

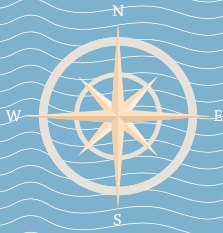
HANDOUT

Robert's Rules 2 Mastering Motions

Association of Washington Cities
June 20, 2024

1. PowerPoint slides
2. Motions chart
3. Dinosaur Precedence of Motions chart
4. Reconsider, Rescind, or Amend previous decision
5. Sanctioning rogue board members
6. Minor mistakes don't invalidate action


Presented by
Ann G. Macfarlane
Professional Registered Parliamentarian



League of NORTHWEST DINO CITIES



**Jurassic
Parliament**


 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Robert's Rules 2 Mastering Motions

Ann G. Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian
Jurassic Parliament

Association of Washington Cities
Vancouver, Washington
June 20, 2024


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 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Our topics

- I. Introduction
- II. Motions and Amendments
- III. Precedence of motions
- IV. Reconsider, Table, Postpone
- V. Censure
- VI. Review and conclusion

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 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

I. Introduction


3

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Why are we here?

To give you confidence in using motions to achieve your goals during meetings.


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 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

After taking this workshop you will be able to:

1. Make Main Motions and Amendments
2. Refer to the Precedence of Motions chart to know when to make other motions
3. Use motions to reconsider, rescind, or amend a prior decision, to table, or to postpone.
4. Make a motion to censure a colleague

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Disclaimer

The material contained in this presentation is based upon the principles and practices of parliamentary procedure. I am not an attorney and nothing in this presentation constitutes legal advice.

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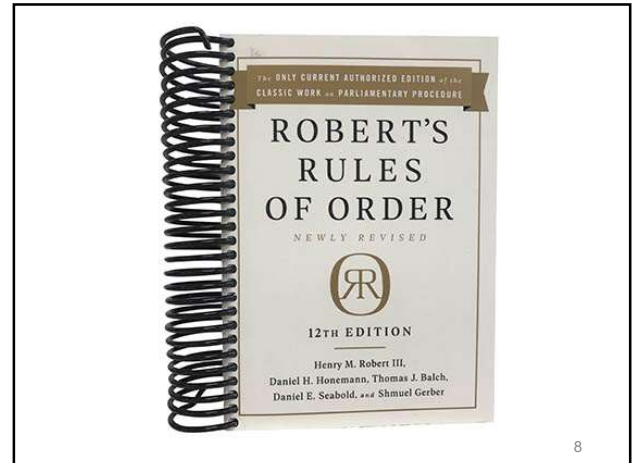
Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition

Abbreviated RONR
"Rules of Order Newly Revised"

We recommend spiral-bound edition, available from the National Association of Parliamentarians

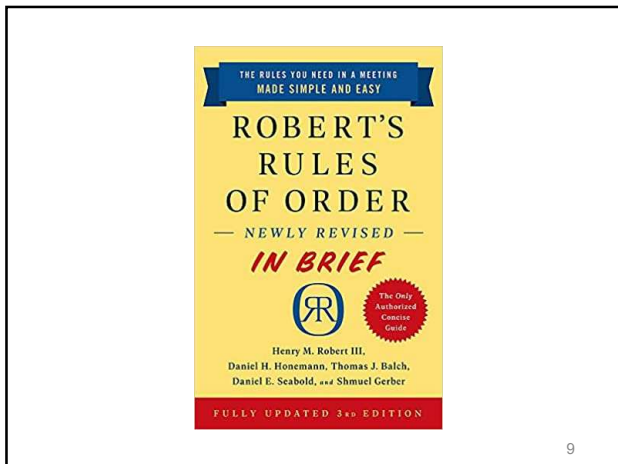
These are also available in Kindle editions on Amazon.

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II. Motions and amendments

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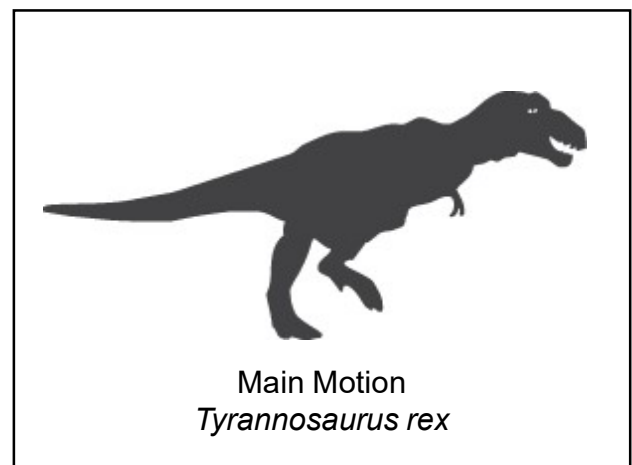
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MAIN MOTIONS

- A main motion is a proposal to do something. It "starts the action."
- It should be in writing if at all possible!
- You can project on a screen.

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Draft motions

- When the leadership knows that a motion is needed, they may create a draft motion and include it in the agenda.
- It has no standing until someone moves it.
- At the correct point in the agenda, members may also move a motion spontaneously.

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Discussion first?

- In large groups, you must have a motion before any discussion begins.
- Some small groups prefer to discuss the topic first, and formulate the motion once they are ready to vote. We don't recommend this.
- If you want to do this, the chair should encourage a member to state a formal motion just as soon as the group is ready for it.

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The City Council desires to provide adequate time for administration and staff analysis, fact finding, and preparation.

Except in extraordinary or unusual circumstances, all items that are not routine in nature shall, when presented, include a completed Council agenda bill.

City of SeaTac Administrative Procedures

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Main Motion

For government bodies, we recommend this sequence:

- Staff presents proposal in writing and answers any questions. Each member may ask one or two questions, then the next member has a turn.
- Motion is moved and seconded.
- Members discuss motion and may amend it.
- Members vote on motion.

