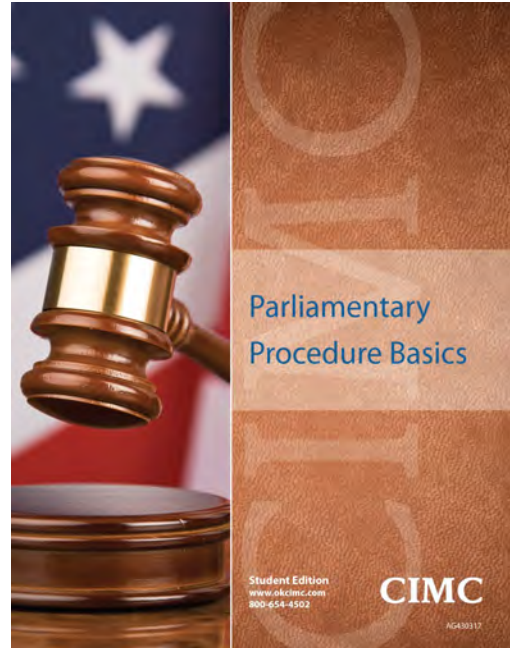


Parliamentary Procedure Basics

This guide is intended to assist students in learning the basics of parliamentary procedure. Example motions and wordings are given throughout the units as a guide to correctly using terms during a business meeting. *Parliamentary Procedure Basics* outlines the fundamentals for training parliamentary procedure teams.

Units include:

- History and Development
- Parliamentary Procedure Today
- Meeting Conduct
- Main Motions
- Privileged Motions
- Subsidiary Motions
- Incidental Motions
- Unclassified Motions



Parliamentary Procedure Basics
2017

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Unit 4

Main Motions

OBJECTIVES

- Explain how a main motion and an incidental main motion are different.
- Demonstrate how to perform a main motion.
- Identify six major rules for debate.
- Recognize and perform effective debate strategies.
- Identify and perform the six major voting methods.

KEY TERMS

germane
incidental main motion
main motion
put the question
seconding the motion
state the question



Main Motions

The primary tool that an assembly can use to propose action is called a *main motion*. A main motion classified as original would typically be made during *new business* in a meeting and cannot be presented while another motion is pending. Any member in good standing that also has the right to vote may propose, or move, a main motion to be considered by the assembly. A main motion is the tool used to propose a new item of business

Key Points

- As the lowest ranking motion, a main motion cannot be made when another motion is pending.
- A main motion cannot be applied to another motion, but secondary motions may be applied to it.
- The member who moves the main motion has the right to debate first on the motion.

Main Motions	
Class	Main
Interrupt?	No (A main motion is out of order when another member has the floor)
Requires second?	Yes
Debatable?	Yes
Amendable?	Yes
Vote Required?	Majority
Reconsider?	Yes
Order of Precedence	#1 (lowest ranking in precedence)
RONR (11th ed.) Pages	pp. 100-125

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Example

Member: (rising and receiving recognition) "I move to host an end of the year ice cream social for our members." (second)

Chair: It is moved and seconded to host an end of the year ice cream social for our members. This is amendable, is debatable and requires a majority vote to pass. Is there any discussion?

The main motion as a proposal is also referred to as an original main motion, which is not to be confused with an *incidental main motion*. Robert refers to incidental main motions as “a main motion that is incidental to or relates to the business of the assembly, or its past or future action.” Like original main motions, incidental main motions can only be made when no business is pending, and they often relate to secondary motions from the subsidiary, privileged, or incidental categories. Some common incidental main motions include:

- *Accept or Adopt a Report* upon a subject referred to a committee
- *Adjourn at, or to, a future time*
- *Appoint the Time and Place for the next meeting*, (if made when no business is pending)
- *Amend the Constitution, By-laws, Standing Rules, or Resolutions* that have already been adopted
- *Ratify or Confirm* action taken
- *Rescind or Repeal* action taken

How to Present a Main Motion Before the Assembly

The following are basic steps to presenting a motion before an assembly.

1. A member obtains the floor.

The member addresses the chair by rising or raising a hand, facing the chair, and stating “Mr./Madam President or Chairman.” Once the chair recognizes the member, he or she may speak.

2. A member makes the motion.

The proper wording for a motion always begins with “I move _____.”

3. A different member *seconds* the motion.

- Main motions, along with several other motions, require a second in order for the motion to be considered. If these motions do not receive a second, they are dropped.
- A member seconds the motion if he or she is in favor of considering that motion. This does not necessarily mean that member is in favor of the motion itself.
- A second can be made without standing or receiving recognition. A member can simply state “second,” immediately following the motion being moved. In larger meetings, it may be preferred that the member be recognized by the chair and state, “I second the motion.”

4. The chair *states the question on the motion*.

Only the chair can bring the motion, or question, before an assembly after it has been moved and seconded. The basic outline for stating the question includes:

- "It has been moved and seconded to (repeats the motion)."
- The chair may choose to provide necessary parliamentary procedure details pertaining to that motion such as, "This main motion is amendable, debatable, and requires a majority vote to pass."
- In the case of a main motion, or any other debatable motion, the chair then opens the floor for discussion.

Rules for Debate

Once a chair has stated the question on a main motion, it is then open for consideration and debate. Understanding the basic rules of debate will allow members to present their opinions and discussion in a fair and organized manner. The following rules can help guide debate in a meeting:

1. All members have the right to debate twice on a particular motion on the same day.
2. The member that moved the motion has the right to debate first.
3. No one should speak twice until every member has had the opportunity to speak once.
4. The general time limit for each individual debate in a normal assembly is ten minutes.
5. The content of the discussion must remain germane, or relevant, to the pending motion, and should be directed towards the chair.
6. The chair must remain neutral and abstain from debate while presiding over a meeting.

