepare a scripted agenda for every meeting since inevitably once you are in front of people you are going to experience moments of "brain freeze" where you cannot recall the name of even a very dear friend or can't recall what comes next. By filling in the agenda with an actual script of exactly what you want to say in the order you want to say it, you will be reinforcing your planned meeting in your mind thus reducing the chance you will need the script, but also for those moments you experience "brain freeze", you will be better able to keep the flow of the meeting.

MEETING PLANNING

Once you have mapped out your administration, you can plan the meetings or steps you will take that will get you to your desired destination. The key to leading any business meeting is an agenda that keeps all participants on the same page and which allows everyone to know what is planned for discussion and the order in which it will be discussed. Roberts Rules of Order sets out a simple formula that can be followed for any business meeting you can imagine. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Sample Agenda

1. Call to Order—rap gavel once ONLY
2. Opening Ceremonies—Pledge, songs, prayer, thank hostesses, introductions, guests, first timers, new members, adoption of agenda
3. Approval of minutes— Often using general consent motion ("If there are no objections, the minutes will stand approved as distributed.")
4. Officer Reports—Goes in order officers appear in bylaws, including correspondence. Relevant motions are presented by officers or committees at the conclusion of their report.
5. Board Reports— News from the Executive Board meeting (Board recommendations to membership are read here by the Recording Secretary.)
6. Standing Committee Reports— Finance, Bylaw, Nominating Committees, etc.
7. Special Committee Reports (Special or Ad Hoc) - Program, Project Committees, etc.
8. Special Orders—Program, speakers, or matters scheduled for a particular time
9. Unfinished Business and General Orders—Matters discussed at past meetings
10. New Business—Matters not discussed at previous meetings or new proposed actions
11. Closing Ceremonies—Announcements including upcoming meetings, Collect, songs
12. Adjourn—rap gavel only ONCE



ACCOUNTABLE AUTHORITY

In addition to assisting with the efficient conduct of business, Roberts Rules of Order is an indispensable resource to provide tools to minimize conflict in your club and keep all your members happy. People who join organizations do so for the purpose of interacting with others to accomplish common goals. Majority rule governs the group. Leaders are put in power because the majority of members believe they will be successful in taking the group to a destination where the most members want to go. Leaders may sometimes perpetrate a conversational myth by referring to the Board rather than the members as the organization. Members sometimes perpetrate conversational myths by saying their views are not relevant to the actions the organization takes. Both of these myths are equally false. Organizational success comes easiest when leaders and members alike participate in the manner envisioned by the rules under which the organization operates. Every member and leader matters and has an important role to play to the overall effectiveness of the organization in reaching the group's mission goals.

Leaders have only the authority delegated to them by the membership. If a leader is in doubt, the best rule is to ask. The first person to ask is the parliamentarian since the bylaws give the parliamentarian the authority to interpret the bylaws. If a member or leader doubts the parliamentarian's interpretation of the rules, the parliamentarian's interpretation can be put to the Assembly by a motion for a vote. If the parliamentarian finds the bylaws offer no insight, the leader should consult the Board for a recommendation. Remember that the Board has been empowered to lead the organization and not just the President. The President is captain of the ship but the Board is the crew that is necessary to keep it afloat. It is always best with matters that do not clearly fall within the purview of the Board's authority if the matter then goes forward to the membership in the form of a Board Recommendation. This is common in matters that involve spending that falls outside the scope of the budget approved by the members and decisions that might raise objection. Transparency is key. The more members are consulted, the more involved and empowered they will feel in the business of the organization. Leaders who shut members out in decision making do so at the expense of making members feel valued by the organization and helping them become invested in its future. Remember members do not join to be an audience. Business meetings are not intended to be community theater. An active membership and all that entails is reflective of a healthy organization.

HALTING THE HUM

We have all been in meetings where we heard a hum of voices talking while a meeting was in progress. While it probably isn't productive to disrupt the flow of the meeting to point out to Suzy Smith that she should not quietly whisper to Mindy Member during the meeting, when quite whispers rise to the level of a hum that distracts from the focus of the conduct of business at hand, the presiding officer should intervene and remind members that conversation is out of order while someone else has the floor.

It is the duty of the presiding officer to control conduct of the meeting. Members who inadvertently disrupt the flow of the meeting in all likelihood would be horrified at the thought they were being rude and simply need to be reminded of the rules that are in place to enable the conduct of business.

Remember to keep the reminders focused on the rules and not on the personalities. Actions, not people, are out of order. No one should ever be made to feel as if they personally are wrong or unwelcome.

If the disruptive behavior continues, it may be a sign that the member needs help or that a recess is in order so be sure to make the effort to see if the club can help. Talk to members and ask their help in finding a solution to the problem.

LEADERSHIP LOYALTY

Leadership is a privilege that has been conveyed upon you by your fellow members because they like you and believe in you. By accepting this privilege, you also accept the obligation of expected loyalty to the organization and to its members. Even if not all members voted to convey this privilege upon you, by virtue of winning the election you are the leader of the entire organization and are bound to protect the rights of all its members, not just those who voted for you.

