



Overview of Robert's Rules of Order

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Robert's Rules of Order

- A set of rules for the conducting the meetings of deliberative bodies
- Also known as “Robert's Rules” or RONR (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*)
- Published 1876, and revised many times – currently in its eleventh edition (2011) at 816 pages
- This presentation contains a comprehensive overview of everything you need to know should you find yourself in a meeting being run according to Robert's Rules...

Everything you need to know

1. *Indicate to the Chair that you would like to speak.*
2. *Once recognized by the Chair, inform them what you are trying to accomplish and ask them how you should best proceed...*
3. *Success!*

Is it really that easy?

Yes!

That is the entire point of Robert's Rules – *it is a system that allows for open discussion of issues while protecting the basic rights of each member –*

- Right to attend meetings
- Right to speak on issues
- Right to make motions
- Right to vote

In a well operating assembly, there is little reason to worry about Robert's Rules...It is only necessary to consider when balancing **individuals and the overall body's** right to collective action – Robert's guides how to balance both individual member rights, and the rights of the body.

Roberts Rules also protect the rights of **the body**:

- Ability to consider and decide matters in a consistent manner
- Ability to hold meetings without requiring 100% participation (i.e. “quorum”)
- Ability to limit discussion to reasonable duration
- Ability to avoid intentional distraction (hence “seconding”)
- Ability to maintain meeting decorum

It is the Chair who has the responsibility to run the meeting per Robert's Rules (and any standing rules adopted by the body). As a member, you simply need to respectfully engage in the discussion and respect the direction of the Chair.

But wait, what if I am the Chair?

- The good news: much of the administrative duties are things that ARIN staff will help out with: meeting notice, agendas, minutes, etc.
- *But you will still need to run the actual meeting or teleconference.*
- The material which follows covers the minimum necessary for you to run the meeting with general respect for the principles of Robert's Rules.

Chair - Make sure you have a valid meeting

- **Have Proper advance notice** (no, you cannot “declare a meeting” if you happen to run into everyone at some conference.)
- **Send the notice to all members of the body** (you cannot invite just a subset that you like.)
- **Have enough people present to make quorum**
- **Participants who can all simultaneously hear and speak to one another** (someone only reachable via chat is not actually present.)
- **Maintained quorum throughout the meeting** (double check whenever you lose participants.)

Chair – Manage the Agenda

- **Adopt (and keep to) the agenda** – your participants have the right to know “what will be discussed when”.
 - *You can always, by consent of the body, suspend the normal sequence and do things in a different order.*
- **Consider one agenda item at a time** – finish one agenda item before moving on to the next.
 - *Someone who left the meeting early has the right to expect that items that have been considered will not be reconsidered without good reason.*
- Allow for “**Any Other Business (AOB)**”
 - *While the Chair can suggest the issues to be discussed in the proposed agenda, members have the right to raise issues/make motions germane to the body either at agenda adoption or in an AOB item if provided.*
- Use “**If there is no objection**”
 - *The Chair readily directs or acts with the authority of the body through this simple phrase.*

Chair – Handling the current motion

- **Motions generally require a second** – this protects the body from a participant engaging in denial-of-service via motions.
- **Once a motion is made and seconded, it is owned by the body** – the person making it has no special relationship with the motion (e.g., they cannot unilaterally withdraw the motion, nor can they accept a “friendly amendment”).
- **Allow withdrawal by consent** – “If there is no objection”
- **Amending a motion** can be done as a formal “subsidiary” motion, but more often should simply be incorporated by consent - “If there is no objection”.
- **Allow discussion** – The Chair should recognize speakers evenly and ask “Is there further discussion” to solicit more. Upon no response, the Chair can note the question is called by stating “Hearing none, we will put the matter to vote ...”.

Chair – Conduct voting with due process

- **Vote only on issues discussed** – Since the right of a member to speak on an issue under consideration is inviolate, the easiest way to endanger the body is calling for a vote on a matter which has not been discussed.
- **Use caution when curtailing discussion** – Similarly, preventing the introduction of new points from participants endangers the validity of an outcome – it is best to allow discussion to continue to its natural end (or if time is short and a significant majority believes that the discussion has been sufficient).
- **Don't revisit issues that have been decided without clear change in circumstances** – members have reasonable expectation that issues will not be revisited arbitrarily, particularly not in the same meeting after a decision has been made.

Chair – Recognizing Points & Privilege Motions

- **Question of Privilege** – Addressed nominally to the Chair, and address such urgent matters as: inability to see/hear speaker; personal privilege (bio break); intolerable environmental conditions in the meeting room; leaving the room because of the fire alarm; or, safety hazard.
- **Point of Information** – Also addressed nominally to the Chair, seeking specific information that is necessary to proceed. Not commonly used (since such such queries usually occur in the normal deliberations) but allow a specific inquiry outside if needed.
- **Point of Order** – Also addressed nominally to the Chair, noting a violation of the rules or decorum. The Chair responds in all cases with either “The point is well-taken” or “The point is not well-taken”.

Members raising these motions should state the type of motion aloud (interrupting the present floor speaker if necessary), and then wait to be recognized to provide the particulars.

Chairs – Your Special Rules of Order at ARIN

- **Members do not have to stand up to speak**
- **Members can address remarks to the body, not just to the Chair**
- **Members can speak multiple times in a discussion**
- **Members can speak against their own motion**
- **Chair can participate in the discussion and voting**

Questions?