

The ABC's of Parliamentary Procedure

"**A**ddress the Chair to be recognized"

"**B**e sure to avoid personalities, stay on subject and state the motion in an affirmative manner"

"**C**hair will call for a second, if there is no second, the motion will fail to be considered"

Roberts Rules of Order

When we think of Parliamentary procedure, we usually think immediately of Roberts Rules of Order or RRO. RRO sets out the parliamentary rules that any group or organization can adopt as a guide to conducting an organized and manageable meeting. RRO make a meeting meaningful and productive in an orderly fashion. RRO provides guidance for most organizational functions, including:

- Establishing an organization and the rules that govern it
- Presiding over and participating in organizational meetings, including making motions and debating motions
- Calling for and conducting elections within the organization

Historical fact about Roberts Rules of Order:

Henry Martyn Robert served as a civil engineer in the U.S. Army, where he was called on to preside at meetings. He immersed himself in a study of the parliamentary law of the day and developed a pocket manual of parliamentary procedure published in 1876 known as Robert's Rules of Order. Since then the manual has seen two revisions in a total of ten editions.

Roberts Rules of Order or RRO provides for a fair and orderly meeting with common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same page and speak the same language. The conduct of all business is controlled by the right of the majority to decide. After a full and fair debate of the issues has been conducted, RRO provides for a constructive and democratic meeting to help the vote go smoothly.

The fundamental right of any group is that all questions are answered and differences in opinions be debated thoroughly and discussed before any action is taken.

General Guidelines:

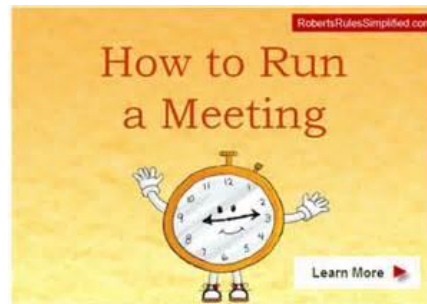
- Obtain the floor or the right to speak, by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state: Mr. or Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order. You must be recognized by the Chair before you can speak.
- Debate cannot begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" IF no one rises, the chair calls for the vote.
- Before the motion or the question is stated by the Chair, anyone may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify if she pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent from the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.
- The immediately pending question or motion is the last motion or question stated by the Chair. It goes like this: Motion/Resolution, Amendment/Motion to Postpone.
- The person moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to have the floor.
- No person can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has had a chance to speak at once.
- All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language. Never refer to anyone by name or their perceived motives.
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations. When presented to the group and the question is stated, debate begins and changes may occur.

Glossary of Terms and Rules:

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. you may interrupt only if absolutely necessary
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion or to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order

- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker; “I should like to ask the speaker a question.”
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda. If you want to deviate from the agenda it requires Suspending the Rules.
- **Main Motion:** Brings a new Business or the next item on the agenda before the group
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions but each point must be able to stand on its own
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of papers is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any changes cannot be considered until debate on the body of the paper has finished
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Commit/Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committees to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting its members and proceed to elect or appoint a committee.
- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time or limiting it to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration or action on a pending question; may be made after a motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously “laid on the table.” State the motion and take it from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view on the topic
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution/motion for this session. The only exception: the motion to reconsider can be made
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful, may be moved to “Close Debate” if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the members go into “Committee of the Whole” or an informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close the debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, must be done formally.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide, this must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the members own rules, except when it relates to the constitution, the object of the suspension must be specified

Robert's Rules of Order for Presiding over a Meeting:



When you Chair a meeting, your job is to always maintain the appearance of impartiality. The quickest way to lose control of a meeting is to allow your personal agenda to control the decisions you make on behalf of a group. Your group may have an agenda; however, your floor leaders must stand on their own when you are in the chair. To ensure that you are seen as impartial group leaders, remember these tips:

- **Speak of yourself in the person of the Chair:** for example say, “The Chair recognizes” or “The Chair rules that.”
- **Avoid directing instructions to members by name.** for example say, “The member will please take her seat,” not “Sit down Sally.” The only exception is when the Chair assigns the floor to someone. For example: “The Chair recognizes Ms. Smith.” Or when recognizing a delegate from a certain area the Chair would say, “The Chair recognizes the delegate from San Bernardino County.”
- **Know your bylaws and rules of order.** This is the most important thing you can do as a presiding officer. KNOW THE RULES. This will help establish your credibility as a leader.
- **Plan your meetings.** Make sure everyone on your team is aware of the agenda. Get the reports from your officers early and familiarize yourself with them.
- **Start your meetings on time.** Nothing commands the respect you must have as a Chair s much as starting on time. People will know you mean business and respect the fact that business comes first and socializing comes last
- **Use Unanimous consent:** This is when the Chair declares a motion to have passed without taking a vote. Instead the Chair asks simply if there are any objections. This is a wonderful tool to get things back on track and moving along when it is obvious something is uncontested and will pass.
- **Use committee's whenever possible.** This will reinforce your impartiality as well as create a secondary forum for the majority of the debates to take place, allowing for the continued flow of the central meeting
- **Preside with impartiality:** Don't let yourself enter into any debates, Don't gavel through motions, Don't vote unless your vote will affect the result or break a tie and don't refuse to hear someone because you don't want to hear them or what they have to say
- **Never give up the Chair:** Robert's Rules states that if you can't be impartial because you feel too strongly, you must step down and let someone else preside until the vote is taken, but remember that they may not want to give back the chair

- **Never share your lectern:** Always have a place for others who will be speaking to speak from
- **Keep your cool:** Never let anyone see you get frustrated. When disorder erupts, never go crazy banging the gavel, simply remain calm and deal with each issue as it arises
- **Use a Parliamentarian:** Regardless of the size of your group, always have someone there who has the RRO ready and handy to answer questions on procedure



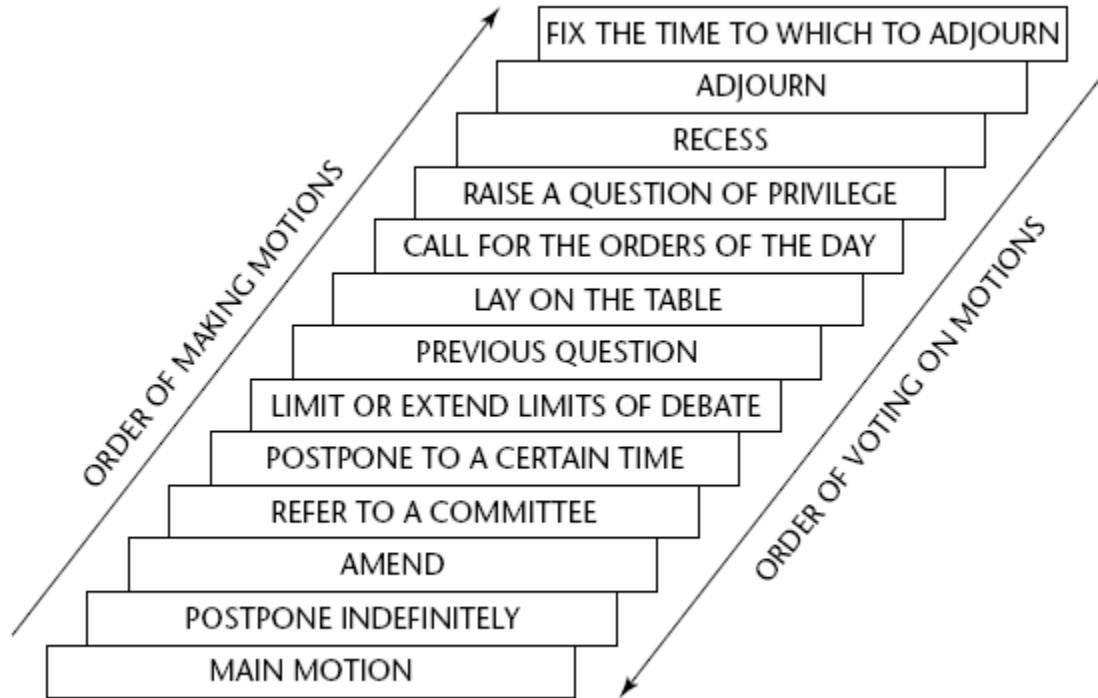
Using an Agenda for a better Meeting:

When it comes to meetings, any kind of meetings, the only way to effectively use your time is to have an agenda. An agenda is essentially a listing of how the meeting will flow and what topics will be covered and when. Sometimes times are listed; however, this is not necessary.