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Main Motion

- It should be **clear and unambiguous**. Don't say, "I move what he just said," or "so moved."
- It should be phrased in the grammatical **positive**. Don't make a motion "not to approve."
- It must comply with the **bylaws** and the **procedural** law of the land.
- You can have only **one main motion** at a time.

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Fundamental guideline

One thing at a time!

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To make a main motion

- At the right time, any member says, “I move that...” and states, as clearly and concisely as possible, what is proposed.
- Don't be shy! Make a motion if you wish to.

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Member must be clear

- The member has the responsibility of formulating the motion.
- Don't mix up your ideas about the subject with the motion itself. Save those for debate.

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I've been noticing that the number of wild cats is increasing in our city, and they're getting stomped on by bigger dinosaurs. I think allowing catios would be great, this fits in with our city mission, it would make a huge difference to the safety of our little feline friends.

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Main Motion

I move that residents be authorized to build CATIOS in their private yards.

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You can request a moment to write it down

- May I have a few minutes to write this motion down?
- Chair may also request that motion be written.

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Second

Director Smith seconds the motion!

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Second the motion

- You “second a motion” to show that you would like to talk about it.
- No need to be recognized. Just give your name and call out “second.”
- It is OK to second a motion you disagree with, if you want to explain why it’s a bad idea.

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If no second...

- If there is no second, the chair says:
There being no second, the motion will not be considered.
- Then moves immediately to next item of business.

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Eight steps to process a motion

1. **Member makes motion.**
2. Another member seconds motion.
3. **Chair states motion.**
4. Members debate and/or amend motion.
5. **Chair restates motion and calls for vote.**
6. Members vote on motion.
7. Chair states results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what happens next.
8. Chair states next item of business.

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Step #3 is very important!

- Presider **MUST** repeat the motion, or have the clerk repeat it.
- **WHY?**
 - So that everyone knows what we are actually discussing.
 - The text of the motion as stated by chair is the official text.
 - After step #3, the motion belongs to the group as a whole, not to the person who made it.

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Chair must be precise

- The chair has the duty of repeating the exact words of the motion made by the councilmember.
- If some change is made, councilmember should speak up and repeat exact words.
- Other councilmembers should not be speaking at this point.

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Step #5 is also very important!

- Chair must repeat the motion before the vote is taken.
- **WHY?** So that everyone knows what we are actually voting on.
- Have you ever been at a meeting when once the vote is taken, someone says, “What did we just approve?” and no one knows exactly what it was?

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Point of Information

Friendly member: *Point of Information Chair!*

Chair: *State your question.*

Friendly member: *I'm confused. What exactly IS a "catio"?*

Chair: *A catio is a patio for cats. Here's an example.*

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Point of Information

- "Point of Information" is a QUESTION. It is also called "Request for Information." It cannot be used to GIVE information.
- Note that a request like this does not count as discussion or debate.

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Language tip

If someone uses this motion incorrectly, chair can ask:

What information does the member need in order to decide how to vote?

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General contractor

I feel that catios will allow our dear feline friends to experience the outdoors without getting hurt or endangering other wildlife. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this motion.

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Photographer

I'm in favor! My cousin has built a catio, and her little pet Fuzzy is completely at home in it, as you can see from this picture.

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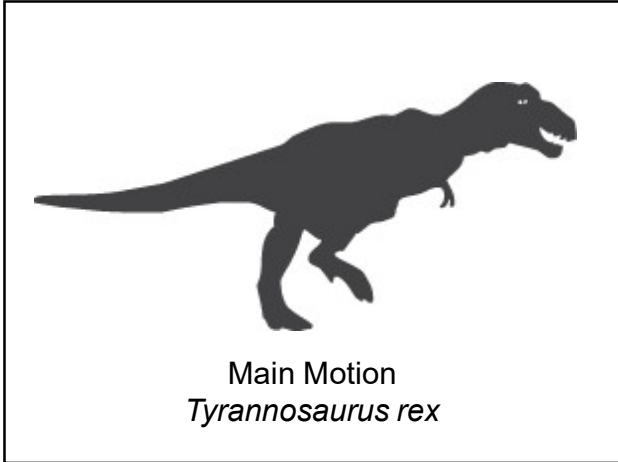
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Architect

I think this is a terrible idea! Catios are intrusive and will ruin the look of our city. Here's an example I saw when I visited Dinodome last week. We don't want this kind of ugly building in beautiful Dinopolis.

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Main Motion

I move that residents be authorized to build CATIOS in their private yards.

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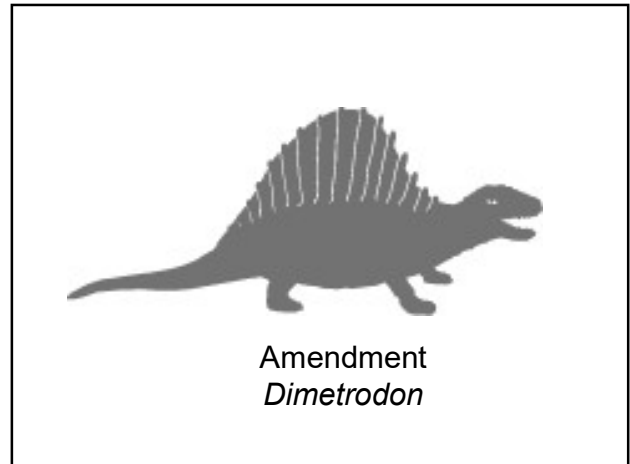
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Amendment

- You amend a motion to improve it.
- The amendment applies to the main motion.
- The amendment must be germane (relevant).
- Anyone may move to amend, even the person who made the motion.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Engineer

I move to amend the motion by adding the words, "Provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board."

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

If adopted, will read:

*Residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards, **provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board.***

42

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Four ways to amend

1. Add or insert words.
2. Strike out words.
3. Strike out words and insert words in their place.
4. Substitute (not recommended).