You were elected since your club has decided you are the best eligible person for this job at this time. Members are more likely to remember the way you made them feel than other things you may accomplish. If nothing else, they want you to treat them fairly. By adhering to the rules set forth in Roberts Rules of Order, you can show your commitment to be fair to all members and pursuit of the best interests of your entire organization.

Remember that your leadership sets the tone for your organization. Always strive to reflect the best and opt to take the high road.

MANAGING MOTIONS

Motions are the means of bringing business before the Assembly. They are the proposal of an idea upon which the Assembly is asked to make a decision. While the “Motion Mechanics” handout deals with motions more in depth, handling motions from the perspective of leading a meeting is fairly easy since the President is prohibited from involving herself in the motion so long as she is presiding. If she feels strongly about the matter and wishes to take part, she can temporarily step down from the conduct of the meeting and relinquish the gavel to the next ranking officer present who is willing to refrain from participation in the vote, participate in the motion, and upon conclusion of the vote have the gavel returned to her.

The presiding officer needs to keep in mind:

1. Generally a motion needs a second before it can be discussed unless it comes from committee.
2. After the motion has been made, it must be repeated by the presiding officer to put it to the Assembly.
3. In the course of discussion, if a motion to amend the main motion is made (a primary amendment), there can only be one motion to amend the primary motion to amend (a secondary amendment) pending at the same time.

4. Voting on all motions and amendments goes in the order of “last one in, first one out” so that a secondary amendment is voted on before the primary amendment, and the primary amendment is voted on before the main motion.
5. The number of votes it takes to win generally depends on the action proposed by the motion. Most motions are a majority vote but those that take away member rights or change something important like bylaws are a 2/3 vote. If in doubt, ask the parliamentarian.
6. At the conclusion of the vote, the presiding officer announces whether the motion passed or was lost and the action that will be taken by the organization as a result of the vote.



CREATING CONSENSUS

Because your club hopefully has a large umbrella that includes people representing every view point in the community, inevitably ideas will be introduced upon which members disagree. Don't worry. Disagreement between human beings has existed as long as human beings themselves. There is nothing wrong with your club and nothing wrong with those who disagree. However, it is important not to let disagreements derail your club from the desired destination of your administrative goals. It is important for leaders to have access to the skills offered by Roberts Rules of Order to better enable members to form a clear consensus of the majority of members while allowing the minority to be heard.

All members are valuable and need to be able to participate regardless of whether they hold the majority or minority viewpoint. Active discussion and even disagreement is a sign of a healthy, involved membership who care about the organization. It signifies that apathy's death knell has yet to peal. However there are times where active discussion threaten to derail a planned meeting. Don't fret! Roberts Rules of Order has the cure to your organizational ailments!

CREATING CONSENSUS (CON'T)

Roberts Rules of Order provides that members may only speak TWICE on any motion. Further members must wait to speak the second time until everyone else who wants to speak has had their first chance. The presiding officer should not recognize anyone after they have had their second chance to speak on a matter. If the member attempts to take the floor, the presiding officer should gently and diplomatically remind them that their discussion is out of order since they have exhausted their opportunity to speak and refer them to Roberts Rules of Order. It is important that members know that the action is not personal or reflective of the content of the speech they would like to make but rather a matter of following the rules by which all members have agreed to be bound.

If disagreement arises in discussion over a matter of business that threatens to derail the flow of the planned meeting, remember that you are the one in charge and do not be afraid to step in. Your club voted you into office since they trust in your leadership abilities. Steer your club away from the ice berg rather than trusting you can crash into it without damage. While anyone presiding over the meeting cannot make a motion, the



*“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”
- John F. Kennedy*

presiding officer can always ask for help by saying “The chair would like to entertain a motion to...” and hopefully an attentive member of the assembly will respond by making the requested motion.

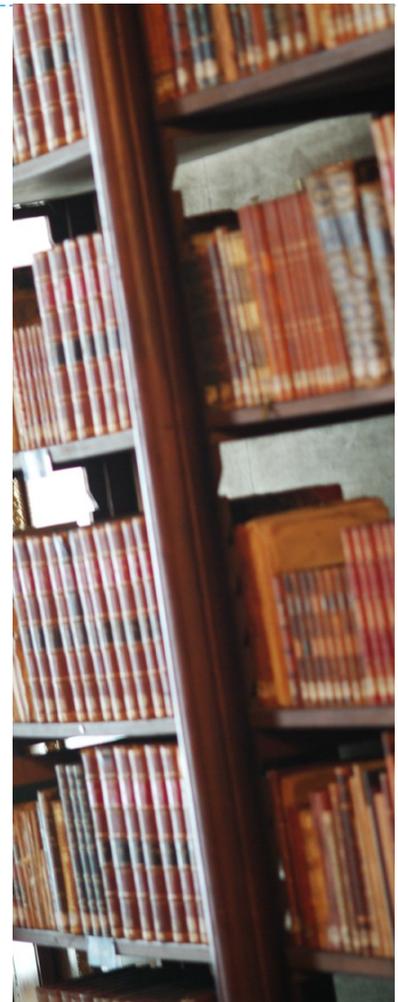
If you believe disagreement or even prolonged discussion is derailing your meeting, think about saying “The chair would like to entertain a motion to...”

