

Robert's Rules of Order

Masonic Edition

Revised and Edited by

Michael R. Poll

Robert's Rules of Order - Masonic Edition

A Cornerstone Book
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FORWARD

Simply put, *Robert's Rules of Order* is indispensable for countless clubs and organizations. The logical manner in which proper parliamentary procedure is laid out in this classic work has made it the most accepted and widely used book of its kind. Many clubs and organization would not consider opening a meeting without a copy of this work within short reach.

Since Masonic lodges operate their meetings within the basic framework of accepted parliamentary procedure, *Robert's Rules of Order* has been the common guide for many lodges. The problem has always been that this work was not written with the Masonic lodge in mind and Masonic lodges do not always follow classic parliamentary procedure. Many aspects of a properly run lodge are in conflict with what is considered correct parliamentary procedure. An example would be the relationship between the membership of a lodge and the Worshipful Master. In a club, there are times when the ruling of the presiding officer can be overturned by a vote of the membership. Such is not the case in a Masonic lodge. The nature of the office of Worshipful Master gives the one holding this office authority not held by the presiding officer of most clubs. Any action of the membership of a lodge that infringes on the authority or rights of the Worshipful Master is out of order. This is but one of the conflicts between the classic *Robert's Rule of Order* and the Masonic lodge. The classic work, while useful and often used in lodges, must be read with caution as many aspects of the original work do not apply to the lodge.

The Masonic edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* is the classic edition of the work edited with the lodge in mind. While it has been designed to better follow the general procedures of a well-run business meeting of a lodge, it should not be considered a law book. Nor should anything in this work be considered as authoritative when in conflict with an accepted practice within a particular jurisdiction. Each and every Masonic jurisdiction has complete authority over the laws and practices of its lodges, and these may or may not agree with the laws and practices of other jurisdictions. Should anything in this work be found to be in conflict with the laws or practices of your particular jurisdiction, the conflicting portion of this work should be disregarded.

The Masonic edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* is designed to be a parliamentary guide to a successfully run lodge meeting. The spirit of the work is to aid the Worshipful Master in general parliamentary questions and a useful educational tool for anyone advancing through the chairs of a lodge.

Michael R. Poll
2005

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Art. I

How Business Is Conducted in A Lodge

1. Introduction of Business
2. What Precedes Debate
3. Obtaining the floor
4. Motions and Resolutions
5. Seconding Motions
6. Stating the Question
7. Debate
8. Secondary Motions
9. Putting the Question and Announcing the Vote
10. Proper Motions to Use to Accomplish Certain Objects

1. Introduction of Business.

Business is brought before a lodge either by the motion of a member, or by the presentation of a communication to the lodge. It is not usual to make motions to receive reports of committees or communications to the lodge. There are many other cases in the ordinary routine of business where the formality of a motion is dispensed with, but should any brother object, a regular motion becomes necessary, or the W. M. may put the question without waiting for a motion.

2. What Precedes Debate.

Before any subject is open to debate it is necessary, first, that a motion be made by a member of the lodge who has obtained the floor; second, that it be seconded (with certain exceptions); and third, that it be identified as such by the Worshipful Master. The fact that a motion has been made and seconded does not put it before the lodge, as the Worshipful Master alone can do that. He must either rule it out of order, or state the question on it so that the lodge may know what is before it for consideration and action, that is, what is the *immediately pending question*. If several questions are pending, as a resolution and an amendment and a motion to postpone, the last one stated by the Worshipful Master is the immediately pending question.

While no debate or other motion is in order after a motion is made, until it is stated or ruled out of order by the Worshipful Master, yet brothers may suggest modifications of the motion, and the mover, without the consent of the seconder, has the right to make such modifications as he pleases, or even to withdraw his motion entirely before the Worshipful Master states the question. After it is stated by the W. M., he can do neither without the consent of the lodge as shown in **27(c)**. A little informal consultation before the question is stated often saves much time, but the Worshipful Master must see that this privilege is not abused and allowed to run into debate. When the mover modifies his motion the one who seconded it has a right to withdraw his second.

3. Obtaining the Floor.

Before a member can make a motion, or address the lodge in debate, it is necessary that he should *obtain the floor* — that is, he must rise after the

floor has been yielded, salute and address the Worshipful Master by his official title, thus, "Worshipful Master," or "Worshipful Brother . . ." If the lodge is large so that the brother's name may be unknown to the W. M., the brother should give his name as soon as he catches the eye of the W. M. after addressing him. If the brother is entitled to the floor, as shown hereafter, the W. M. "recognizes" him, or assigns him the floor, by announcing his name. If the lodge is small and the brothers are known to each other, it is not necessary for the brother to give his name after addressing the W. M., nor is it necessary for the W. M. to do more than bow in recognition of his having the floor. If a brother rises before the floor has been yielded, or is standing at the time, he cannot obtain the floor provided any one else rises afterwards and addresses the W. M.. It is out of order to be standing when another has the floor, and the one guilty of this violation of the rules cannot claim he rose first, as he did not rise after the floor had been yielded.