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Amend by adding words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards, **provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board.***

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Amend by inserting words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios **with a maximum height of 8 feet** in their private yards*

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Amend by striking out words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios ~~in their private yards.~~*

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Amend by striking out and inserting words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios ~~in their private yards~~ **adjacent to their home if their neighbor agrees.***

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Amend by substitution

- *I move that we amend the motion by substituting this paragraph:
That we will survey neighboring cities in the League to find out what their experience has been with authorizing catios.*

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Process Amendment

- The amendment is processed using the same eight steps that we just saw for a main motion.

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The challenge is...

- We vote on amendments BEFORE we vote on the main motion, in order to make the main motion as good as possible—to PERFECT the motion.

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Amendment blocks Main Motion

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Fate of the Amendment

- Once the fate of the amendment has been decided, debate continues on the main motion.
- Don't forget to vote on the main motion "as amended."

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More amendments are possible...

- Once you've dealt with one amendment, you may have others...
- provided that they apply to a *different aspect* of the main motion.
- It takes special actions (reconsideration) to go back and change something we've already amended.

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The process continues

- After all amendments have been processed, the body still must vote on the AMENDED MAIN MOTION.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Secondary amendment


- When an amendment has been proposed, it is called a "primary amendment."
- It is also possible to amend the amendment, which is called a "secondary amendment."
- This is processed just like the main motion, EXCEPT that no further amendments are possible—no "tertiary" amendments.

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Primary Amendment
Dimetrodon

56



Secondary Amendment
Small Dimetrodon

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Amend the Amendment Architect

I move that we amend the amendment by striking the words "Design Review Board" and inserting the words "a licensed architect."


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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

If adopted, amendment will read:

provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the ~~Design Review Board~~ a licensed architect.

59



Secondary amendment
Secondary amendment blocks primary amendment

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Sequence

- Discuss and vote on the secondary amendment.
- Discuss and vote on the primary amendment.
- Discuss and vote on the Main Motion.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

How many amendments?

- “Primary amendments” are amendments to the main motion itself. You may have as many as you have time for.
- There are also “secondary amendments.”
- You may have as many of these as you have time for.
- At any given moment, there may be only ONE primary amendment and ONE secondary amendment pending.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

“Friendly amendment”

- People often process “friendly amendment” the wrong way.
- DO NOT turn to maker and seconder to ask if they accept the amendment – this give them improper power.
- Once a motion has been stated by the chair, the maker and seconder have same rights as any other member.
- Handle this the same as any other amendment.
- Ask, “Is there a second?” etc.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Germaneness

- According to Robert, amendments must be germane – relevant to the main motion.
- This rule allows for some surprising possibilities.
- A “motion to commend” may be amended into a “motion to censure.”
- Some bodies adopt a Special Rule of Order that no amendment will be allowed which changes the intent of the original motion.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Minutes and amendments per Robert

- The clerk must keep track of amendments during the discussion, because people will ask you what’s up.
- Detail on who moved what amendment, how it was voted on etc. does NOT go into the minutes.
- The minutes include only the final text of the motion and its disposition (passed, failed, referred to committee, withdrawn...)
- “After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted...”

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Entering amendments in the minutes


- Councilmember Smith moved to require that all delinquent dinosaurs be required to register with the Department of Social Welfare, seconded by Councilmember Johnson.
- After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted:
 - That all delinquent dinosaurs be required to register with the Department of Social Welfare starting in July 2023, and that the staff receive special training in managing delinquents.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

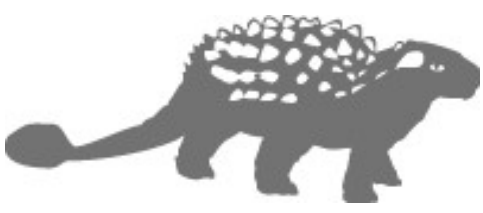
III. Precedence of motions

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Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

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Refer to Committee
Ankylosaurus

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Refer to Committee

Ankylosaurus

- Motion sending main motion (and any amendments) off to another group.
- Should specify two things:
 1. Which **committee it's going to**
 2. When **it's coming back**

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Refer to Committee

Ankylosaurus

Two different types:

1. Normally a motion is referred for a **recommendation**.
2. It is possible to refer a motion with **power to decide**.

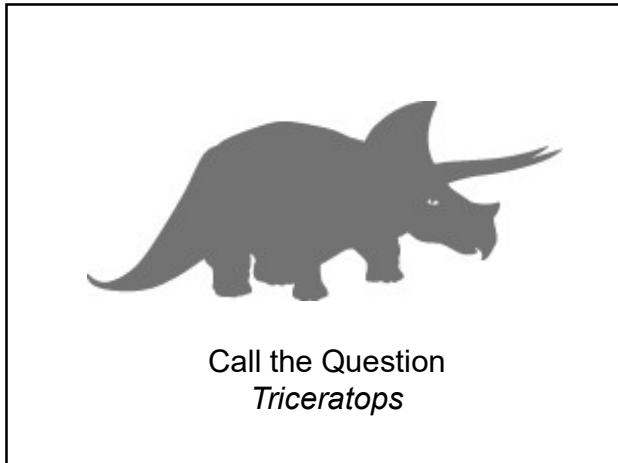
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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


Process Refer to Committee

- Refer to Committee is processed using the same eight steps we saw for the Main Motion and the Amendment.

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Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


Call the Question

Triceratops

- Motion requesting that we stop debate and vote.
- This motion requires a **second**.
- HOWEVER it cannot be **debated**.
- It cannot be **amended**.
- And, it takes a **two-thirds** vote to pass.