Parts of an agenda:

- **Call to Order:** Always start your meetings on time. A single tap of the gavel is sufficient with the statement, “The meeting will come to order.”
- **Opening ceremonies:** You may open your meeting with a simple call to order or you may use an invocation or the Pledge of Allegiance. The protocol is “God before country” so any invocation will come prior to the Pledge. Any special rituals like the Girl Scout Promise will come after the Pledge of Allegiance.
- **Roll call:** If you have any rules stating certain positions must be in attendance, now is the time to take roll.
- **Consent calendar:** This point is not used often except in large bodies such as public legislative bodies or large professional society’s House of Delegates.
- **A consent calendar :** This quickly processes a lot of noncontroversial items that can be disposed of quickly by placing them on a list of items to be adopted all at once
- **Standard order of business:** All of the business really begins with the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting and ends with you are finished with any new business
- **Good of the order:** This is a tie set aside for members to offer comments or observations without formal motions this time is also a time to offer a resolution or bring a disciplinary charge against a member or offenses committed outside of a meeting
- **Program:** any special speakers or program will be conducted here before the meeting is adjourned.
- **Adjourn:** this is where the meeting Chair declares the meeting adjourned

Robert's Rules of Order: Making Basic Motions and Mistakes to Avoid



Until a motion is made, seconded and stated by the Chair, no discussion may take place. This rule of "Motion before discussion" saves valuable time during meetings. To start a motion you would say: "I move that..." or "I make a motion to..." and then the motion needs someone else to second it in order for a discussion, debate or amendments to proceed. Time allowed is determined by the Chair, the group as a whole or predefined in the constitution of the group.

Motions fall into 3 basic types:

- **A main motion:** This introduces a new subject or topic for discussion and action. A main motion is a starting point for making a group decision
- **Secondary motion:** This motion offers three different ways of adding to the main motion
 1. **Subsidiary motion:** This applies directly to a pending main motion and helps the group arrive at a final decision on a main motion. For example a subsidiary motion says; let's do this along with the main motion.
 2. **Privileged motion:** These deals with things related to the comfort of the group or other situations that are so important they may interrupt current business. This motion does not require debate.

3. ***Incidental motion:*** These are motions that generally deal with procedures and help process other motions. An incidental motion says; let's do this to better handle the pending motion.
 - ***Restorative motion:*** this motion seeks to put things back to where they were. This motion says; let's undo this and maybe do this instead.

Brainstorming is great but belongs in a committee meeting not in the main business meeting. At this meeting time is limited and discussions and debates should be virtually talked out for the most part before they make it to this meetings agenda.

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th Edition)

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§21 Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20 Take break	I move to recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19 Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18 Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17 Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16 Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§15 Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§14 Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§13 Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§12 Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§11 Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
§10 Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

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Side 1

Common mistakes to RRO include:

- ***Speaking without recognition:*** you must be recognized by the Chair before you can speak
- ***Moving to "Table:"*** Many people think that by tabling a motion they are killing it. In reality they are simply moving it aside to work on something more pressing or urgent. To kill a motion you need to Postpone indefinitely

- **Calling the question:** When members get tired of hearing the same argument over and over they can call for the question. Your presiding officer may take the opportunity to tell the members that calling the question requires a formal motion.
- **Tabling it until next month:** What a member who makes this proposal usually wants is to *Postpone to a certain time, not lay it on the table.*
- **Reconsidering a vote:** Under RRO this has a very specific meaning. You may reconsider only with respect to a decision made in the current meeting.
- **Requesting a point of information:** Some people think this means they can get the floor to give information. In reality a *point of information* is made to enable the member to request information, not to give him an opportunity to speak again.
- **Offering friendly amendments:** When the motion is on the floor, the maker of the motion no longer owns it. Any motion to amend a main motion depends upon the acceptance of the group, not the person who originally made it.
- **Making a motion or accept or receive reports:** Motions to accept or receive reports after they are presented should never be entertained except in specific circumstances. Sometimes, a report contains recommendations or suggestions the need for the group to take some specific action. In these cases the presiding officer states the question on the motion that arises from the report, not on whether to adopt the recommendations contained in the report, and not on whether to receive adopt, for accept the report.
- **Dispensing with the minutes:** You don't want to dispense with the minutes; you want to dispense with the reading of the minutes

Roberts Rules for Defining a Quorum

Establishing a Quorum

According to RRO, a quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present at a properly called meeting in order to conduct business in the name of the group. A quorum should consist of "as large a number as can be depended upon for being present t at a meeting when the weather is not unexpectedly bad."

Some groups set a quorum as a percentage of membership, while others set a fixed number. You must determine a reasonable number of voting members needed in order to adequately vote on business for your group. Be sure to proceed with caution, and think about this number carefully. Use common sense and be willing to change the quorum requirements as frequently as needed as your group grows. Make sure to write these requirements into your constitution or bylaws and update it as needed. For general purposes of getting started, RRO sets the size of a reasonable quorum at the majority of the members. For example, if your group has 20 members, your quorum would be 11 voting members.