Where two or more rise about the same time to claim the floor, all other things being equal, the brother who rose first after the floor had been yielded, and addressed the W. M. is entitled to the floor. It frequently occurs, however, that where more than one person claims the floor about the same time, the interests of the lodge require the floor to be assigned to a claimant that was not the first to rise and address the Worshipful Master. There are three classes of such cases that may arise: (1) When a debatable question is immediately pending; (2) when an undebatable question is immediately pending; (3) when no question is pending. In such cases the W. M. in assigning the floor should be guided by the following principles:

(1) *When a Debatable Question is immediately Pending.* (a) The brother upon whose motion the immediately pending debatable question was brought before the lodge is entitled to be recognized as having the floor (if he has not already spoken on that question) even though another has risen first and addressed the Worshipful Master. The brother thus entitled to preference in recognition in case of a committee's report is the reporting brother (the one who presents or submits the report); in case of a question taken from the table, it is the one who moved to take the question from the table; in case of the motion to reconsider, it is the one who moved to reconsider, and who is not necessarily the one who calls up the motion. (b) No brother who has already had the floor in debate on the immediately pending question is again entitled to it for debate on the same question. As the interests of the lodge

are best served by allowing the floor to alternate between the friends and enemies of a measure, the W. M., when he knows which side of a question is taken by each claimant of the floor, and these claims are not determined by the above principles, should give the preference to the one opposed to the last speaker.

(2) *When an Undebatable Question Is Immediately Pending.* When the immediately pending question is undebatable, its mover has no preference to the floor, which should be assigned in accordance with the principles laid down under (b) in paragraph below.

(3) *When No Question Is Pending.* (a) When one of a series of motions has been disposed of, and there is no question actually pending, the next of the series has the right of way, and the W. M. should recognize the brother who introduced the series to make the next motion, even though another has risen first and addressed the Worshipful Master. In fact no other main motion is in order until the lodge has disposed of the series. Thus, the motion to lay on the table, properly used, is designed to lay aside a question temporarily, in order to attend to some more urgent business, and, therefore, if a question is laid on the table, the one who moved to lay it on the table, if he immediately claims the floor, is entitled to it to introduce the urgent business even though another has risen first. So, when the rules are suspended to enable a motion to be made, the mover of the motion to suspend the rules is entitled to the floor to make the motion for which the rules were suspended, even though another rose first. When a brother moves to reconsider a vote for the announced purpose of amending the motion, if the vote is reconsidered he must be recognized in preference to others in order to move his amendment. (b) If, when no question is pending and no series of motions has been started that has not been disposed of, a brother rises to move to reconsider a vote, or to call up the motion to reconsider that had been previously made, or to take a question from the table when it is in order, he is entitled to the floor in preference to another that may have risen slightly before him to introduce a main motion, provided that when some one rises before him he, on rising, states the purpose for which he rises. If members, rising to make the above mentioned motions, come into competition they have the preference in the order in which these motions have just been given; first, to reconsider; and last to take from the table. When a motion to appoint a committee for a certain purpose, or to refer a subject to a committee, has been adopted no

new subject (except a privileged one) can be introduced until the lodge has decided all of the related questions as to the number of the committee, and as to how it shall be appointed, and as to any instructions to be given it. In this case the one who made the motion to appoint the committee or refer the subject to a committee has no preference in recognition. If he had wished to make the other motions he should have included them all in his first motion.

From the decision of the W. M. in assigning the floor any two brothers may appeal, one making the appeal and the other seconding it. Where the W. M. is in doubt as to who is entitled to the floor, he may, if he chooses, allow the lodge to decide the question by a vote, the one having the largest vote being entitled to the floor.

If a brother has risen to claim the floor, or has been assigned the floor, and calls for the question to be made, or it is moved to adjourn, or to lay the question on the table, it is the duty of the W. M. to suppress the disorder and protect the brother who is entitled to the floor. A motion cannot be made by one who has not been recognized by the W. M. as having the floor.