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Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Process Call the Question

1. Member A: *I call the question!*
2. Member B: *Second!*
3. Chair: *The question has been called, so we will vote immediately on whether to end debate and vote on the pending motion, which is [state motion]. All those in favor of stopping debate now, raise your right hand.*
4. [Members in favor raise right hand]

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Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Process Call the Question

5. Chair: *Thank you, hands down. All those opposed, raise your right hand.*
6. [Members opposed raise right hand]
7. Chair: *Thank you, hands down. There are two-thirds in favor of ending debate, so we will vote immediately, OR There are not two-thirds in favor of ending debate, so discussion will continue.*

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Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Additional points

- Once approved, no more discussion is allowed.
- Don't include this motion in the minutes.
- There is no need for the chair or a member to say "I call the question" in order to take the vote.
 - The chair just asks, "Is there any further discussion?" or "Are you ready to vote?"
 - These are rhetorical questions! If no one speaks up, the chair proceeds immediately to take the vote.

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Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Let's go back to the menagerie...

- HOW do you know which motion can be made when, and how to process them?
- There is a SECRET—not to unbounded prosperity, but to continued success at meetings!

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What is the SECRET?

Pree – SEE – dence of motions

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The SECRET

- Each motion has a number or rank.

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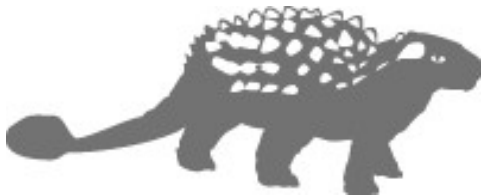
1 - Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

81



3 - Amendment
Dimetrodon

82



4 - Refer to Committee
Ankylosaurus

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7 - Call the Question
Triceratops

84

The SECRET

- Each motion has a number or rank.
- When a motion is pending (under consideration), motions with a higher rank may be made.
- Motions with a lower rank are out of order.

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The SECRET continued

- The “main motion” has the LOWEST rank.
- There are 13 motions with ranks in all.
- The “flying dinosaurs” like Point of Order do not have any rank.

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Precedence of Motions

1 MAIN MOTION Tyrannosaurus rex

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Precedence of Motions

3 Amendment Dimetrodon
1 MAIN MOTION

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Precedence of Motions

4 Refer to committee Ankylosaurus
3 Amendment
1 MAIN MOTION

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Precedence of Motions

7 Call the question Triceratops
4 Refer to committee
3 Amendment
1 MAIN MOTION

90

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Precedence of Motions

7	Call the question – vote now
4	Refer to committee – send to committee
3	Amendment – add “provided approved by Design Review Board”
1	MAIN MOTION – build catios

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Why are we not going in numerical order?

- The motions we’re discussing today are the most common motions.

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Precedence of Motions

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Another main motion

That we conduct a survey of all the cities in the League to find out if they authorize catios.

NOT IN ORDER! We’re voting on a #7 motion, and this is a #1 motion.

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Another amendment

- Residents are authorized to build catios in their private yards **starting in January 2025.**

NOT IN ORDER! We’re voting on a #7 motion, and this is a #3 motion.

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Precedence of Motions

- Chart showing all 13 motions is available on our website for download, <https://jurassicparliament.com/free-roberts-rules-motions-chart/>

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

MOTIONS CHARTS

	Rank	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote?
PRIVILEGED MOTIONS					
Fix time to which to adjourn	13	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Adjourn	12	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	11	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Raise a question of privilege	10	No	No	No	Chair decides
Call for orders of the day	9	No	No	No	At request of one member
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS					
Table	8	Yes	No	No	Majority
Previous question or call the question*	7	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
Limit or extend limits of debate	6	Yes	No	Yes	Two-thirds
Postpone to a certain time	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Secondary amendment		Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Primary amendment		Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amendment*	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
<small>*Rank 2 motions include table, amend, and refer to committee.</small>					

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Dinosaur Precedence of Motions

Point of Order, Appeal, Point of Information
Flying dinosaur
No rank

Respond to these motions as they come up

Call the Question
Triceratops
Rank of 7

Needs a second, cannot be debated or amended, two-thirds vote

Refer to Committee
Ankylosaurus
Rank of 4

Needs a second, can be debated and amended, majority vote

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

IV. Reconsider, Table, Postpone

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Changing your mind

Whoops, we made a mistake!
These motions have no rank.

- Amend something previously adopted
- Rescind
- Reconsider

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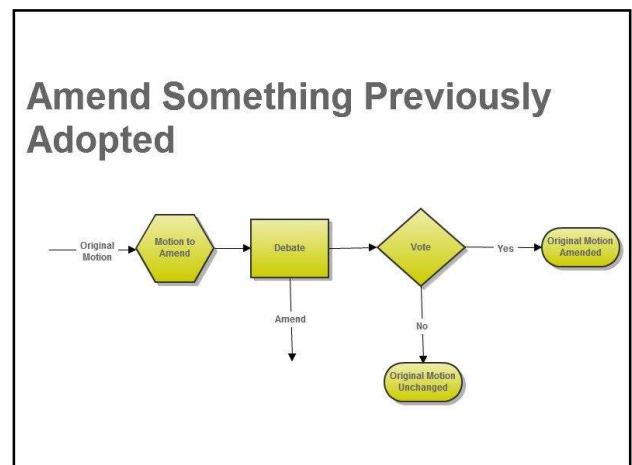
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Amend something previously adopted

- This is motion you use to amend (change) the minutes once they have been approved.
- Three ways it can be approved:
 - Two-thirds vote during the meeting
 - Majority vote with advanced notice
 - Majority of the entire body

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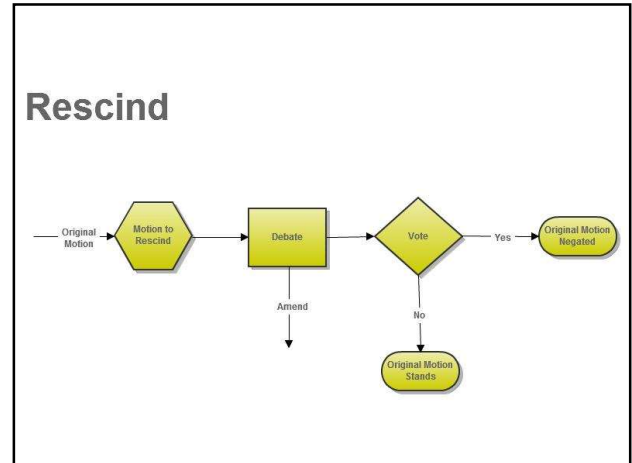
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Rescind