Dealing with the Absence of a Quorum

Sometimes there just aren't enough members present for a quorum. According to RRO, when this happens there are four options:

- **Fix the time to adjourn:** Doing so makes it possible for the meeting to continue on a later day, after you have enough people to achieve a quorum.
- **Adjourn:** You can adjourn the meeting and wait for the next regular meeting
- **Recess:** Sometimes you can simply take a recess and run around gathering up members to come to the meeting so you can proceed with business. Recess is often used when members wander around in the middle of a meeting and then someone notices there isn't enough members in the room to conduct business.
- **Take other measures to assemble a quorum:** You can appoint a committee to go make calls and round up enough members for your business meeting. The program or speakers may continue until a motion to obtain a quorum is called. It is treated as a privileged motion and takes precedence over a motion to recess. If you choose to make an urgent decision without the presence of a quorum, you and the members responsible for said decision, can be held liable should the quorum choose not to honor your decision. So think carefully if you want to put yourself in that position before you act. IF you choose to proceed with a decision without the vote of the quorum or the majority of the membership, the group may call a motion to **Ratify** which allows the group to approve, by majority vote at a regular meeting with a quorum, your action and adopt it as the action of the group. IF they choose to ratify, you're "off the hook," if they vote against the motion to ratify, you and the other members who made the decision will be held financially responsible for the decision made.

Roberts Rules of Order Voting Methods

Whether you're voting on a motion or participating in an election, RRO has various official means of voting:

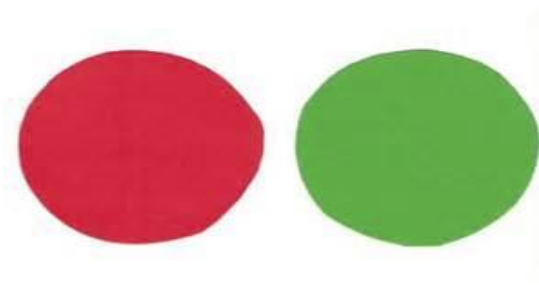
- **Unanimous Consent:** The voting method taking the least amount of time is the vote by unanimous consent. This method simply involves asking the members if there is any objection to adopting the motion. If no one objects, then the motion is adopted. If even one member objects, you must take a vote.
- **Voice Vote:** Voice Vote or Viva Voce, (pronounced VEE-vah Voe-see) is the method for voting on motions requiring a majority vote. A Voice Vote should start by the presiding officer saying, "All those in favor say "AYE" pause then, "All those opposed, say "No" then pause. A standard time to pause would be to silently count from 1 to 10. This method is usually quite effective but may require a little extra effort if the vote is too close. At the discretion of the presiding officer, a close vote may require a raise of hands to substantiate. The presiding officer must always call for a positive AND a negative vote. This rule does not apply to courtesy resolutions expressing appreciation such as a thank you but it does to every other vote.

- **Rising Vote:** When a motion is to be decided by a 2/3's vote, or when a voice vote is too close to call, you can use a rising vote. The presiding officer may call for a Rising Vote by saying: "All those in favor please raise" Pause and then, "be seated. "Next, "Will all opposed please rise," pause and then, "be seated."

1. **Voting by show of hands:** A vote by show of hands can be used rather than a rising vote at the discretion of the presiding officer.

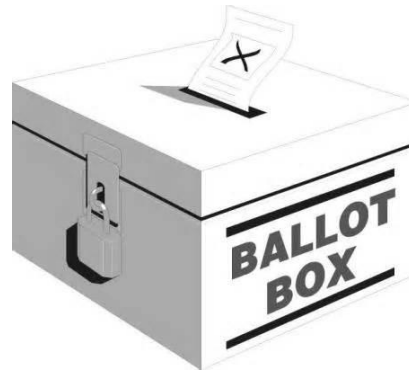


2. **Voting by show of cards:** Usually in very large groups needing to conduct business, voting members are given colored voting cards. They will hold the cards up appropriately indicating their vote. This makes it easier for the presiding officer to see and count the votes