A member may also move to limit or extend limits of debate, which will be discussed in another unit.



Tips for Effective Debate

Effective discussion or debate requires assembly members to clearly convey their position on a debatable motion and back up their statements with complete thoughts and logical reasoning. The National FFA Parliamentary Procedure Handbook (2017-2021) outlines the identifying components of each level of debate quality.

GOOD DEBATE

A good debate would be characterized by a presentation that includes the components of a good debate as well as the quality of delivery in which the debate is delivered.

- States position
- Provides more than one reason supporting their position
- Tells delegation how to vote

AVERAGE DEBATE

An average debate would be characterized by a presentation that includes only one supporting reason or lacks in the quality of delivery.

- States position
- Provides one reason supporting their position
- Tells delegation how to vote

POOR DEBATE

A poor debate would be characterized by a lack of effective delivery, poor grammar, reasoning and substance. Poor debate may also omit one or more components of an effective debate. When competing in FFA parliamentary procedure, it is beneficial for team members to demonstrate their knowledge of FFA and the agriculture industry. Members should also show awareness of their school and community as they discuss ideas and logistical matters associated with the pending motion.

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Debate Examples

Example 1: Assume the main motion is, "I move our chapter conduct a recruitment activity at the middle school."

Good Debate

I rise to speak in favor of this motion. As chapter recruitment is one of the five Quality Standards of the *Strengthening Agriculture* division of our Program of Activities, it is essential for increasing our enrollment and encouraging greater participation in FFA activities. We should plan an interactive and engaging assembly that informs middle school students of the great variety of FFA opportunities. Please vote to pass this motion.

Average Debate

I also am in favor of this motion. Our chapter membership declined by 10% this school year, and the current 7th grade class is the largest in the school district. Vote yes.

Poor Debate

We should go and talk to the kids, and tell them about FFA.

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Example 2: Assume that the main motion is, "I move our chapter conduct a community garden service-learning project."

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Good Debate

I encourage the assembly to vote in favor of this motion. With the approval of our advisor, we can tie this project to our Horticulture curriculum. Our students could apply the concepts from classroom instruction to teach our community how to grow their own produce. Our chapter could apply for a *Living to Serve* grant to support the purchase of necessary tools and materials.

Average Debate

I am in favor of this motion. I think this garden would be a good way to teach agricultural literacy to our community. I urge the assembly to vote yes.

Poor Debate

This will be good and help our community.

Example 3: Assume that the main motion is, "I move that our chapter host a leadership workshop for greenhand members," and you are opposed to the motion.

Good Debate

I do not think this motion will benefit our chapter. Our greenhand members have already had the opportunity to participate in leadership activities such as Made for Excellence conference and Alumni Leadership Camp. We have an extremely busy Program of Activities this month and I think this activity would be poorly attended. Therefore, I ask the assembly to join me in failing this motion.

Average Debate

I am opposed to this motion. There is not enough time to plan an event of this nature with such short notice. Please vote "no."

Poor Debate

This is a bad motion, and I don't think anyone will like it.

Procedure for Voting provided by CIMC

After the limits of debate have been exhausted, or debate has finished, the chair *puts the question*, or brings the motion to a vote. Robert states that the order of voting must begin with taking the *affirmative*, or votes in favor, first and then the negative votes.

Depending on the motion, a majority or two-thirds majority vote is required to pass. As stated in a previous unit, a simple majority is considered half the voting members plus one. A two-thirds majority, as its name implies, is two-thirds of the voting members. Motions that may require a two-thirds vote include: amend something previously adopted, objection to the consideration of a question, limit/extend limits of debate, and previous question.

There are several methods of voting that apply to particular motions and actions. The following examples are commonly used in meetings:

Voice

Voice vote is considered the normal method of voting, and applies to simple majority votes. Members may vote in the affirmative by saying "aye" or "yes," and in the negative by saying "nay" or "no."

Rising

A rising vote provides a more accurate, counted vote and is commonly used after a member calls for division of the assembly, or in the case of a two-thirds majority vote.

Show of Hands

A show of hands, rather than rising, may be more suitable in smaller assemblies.



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Ballot

A ballot vote, which involves members writing their vote on a piece of paper, provides secrecy. It is often used in elections and membership admission or expulsion votes.

Roll Call

A roll call vote is used to attain a record of the votes when needed by certain societies.

Unanimous Consent

Unanimous consent is useful for saving time when a motion appears to have no opposition. For routine motions like an adjournment, a chair may simply ask "is there any objection to adjourning the meeting at this time? [pause] Hearing none, I declare this meeting adjourned."

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Summary

A main motion is the primary tool for bringing a new action before an assembly. All members have the right to speak on debatable motions, but no member can speak twice before each member has had the opportunity to speak. Following the rules of debate can allow members to share their opinions in a fair and organized manner. Quality debate must be clear, logical, and germane to the pending motion. There are different methods of voting that are most effective for various motions and items of business.

Review Questions

1. How many times may a member debate on a motion on the same day?
2. In a normal assembly, what is the time limit for each debate?
3. What are the four steps for bringing a motion before the assembly?
4. What are the three components of good debate, as outlined by the National FFA Organization?
5. What method of voting is typically required for elections?
6. Describe the difference between *stating the question* and *putting the question*.

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