- A proposal to cancel out something the group has already decided.
- If something has been done that cannot be undone, this motion may not be made.
- Three ways it can be approved:
 - Two-thirds vote during the meeting
 - Majority vote with advanced notice
 - Majority of the entire body

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Reconsider

- A proposal to reopen something already decided.
- Must have voted with prevailing side to move reconsideration.
- Again, cannot use this to undo something done.
- Has two parts:
 - Vote whether to reconsider (majority vote)
 - If yes, then resume matter where it was just before the vote was taken

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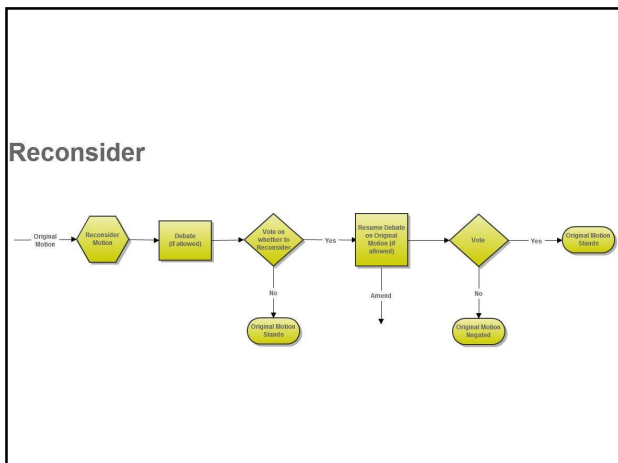
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Reconsider

- According to Robert, can only be moved on same day or next day.
- Note: Some bodies allow a motion to be reconsidered at the next meeting.
- Bill Murray in "Groundhog Day"

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Renewing a motion

- If a motion is defeated, it can be introduced again at a future meeting.
- This is called "renewing" the motion.
- "Renewal" is different from "reconsider," which normally may be done ONLY at the same meeting.
- Some bodies have rules restricting when and how this can be done.


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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Reconsider, Rescind, or Amend previous decision

By Ann G. Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian



Some years ago, I had a dramatic exposure to the motion to "Reconsider." At a 2-day meeting of our professional society board, one member (I'll call him "Alex") proposed that our society spend \$4000 on radio spots in Washington, DC. He felt that we needed to develop a public relations strategy, and that this would be a great entry into the market. The motion passed.

At the board dinner that evening, people who knew something about PR complained that this would be a waste of money, since it was not "targeted marketing." Alex, however, argued that not only was it a great move, in fact, we should increase the amount.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Table

- Often misused.
- Has a high rank, and is not debatable.
- Cannot be used to kill a motion.
- Chair may ask, "For what purpose?"
- Merely sets a motion "on the table."
- Must be "taken from the table."
- If not taken from the table by the end of the next regular meeting, it falls to the ground.
- If someone says, "Table *until*!" they really mean "Postpone."

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Postpone

- Robert's Rules say you can postpone a motion to later in the same meeting, or the next meeting.
- Jurassic Parliament believes you should be able to postpone longer than that.
- You could refer something to a committee, or to the staff, to report back at a future time.
- Motion to Postpone can be debated and amended, and takes a majority vote to pass.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

V. Censure

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Council may sanction

- The power of the group extends to the power to sanction.
- If you have adopted Robert's Rules, you have this power.
- In addition, it is best if council rules of procedure include specific steps to be taken when the guidelines are broken.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

What actions may merit sanction?

- Failing to offer courtesy and respect, using foul language.
- Failing to observe the rules of discussion: interrupting others, speaking out of turn, speaking beyond established time limits.
- Violating the confidentiality of executive session.
- Failing to observe ethics guidelines.
- Taking actions outside the meeting that attempt to undermine a board decision.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Don't do this lightly!

- Use sanctions only when repeated offenses make it necessary.
- Consult with your attorney before proceeding.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Possible sanctions

- Verbal admonishment.
- Letter of reprimand.
- Motion of censure (member may vote on own censure motion, unless under disciplinary proceedings).
- Removal from external or board committees.
- Ordered to leave the meeting at which behavior occurs (cannot be barred from future meetings).

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Motion to censure

- First, check bylaws or rules of procedure to see if there is guidance on how to censure, and follow it.
- If there is no such guidance, you still can move to censure a fellow councilmember.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Motion to censure

I move that Councilmember Smith be censured for his continued use of offensive language towards colleagues and the public, despite repeated admonitions to cease from such behavior.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- This motion requires a second, and majority vote to pass (unless there is a higher requirement in your rules).
- It is debatable.
- The member who is the subject of the proposed censure may speak and vote, unless they are under a disciplinary process.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Sanctioning rogue board members



In general, people who serve on nonprofit boards or in local government are peaceful and compliant. But every once in a while, you get a rogue board member. What can be done? We believe that it's important for boards to be prepared to sanction rogue members when necessary.

This is an unpleasant subject. However, all human organizations, even benign institutions like hospitals, schools and retirement communities, depend on proper enforcement for their survival. If,

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Formal disciplinary process

- *Robert's Rules of Order* also has a formal disciplinary process in Chapter XX.
- Hopefully you will not have to use this.
- It is not necessary follow this process in order to pass a motion of censure.

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VI. Conclusion

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Minor mistakes don't invalidate action



A recent news report described how a school board, realizing that no one had seconded the motion they approved, went back at the next meeting and voted on it again. This was a waste of time.

The purpose of "seconding the motion" is to be sure that at least two people on a board want to discuss the proposed action. Obviously if a board has passed a motion, at least two people wanted to discuss it, and did. A second is not a seal of approval or an "imprimatur" that must happen before action on a given proposal proceeds. It is just a way of confirming enough interest for discussion.

