

Parliamentary Pointers

By definition, Parliamentary Law or Parliamentary Procedure is a set of rules designed to protect the rights of individuals conducting and attending a meeting.

Parliamentary Law will:

- Ensure that the will of the majority will rule
- Protect the rights of the minority to be heard
- Defend the rights of individual members
- Empower the Chair to control the conduct of attendees
- Allow business to be dispatched quickly and fairly

Your responsibility as President and presiding officer:

- Know the basics of Parliamentary Law
- Treat all members fairly and equitably
- Never tell a member he/she is “out of order”, even though the motion might be ...say “Mr. Jones, the motion is out of order”
- Never allow the meeting to get out of control – for the sake of all attendees and you as the presiding officer

As the presiding officer during a meeting:

- Keep the chars of motions (below) close at hand so you will always know whether a motion needs a second, can be amended, is debatable and whether it requires a majority or two-thirds vote
- Always repeat the motion after it has been seconded and before calling for discussion. Remember that the motion belongs to the assembly until the presiding officer takes it from them by repeating it. Once you have done that, the motion now belongs to you and you have the responsibility for seeing it through to its proper conclusion
- Remember that *subsidiary (secondary) motions* are always attached to other motions. Subsidiary motions are disposed of first, and then the main motion.

Example:

Main motion: I move we purchase a gift for the main speaker at the conference.

Subsidiary motion: I move to amend the main motion to include “at a cost of no more than \$50.00.”

The amendment will be entertained first. Once that is passed or rejected, the main motion is taken up. The *main motion* is always the last motion taken up by the assembly.

To Do This ¹ :	You Say This:	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Must you be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Vote IS Required?
Adjourn the meeting	"I move that we adjourn."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority vote required
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until.."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Complain about noise, room temperature, etc.	"Point of privilege."	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable ²	Not amendable	No vote required ³
Lay the pending question aside when something else of immediate urgency has arisen	"I move we table it."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority vote required
End debate	"I move the previous question."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Two-thirds vote required
Postpone consideration of something	"I move we postpone this matter until..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Have something studied further	"I move we refer this matter to a committee."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Introduce business (a primary motion)	"I move that..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required

¹ The motions or points above are listed in established order or precedence. When any one of them is pending, you may not introduce another that's listed below it, but you may introduce another that's listed above it.

² In this case, any resulting motion is debatable

³ Chair decides

To Do This ¹ :	You Say This:	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Must you be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Vote IS Required?	
Object to a departure from the rules	"Point of Order"	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	No vote required ³	
Request Information	"Point of Information"	May interrupt speaker if urgent	No second needed	Not debatable	Not Amendable	No vote required	
Ask for a rising vote to verify a voice vote	"I call for a division of the house."	May interrupt speaker if urgent ²	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	No vote required	
Object to considering some undiplomatic or improper matter	"I object to consideration of this question."	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	Two-thirds vote in the negative required to prevent consideration	
Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move we take from the table...."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority vote required	
Reconsider something already disposed of	"I move we now (or later) reconsider our action relative to...."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable if original motion is debatable	Not Amendable	Majority vote required	
Consider something out of its scheduled order	"I move we suspend the rules and consider..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not Debatable	Not Amendable	Two-thirds vote required	
Vote on a ruling by the chair	"I appeal the chair's decision"	May interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Not Amendable	Majority in the negative required to reverse chair's decision	
¹ The motions, points, and proposals listed above have no established order of precedence. Any of them may be introduced at any time except when the meeting is considering one of the top three matters listed in above chart (motion to adjourn, motion to recess, point of privilege).		² But division must be called for before another motion is started.				³ Chair decides	