- **Counted Vote:** A counted vote simply means that you ask the voting members to remain standing, keep their hands raised or their colored cards raised until all votes can be counted. In very large groups, **Tellers** are appointed by the chair with the consent of the members to count the votes.
- **Roll-Call Vote:** A roll-call vote will commence when the presiding officer calls each member by name and their vote is recorded into the minutes of the meeting.
- **Ballot Voting:** Voting by ballot is used whenever you do not want the members individual views disclosed. Papers on which voters indicate their vote are understood to be secret unless otherwise specified. Votes may be cast via mail when secrecy is not required. If the bylaws of your group allow for ballot voting on any matter it is to protect you as a voting member from having to disclose your preference in voting. This rule protects the rights of the individual and this rule can never be suspended even by a unanimous vote when written into the bylaws or

constitution of the group. If your bylaws allow voting by ballot, as a voting member, a motion may never be entertained if it forces a member to disclose their views when voting by ballot.



Roberts Rules of Order for Conducting Elections

The election process may be the easiest part of deciding who handles a particular job within your group. RRO elections are very simple and are really nothing more than the handling of an assumed motion. The only question being who will be elected to fill a position. Like any other motion, an election can be decided by voice vote or ballot.

- **Electing by Ballot:** When holding ballot elections there are two options:
 1. **Nominations for all offices conclude before any balloting begins.** This saves time and allows for polling at a time and place other than a meeting.
 2. **Nominations for each office are followed by the election for that office.** This allows voting members to consider the election results of one office before proceeding to the election of another office. You take nominations from the floor for one office and when no further nominations are stated you proceed to the balloting for that office.

No matter which procedure you use, the order in which you take up each election is the order in which the offices are listed in the bylaws. Voting by ballot enables a voting member to vote for a candidate not formally nominated by writing in a name. A write-in vote is legal unless it is unintelligible or cast for an unidentifiable or ineligible person or for a fictitious character. In this case the vote is counted as illegal.

- **Electing by Voice Vote:** If your bylaws do not require you to conduct an election by ballot, and if candidates are unopposed or there is no major contest for an office you can save time and call for a simple voice vote or viva voce vote. After nominations are closed, the vote is taken on each nominee in the order in which they were nominated.
- **Electing by Roll Call:** If your voting members are accountable to a constituency, your rules may require you to conduct your elections by roll-call vote in order for each voting members vote to be recorded into the minutes.

- **Determining Who Wins:** Elections are always decided upon by majority vote unless specifically outlined in your bylaws. When it comes to a voice vote the winner is determined immediately, however, when it comes to ballot voting, the election isn't complete until a position is filled. A position is never filled until a candidate receives the number of required votes as set forth by the bylaws or the majority of votes as cast by voting members. If you have a tie then ballots are re-cast until there is a clear winner by majority vote of voting members.

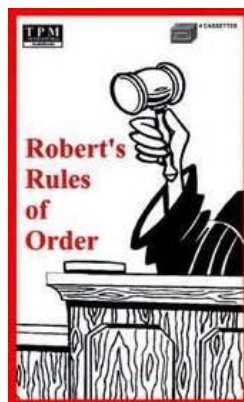


How to Relax Roberts Rules of Order

Considering Things Informally:

Sometimes groups are so small that a less formal RRO is in order. Options for relaxing RRO for debate on a particular subject for committees and boards are as follows:

- **Resolve itself into a committee of the whole or a quasi-committee of the whole:** The entire group makes itself one big committee and uses committee rules as the rules of debate on a particular subject. In a quasi-committee the presiding officer of the whole body and the committee can be the same person.
- **Simply Relax the rules and consider a particular subject informally.** This move essentially relaxes the limits on debate. Votes during informal consideration are votes of the group only.
- **Establish breakout groups:** This method requires some planning in advance so that facilitators can be appointed to bring back the results of these committee meetings.





Taking it easy in Committees and small Boards

In some instances the need for formality is essential to have a smooth running meeting. You may start off formal and use special procedures to relax formality in some circumstances. In small groups you may start off informally and only get formal when it becomes necessary.

Board and Committee meetings are usually subject to the same formality as regular business meetings, however, relaxing the rules is permitted as long as your bylaws permit such special procedures.

Under the relaxed rules of procedure for committees and boards:

- You can make motions or speak without a formal recognition from the presiding officer
- Your motions don't have to be seconded
- You can speak as often as you can politely obtain the attention of the other members. In fact, motions to **Limit Debate** are not in order, and the motion to **Reconsider** practically knows no limit in a committee.
- You can discuss things without a motion being on the floor
- You do not need to take minutes. However, having some record is useful and may be customary for the chair to keep notes of committee proceedings for reference
- The chair can make motions, participate in discussions and vote