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Why are we here?

To give you confidence in using motions to achieve your goals during meetings.

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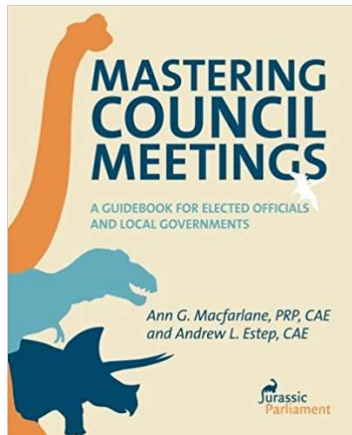
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

After taking this workshop you will be able to:

1. Make Main Motions and Amendments
2. Refer to the Precedence of Motions chart to know when to make other motions
3. Use motions to reconsider, rescind, or amend a prior decision, to table, or to postpone.
4. Make a motion to censure a colleague

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MASTERING COUNCIL MEETINGS

A GUIDEBOOK FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Ann G. Macfarlane, PRP, CAE and Andrew L. Estep, CAE

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Next steps?

- Quick Introduction to Robert's Rules
Email Course
7 short email lessons, one a day, each 5 minutes or so.
A great and affordable way to learn more.
- Blog article: *Becoming a parliamentarian step-by-step*

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MOTIONS CHARTS

	Rank	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote?
PRIVILEGED MOTIONS					
Fix time to which to adjourn	13	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Adjourn	12	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	11	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Raise a question of privilege	10	No	No	No	Chair decides
Call for orders of the day	9	No	No	No	At request of one member
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS					
Table	8	Yes	No	No	Majority
Previous question or call the question*	7	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
Limit or extend limits of debate	6	Yes	No	Yes	Two-thirds
Postpone to a certain time	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Secondary amendment		Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Primary amendment		Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amendment*	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone indefinitely	2	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
MAIN MOTION					
Main motion	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

* Amendment and previous question may be applied to motions higher than themselves.

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS				
	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote?
Request for information	No	No	No	Chair responds
Point of order	No	No	No	Chair rules
Appeal	Yes	It depends	No	Negative

BRING-BACK MOTIONS				
	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote?
Reconsider	Yes	It depends	No	Majority
Rescind	Yes	Yes	Yes	§
Amend something previously adopted	Yes	Yes	Yes	§
Take from table	Yes	No	No	Majority

§ Majority with previous notice, two-thirds without notice, or majority of entire membership

Dinosaur Precedence of Motions



Point of Order, Appeal, Point of Information

Flying dinosaur

No rank

Respond to these motions
as they come up



Call the Question

Triceratops

Rank of 7

Needs a second, cannot be debated or
amended, two-thirds vote



Refer to Committee

Ankylosaurus

Rank of 4

Needs a second, can be debated and
amended, majority vote

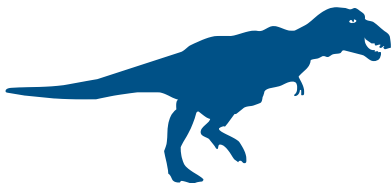


Amendment

Dimetrodon

Rank of 3

Needs a second, can be debated and
amended, majority vote (Amendment
to the amendment cannot be further
amended; amendment may also apply
to motions higher than itself)



Main Motion

Tyrannosaurus rex

Rank of 1

Needs a second, can be debated and
amended, majority vote to pass



Reconsider, Rescind, or Amend previous decision



By Ann G. Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian

Some years ago, I had a dramatic exposure to the motion to “Reconsider.” At a 2-day meeting of our professional society board, one member (I’ll call him “Alex”) proposed that our society spend \$4000 on radio spots in Washington, DC. He felt that we needed to develop a public relations strategy, and that this would be a great entry into the market. The motion passed.

At the board dinner that evening, people who knew something about PR complained that this would be a waste of money, since it was not “targeted marketing.” Alex, however, argued that not only was it a great move, in fact, we should increase the amount.

The next morning, Alex asked how we could add more money to the PR effort. I suggested that he move to “Reconsider” the motion. The board agreed to reconsider, and we continued our discussion. During the discussion, Alex moved to amend the motion by increasing the amount to \$8000, and the amendment passed. But when it came time to vote, the amended motion failed. In other words, Alex had gone “double or nothing,” and lost everything.

On the plane flight home, I started digging into Robert’s Rules of Order to better understand what had happened. I realized that if I had suggested that Alex move to “Amend Something Previously Adopted,” he would have been able to propose amending the amount to \$8000. If that amendment had failed, however, he still would have kept the \$4000 that was originally approved.

If you’re wondering about the people who voted to increase the amount, but then voted against the motion as amended, all I can say is that people are fickle! Maybe the board members were swept up in Alex’s enthusiasm, so they voted to increase, but in the end, decided they couldn’t swallow the larger sum. Voting one way on an amendment does not require you to vote a certain way on the motion once amended.



That incident made me decide I really had to learn more about parliamentary procedure, which in turn led to my studying Robert's Rules, which in turn led to the idea of "Jurassic Parliament." So I'm grateful to Alex for starting me on this path!

Let's review how you can change your mind.

If the decision was positive and the motion passed

If your body approved a motion, there are three ways you can change your mind.

1. AMEND SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED

The easiest way to change your mind is to "Amend Something Previously Adopted." A member proposes "to amend Motion X by the amendment Y." This requires the standard steps to process a motion. (Read our articles [Processing motions in Robert's Rules](#) and [Amendment in Robert's Rules](#).) There are three ways that this motion can pass:

- 1) With a two-thirds vote.
- 2) With previous (advance) notice and a majority vote.
- 3) With a majority of the entire body.

One interesting point is that in a small board (up to about 12 people), it may be easier to obtain a "majority of the entire body" than to obtain a two-thirds vote. Learn more in our article [Counting a vote wrong is dangerous](#).