In Order When Another Has the Floor. After a brother has been assigned the floor he cannot be interrupted by another brother, except by (a) a motion to reconsider; (b) a point of order; an objection to the consideration of the question; (d) a call for the orders of the day when they are not being conformed to; (e) a question of privilege; (f) a request or demand that the question be divided when it consists of more than one independent resolution on different subjects; or (g) a parliamentary inquiry or a request for information that requires immediate answer; and these cannot interrupt him after he has actually commenced speaking unless the urgency is so great as to justify it. The speaker (that is, the brother entitled to the floor) does not lose his right to the floor by these interruptions, and the interrupting brother does not obtain the floor thereby, and after they have been attended to, the W. M. assigns him the floor again. So when a brother submitting a report from a committee or offering a resolution, hands it to the secretary to be read, he does not thereby yield his right to the floor. When the reading is finished and the W. M. states the question, neither the secretary nor any one else can make a motion until the brother submitting the report, or offering the resolution, has had a reasonable opportunity to claim the floor to which he is entitled, and has not availed himself of his privilege. If, when he submitted the report, he

made no motion to accept or adopt the recommendations or resolutions, he should resume the floor as soon as the report is read, and make the proper motion to carry out the recommendations, after which he is entitled to the floor for debate as soon as the question is stated.

4. Motions and Resolutions.

A motion is a proposal that the lodge take certain action, or that it express itself as holding certain views. It is made by a brother's obtaining the floor as already described and saying, "I move that . . ." (which is equivalent to saying, "I propose that"), and then stating the action he proposes to have taken. Thus a brother "moves" (proposes) that a resolution be adopted, or amended, or referred to a committee, or that a vote of thanks be extended, etc.; or "That it is the sense of this meeting (or lodge) that industrial training," etc. Every resolution should be in writing, and the Worshipful Master has a right to require any main motion, amendment, or instructions to a committee to be in writing. When a main motion is of such importance or length as to be in writing it is usually written in the form of a *resolution*, that is, beginning with the words, "*Resolved*, That," the word "*Resolved*" being underscored (printed in italics) and followed by a comma, and the word "That" beginning with a capital "T." If the word "Resolved" were replaced by the words "I move," the resolution would become a motion. A resolution is always a main motion. In some jurisdictions the word "resolve" may be used instead of "resolution."

When a brother wishes a resolution adopted after having obtained the floor, he says, "I move the adoption of the following resolution," or "I offer the following resolution." In most jurisdictions, a resolution must be submitted in writing and received by the Lodge during a stated meeting and held over, without debate, for a specific period of time in order for due notice to be given to the lodge membership. If it is desired to give the reasons for the resolution, they are usually stated in a *preamble*, each clause of which constitutes a paragraph beginning with "Whereas." The preamble is always amended last, as changes in the resolution may require changes in the preamble. In moving the adoption of a resolution the preamble is not usually referred to, as it is included in the resolution. But when the previous question is ordered on the resolution before the preamble has been considered for amendment, it does not apply to the preamble, which is then open to debate

and amendment. The preamble should never contain a period, but each paragraph should close with a comma or semicolon, followed by “and,” except the last paragraph, which should close with the word “therefore,” or “therefore, be it.” A resolution should avoid periods where practicable. Usually, where periods are necessary, it is better to separate it into a series of resolutions, in which case the resolutions may be numbered, if preferred, by preceding them with the figures 1, 2, etc.; or it may retain the form of a single resolution with several paragraphs, each beginning with “That,” and these may be numbered, if preferred, by placing “First,” “Second,” etc., just before the word “That.” The following form will serve as a guide when it is desired to give the reasons for a resolution:

Whereas, The lodge is in need of building repair; and

Whereas, There is not enough funds in the general funds of the lodge; therefore

Resolved, That the annual lodge dues be increased by a sum of \$5.00 per Member.

As a general rule no brother can make two motions at a time except by permission of the Worshipful Master. But he may combine the motion to suspend the rules with the motion for whose adoption it was made; and the motion to reconsider a resolution and its amendments; and a brother may offer a resolution and at the same time move to make it a special order for a specified time.

5. Seconding Motions.

As a general rule, with the exceptions given below, every motion should be seconded. This is to prevent time being consumed in considering a question that only one person favors, and consequently little attention is paid to it in routine motions. Where the W. M. is certain the motion meets with general favor, and yet brothers are slow about seconding it, he may proceed without waiting for a second. Yet, any one may make a point of order that the motion has not been seconded, and then the W. M. should proceed formally and call for a second. The better way when a motion is not at once seconded, is for the W. M. to ask, “Is the motion seconded?” In a very large hall the W. M. should repeat the motion before calling for a second in order that all may

hear. After a motion has been made no other motion is in order until the W. M. has stated the question on this motion, or has declared, after a reasonable opportunity has been given for a second, that the motion has not been seconded, or has ruled it out of order. Except in very small lodges the W. M. cannot assume that brothers know what the motion is and that it has not been seconded, unless he states the facts.

A motion is seconded by a brother's saying "I second the motion," or "I second it," which he does without obtaining the floor, and in small lodges without rising. In large lodges, members should rise, and without waiting for recognition, say, "Worshipful Master, I second the motion."

Exceptions.