1. “...refer the matter to committee for recommendation.” (This takes a majority vote.) Be sure to offer the major proponents of each viewpoint in the discussion the opportunity to serve on the Committee and to schedule a time for the Committee to report their recommendation.
2. “...call for the question.” (This takes a 2/3 vote.) This ends discussion and allows matter to be voted on immediately

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

As a leader of your club, you serve as its face to members of the public most of whom are unfamiliar with your organization. As such the impressions they form of you are likely to reflect on your organization. As a club leader it is important to maintain the integrity of the organization you represent to the community at large. While visibility is always important and it is great to look for opportunities to make your club better known in the community, be sure this does not come at the expense of integrity. Remember that while you may be a club

president, there are more people than just you that must be consulted when making commitments on behalf of your organization. Rarely can one ever offer a blanket guarantee in life under the best of circumstances. Keep in mind that while it is tempting to make promises on behalf of your club, there are other people whom you must generally consult unless you have already been authorized to make the commitment. Well intentioned promises lead to bad feelings (at best) on all sides if they cannot be kept. You represent an entire host of women. When in doubt, ask



THE DE ANZA DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY STUDY GROUP

The De Anza District Parliamentary Study Group is intended to be an informal gathering where members of the California Federation of Women's Clubs can come together to study Roberts Rules of Order and learn from one another how its tools can best be used to empower all levels of Federation through the efficient, effective, and engaged conduct of business.

The Study Group Difference

Study groups are geared to provide education /learning from the bottom up where all members prepare the lessons in advance and teach one another at the session.

Classes are geared to learning from the top down where students gather to learn from a teacher and can come to class unprepared and study afterward which would not be possible in a study group since each member is essentially promising to do her best to contribute to the teaching of fellow members. There are no grades given out in a study group and each member only receives the benefit of the effort they make in their own education.



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EMPOWERING EDUCATION

Good leaders lead successfully. Great leaders empower others to lead successfully. Most of us did not found the organizations we lead. We stand on the shoulders of the members who came before us. Just as these past members created an organization we all hopefully love, we have an obligation to help empower new members or perhaps members who may be new to the ideas of Roberts Rules of Order to stand on the shoulders of what we have learned by reading this book. Knowledge should be shared. Sharing information in order to help build a better world is a large part of why Federation was created.

Taking the time to educate members in the course of your club activities about the insight offered by Roberts Rules of Order and relevant bylaws will help provide them with information to which they might not otherwise be exposed. Let's face it: none of us were born with this knowledge and the only way we have gained it is by making the effort to learn. ALL of us have a starting place. Taking the time to explain the rules to others may help inspire them to want to learn them for themselves and if nothing else will help them better understand you and the reasons for your actions as you lead.

Women's clubs have been Federated since the last millennium. Leaders of Federated clubs have the duty to do their best to ensure Federation continues into the next millennium. The effort you make to learn and lead is important and will serve to make you a better leader. However the effort you put into empowering others to learn and lead may be even more important since each of us has a limited life span and are unlikely to live as long as the institution we represent.

It is a common lamentation among busy leaders that it is simply easier to do a task themselves than to take the time to teach someone else to do it, but by taking the time to teach someone else you are investing in the continued success of your organization. Even if your teachings are ignored in favor of another way, by teaching others what you have learned you are providing members with options that they might not otherwise realize. It should be the goal of every leader to train someone and give them the advantage of learning from their experience and mistakes so that they can hopefully be even more successful than their mentor. The late Past District President Jacki Antee who also served as President for California Association for the Advancement of Retired People (AARP) generously shared advice and the philosophy that the sign of a great leader—like a great teacher—are the accomplishments of those she mentors. Leadership should never be viewed as a zero sum game. No one gains from another's loss. A good leader realizes that we all win or lose together by putting the organization first. The goal of a good leader is not to be the summit of their organization's leadership accomplishments but to be a springboard that helps others reach even higher.

Roberts Rules of Order may be less entertaining to read than a novel to most, and many may be put off by the thickness of the book and its small print. Most members are unlikely to own a copy and even fewer to read its pages. Therefore, it is critical that those who take the time to study share what they have learned with others. Members may never actually read a rule but may remember when they are told the rule exists and where it can be found. Look for teaching opportunities and be sure to explain Roberts Rules of Order to others as you take an action at a meeting. Don't hesitate to use what you have learned to increase the level of your own participation at meetings and teach others by letting them watch your example. Become ambassadors of education by empowering others with your leadership.

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