Read more about "Amend Something Previously Adopted" in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, pp. 305-309.

2. RESCIND

The next way to change a decision is to "Rescind" the motion. When you do this, the motion is revoked or canceled.

The motion to "Rescind" requires one of the same three methods described above in "Amend Something Previously Adopted."

Note that you cannot rescind a motion when something has been done, as a result of the vote on the main motion, that it is impossible to undo. I had an inquiry from a clerk about a decision taken at the previous week's meeting. The vouchers had been approved and the checks cut, but a councilmember had a question about one of the bills.

From a parliamentary perspective, it was not possible to "Rescind" the motion approving the checks. Some other action was called for. Perhaps the body could move to put a stop on the check, or to appoint a committee to investigate the bill. If you're in this situation, if contract has been signed, for example, speak with your attorney.

Read more about "Rescind" in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, pp. 305-309.

3. RECONSIDER

Your third option is to “Reconsider” the motion. The British don’t like this — they call it “the American motion.” This motion has two steps:

- 1) A member moves to reconsider.
- 2) If the body agrees, the previous decision is canceled, and the body takes up the matter where it was just before the vote was taken.

I like to think of this as the “Groundhog Day” motion. There we are with Bill Murray at 6:17 am, starting over again, at the point of discussion reached just before the vote.

The purpose of reconsidering a vote is to permit correction of hasty, ill-advised, or erroneous action, or to take into account added information or a changed situation that has developed since the taking of the vote.

Note that a member must have voted “with the prevailing side” in order to move reconsideration. This means that if the motion passed, the member voted for it. If the motion failed, the member voted against it. If the vote was tied, so that it failed, the member voted against it. The reason for this requirement is obvious: to prevent a disgruntled minority from bringing something up over and over again.

If the original motion was debatable, then the motion to reconsider, and the motion itself, can be debated. If the original motion could not be debated, then the motion to reconsider cannot be debated. I learned this rule at a convention in Washington DC, when the body “moved the previous question,” that is, decided by a two-thirds vote to stop debate and vote immediately. (This motion is often referred to as “[call the question](#)” and cannot be debated.) A member moved to reconsider on the grounds of new information, and the body agreed to reconsider the motion. But they couldn’t DISCUSS whether they should reconsider or not.

According to Robert’s Rules of Order, the motion “to reconsider” can be made ONLY on the same day or the next day, if a meeting continues to a second day. However, sometimes public bodies have rules of procedure allowing someone to move reconsideration at the next business meeting. Your own rules of procedure have more authority than Robert’s Rules.

As with Rescind, you cannot reconsider a motion when something has been done, as a result of the vote on the main motion, that it is impossible to undo.

Read more about “Reconsider” in *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, pp. 315-335.

If the decision was negative and the motion failed

If your body defeated a motion, you have two options:

RECONSIDER – see item 3 above

4. RENEW

Robert’s Rules encourages bodies to make up their mind and stick to it—during the meeting! The idea is to keep meetings efficient, and prevent endless backtracking. However, if a motion is defeated, a member has the right to RENEW it, that is, to bring it up at a future meeting. You can read about renewal in our article, [Renewing a defeated motion at a future meeting](#), and in *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, pp. 336-342.

General thoughts on Reconsider etc.

I hope this article brings clarity to a murky subject. Part of the problem is that in ordinary speech, we use “reconsider” differently from the specific motion described in Robert’s Rules. It will help your group if you master the three different ways that a body can change its mind during a meeting:

1. Amend Something Previously Adopted
2. Rescind
3. Reconsider

And while it’s technically feasible to “renew” motions, I encourage you to refrain from doing so. It’s not a good use of your group’s time to go round and round the mulberry bush, hashing out things that were already decided once.

Respect for the majority decision is a key principle of Robert’s Rules. Observing it will help your group function well, and earn you the respect of your colleagues. As Cornell Clayton of Washington State University says, “The willingness to engage in honest debate and lose, on issues you care deeply about, reaffirms your commitment to common citizenship.”

Reconsider, Rescind, or Amend previous decision

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Sanctioning rogue board members



In general, people who serve on nonprofit boards or in local government are peaceful and compliant. But every once in a while, you get a rogue board member. What can be done? We believe that it's important for boards to be prepared to sanction rogue members when necessary.

This is an unpleasant subject. However, all human organizations, even benign institutions like hospitals, schools and retirement communities, depend on power enforcement for their survival. If a member on your board is disrupting your work, we recommend you seek allies and take action. (Read this excellent article on [“The Outlier Syndrome in Governing Bodies”](#) for perspective on rogue board members.)

Note that this article applies only to members of boards and local government bodies, not to the ordinary members of a nonprofit organization. Professional organizations with ethics requirements for their members will have separate procedures. The article also does not apply to citizens giving public comment at meetings. [See our guidelines](#) on that topic.

ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

The first and most important step is to establish clear guidelines and behavioral expectations. If you have adopted Robert's Rules of Order as your parliamentary authority, you have the basics in place. It can also be helpful to adopt more detailed discussion guidelines — [see our blog post here](#). When everybody knows what is expected and agrees on how your group will conduct its business, managing that business becomes much easier.

Just to remind, all persons present at a meeting have an obligation to obey the legitimate orders of the presiding officer (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition, p. 645*).



YOUR RULES SHOULD INCLUDE THE POWER TO SANCTION

In drafting bylaws or procedural rules, it's easy to forget to mention sanctions. It's human nature to hope that everyone will be polite and act appropriately in all circumstances. Unfortunately that doesn't always happen. Including the power to sanction, and specific actions that may be taken, in your bylaws or procedural rules will make it easier to tackle the problem if it occurs.

WHAT KINDS OF OFFENSES SHOULD BE SANCTIONED?