The following do not require a second:

<i>Question of Privilege, to raise a</i>	19
<i>Questions of Order</i>	21
<i>Objection to the Consideration of a Question</i>	23
<i>Call for Orders of the Day</i>	20
<i>Call for Division of the Question</i> <i>(under certain circumstances)</i>	24
<i>Call for Division of the Lodge (in voting)</i>	25
<i>Call up Motion to Reconsider</i>	36
<i>Filling Blanks</i>	33
<i>Nominations</i>	33
<i>Leave to Withdraw a Motion</i>	27
<i>Inquiries of any kind</i>	27

6. Stating the Question.

When a motion has been made and seconded, it is the duty of the W. M., unless he rules it out of order, immediately to *state the question* — that is, state the exact question that is before the lodge for its consideration and action. This he may do in various ways, depending somewhat on the nature of the question, as illustrated by the following examples: "It is moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted [reading the resolution];" or "It is moved and seconded to adopt the following resolution;" "Br. A

offers the following resolution [read]: the question is on its adoption;” “It is moved and seconded to amend the resolution by striking out the word ‘very’ before the word ‘good’;” “The previous question has been demanded [or, moved and seconded] on the amendment;” “It is moved and seconded that the question be laid on the table.” If the question is debatable or amendable, the W. M. should immediately ask, “Are you ready for the question?” If no one then rises he should put the question as described in **9**. If the question cannot be debated or amended, he does not ask, “Are you ready for the question?” but immediately puts the question after stating it.

7. Debate.

After a question has been stated by the W. M., it is before the lodge for consideration and action. All resolutions, reports of committees, communications to the lodge, and all amendments proposed to them, and all other motions except the Undebatable Motions mentioned in **45**, may be debated before final action is taken on them, unless by a two-thirds vote the lodge decides to dispose of them without debate. By a two-thirds vote is meant two-thirds of the votes cast. In the debate each brother has the right to speak twice on the same question (except on an appeal), but cannot make a second speech on the same question as long as any brother who has not spoken on that question desires the floor. No one can speak longer than ten minutes at a time without permission of the Worshipful Master.

Debate must be limited to the merits of the *immediately pending question* — that is, the last question stated by the W. M. that is still pending; except that in a few cases the main question is also open to debate [**45**]. Speakers must address their remarks to the W.M., be courteous in their language and deportment, and avoid all personalities, never alluding to the officers or other brothers by name, where possible to avoid it, nor to the motives of brothers. [For further information on this subject see Debate, **42**, and Decorum in Debate, **43**.]

8. Secondary Motions.

To assist in the proper disposal of the question various *subsidiary* [**12**] motions are used, such as to amend, to commit, etc., and for the time being the subsidiary motion replaces the resolution, or motion, and becomes the immediately pending question. While these are pending, a question incidental

to the business may arise, as a question of order, and this *incidental* [13] question interrupts the business and, until disposed of, becomes the immediately pending question. And all of these may be superseded by certain motions, called *privileged* [14] motions of such supreme importance as to justify their interrupting all other questions. All of these motions that may be made while the original motion is pending are sometimes referred to as *secondary* motions. The proper use of many of these is shown in 10.

9. Putting the Question and Announcing the Vote.

When the debate appears to have closed, the W. M. asks again, “Are you ready for the question?” If no one rises he proceeds to *put the question* — that is, to take the vote on the question, first calling for the affirmative and then for the negative vote. In putting the question the W. M. should make perfectly clear what the question is that the lodge is to decide. If the question is on the adoption of a resolution, unless it has been read very recently, it should be read again, the question being put in a way similar to this: “The question is on the adoption of the resolution [which the W. M. reads]; those in favor of the resolution say aye; those opposed say no. The ayes have it, and the resolution is adopted;” or, “The noes have it, and the resolution is lost.” Or, thus: “The question is on agreeing to the following resolution,” which the W. M. reads, and then he continues, “As many as are in favor of agreeing to the resolution say aye;” after the ayes have responded he continues, “As many as are opposed say no. The ayes have it,” etc. Or, “It is moved and seconded that an invitation be extended to Br. Jones to address our lodge at its next meeting. Those in favor of the motion will rise; be seated; those opposed will rise. The affirmative has it and the motion is adopted [or carried].” Or, if the vote is by “show of hands,” the question is put and the vote announced in a form similar to this; “It has been moved and seconded to lay the resolution on the table. Those in favor of the motion will raise the right hand; those opposed will signify [or manifest] it in the same way [or manner]. The affirmative has it [or, The motion is adopted, or carried] and the resolution is laid on the table.” The vote should always be announced, as it is a necessary part of putting the question. The lodge is assumed not to know the result of the vote until announced by the W. M., and the vote does not go into effect until announced. As soon as the result of the vote is announced the W. M. should state the next business in order, as in the following example of putting the question on an amendment: “The question