Given human ingenuity, there are many actions that could be subject to sanction. Here's a starter list:

- Failing to offer courtesy and respect, using insulting or foul language in discussion
- Failing to observe the rules of discussion: interrupting others, speaking out of turn, speaking beyond the established time limits
- Violating the confidentiality of executive session
- Failing to observe ethics guidelines
- Taking actions outside the meeting which are aimed at undermining a board decision

WHAT SANCTIONS CAN BE IMPOSED?

Obviously sanctions should be considered only when there is an ongoing problem. Before embarking on the sanctions route, we recommend that a serious conversation be held with the offender, and that the individual be encouraged to change behavior without formal action by the board. Sometimes bringing the options to the offender's attention is enough to bring about change, or even resignation from office.

If that isn't effective, you may have to impose a sanction. [Craig Freshley wrote](#) that "ideal penalties inflict just the right amount of hurt in order to tilt the scales toward compliance." Options include:

- Verbal admonishment
- Letter of reprimand
- Formal motion of censure
- Removal from external or internal committees
- Being directed to leave the meeting at which the behavior occurs
- Removal from a nonprofit board if the board has the power to do this

Note that directing a member to leave the meeting at which the behavior occurs, [removing a director from a nonprofit board](#), and [removing the chair during a meeting](#) are all drastic steps. Consult with your attorney before doing this. We have more information in the linked blog posts.

WHO CAN VOTE ON SANCTIONS?

Since misbehavior is a serious matter, it's best to require that a majority of the entire board (all directors in office) vote in favor. Check your state law and conflict of interest policy to determine whether the person who is the subject of the proposed sanction may vote on the motion, or not.

From the perspective of parliamentary procedure, Robert's Rules has a specific disciplinary process, described on pp. 643 to 669. If this process has been started, the member may not vote on their own case. Robert also says that if a member offends repeatedly during a meeting, to the extent that the presider has warned the offender three times and "named" the member, they may not vote (see p. 646). Robert says that in other circumstances, the member may vote on the motion proposing to sanction them.

On a nonprofit board, even if you don't follow the formal disciplinary process, you may want to establish a special or select committee to consider the behavior and recommend action to the board. In a local government body, you will of course review state law and your options before moving ahead.

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR OFFENSES DURING A MEETING

Member A: *Member B has repeatedly violated our rules of procedure and persists in using insulting language towards his colleagues and the public. I move that Member B be issued a verbal admonishment and directed to cease his inappropriate behavior.*

Member C: *Second!*

Chair: *It has been moved and seconded that Member B be issued a verbal admonishment and directed to cease his inappropriate behavior. Is there any discussion?*

Member A: *This has just gone on too long! At every meeting Member B calls his colleagues "bozos" and describes the public as "the great unwashed." It's impossible to get any work done with all the high emotion around here.*

Member B: *You people are all too sensitive. I'm just using humor to lighten things up a bit. I think this motion is a bunch of malarkey.*

Member D: *Well, I agree with the motion. I'm sick and tired of all this nonsense.*

Chair: *Is there any further discussion? [pause] Hearing none, we'll take the vote. All those in favor of the motion to issue a verbal admonishment to Member B and direct him to cease his inappropriate behavior, please say "aye."*

Members A, C, D and Chair: *Aye!*

Chair: *All those opposed, please say "no."*

Member B: *No!*

Chair: *The ayes have it and the motion passes. Member B, you are hereby admonished for your inappropriate and disruptive use of language during our meetings. Kindly cease such actions immediately and abide by our guidelines.*

Member B: *Well, I have a lot more to say about that, Chair.*

Chair interrupts: *The motion has been approved and no further discussion is in order. The next business in order is...*

Sanctioning rogue board members.

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Minor mistakes don't invalidate action



A recent news report described how a school board, realizing that no one had seconded the motion they approved, went back at the next meeting and voted on it again. This was a waste of time.

The purpose of “seconding the motion” is to be sure that at least two people on a board want to discuss the proposed action. Obviously if a board has passed a motion, at least two people wanted to discuss it, and did. A second is not a seal of approval or an “imprimatur” that must happen before action on a given proposal proceeds. It is just a way of confirming enough interest for discussion.

More small mistakes in Robert's Rules

Similarly your board may have made some small mistake in Robert's Rules in taking an action. Perhaps you allowed a member to withdraw their motion unilaterally, when most people wanted to continue discussion. Once a motion has been made, seconded, and stated by the chair, it belongs to the entire group, not to the member who made the motion.

Maybe the chair arbitrarily adjusted the agenda, postponing the topic of employee reviews to a future meeting, and no one spoke up. At the meeting, the group is in charge of its own agenda, not the chair.

Perhaps the chair, in calling for the vote, only asked for the votes in favor, and neglected to say, “All those opposed, please say ‘no.’” The chair must call for the negative vote, except in a few specific instances.

How to respond to mistakes in Robert's Rules?

Robert's Rules says that the correct way to object is to raise a Point of Order **at the time of the mistake**. If the members fail to do this, they have waived their right to object and tacitly accepted the outcome. The mistake does not invalidate the action taken.



It's important to note that there are a few instances when you can raise a Point of Order at a future time. If the Point of Order concerns a "continuing breach," it can be raised as long as the breach of the rules is in effect. If a member was elected to the board, for example, and later it is discovered that she is not eligible to serve, a Point of Order should be raised and action should be taken. Read more about "continuing breach" in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 12th edition*, 23:6. As always, note that this is not legal advice. Please consult your attorney if you have a "continuing breach."

What about mistakes in announcing the vote?

It occasionally happens that the chair hears a voice vote wrong, and calls the vote incorrectly. If everyone remains silent and the group moves on to the next item of business, the statement made by the chair is the official determination of the outcome, and stands as the action of the body.

In this particular situation, a member should loudly call out the word "DIVISION!" When this happens, the chair should take the vote again by having those in favor stand, and then those opposed stand. (Note that members are free to vote as they choose on this second attempt.)

Point of Order and Appeal are essential to address mistakes

Jurassic Parliament wants everyone to know how to use Point of Order and Appeal. In our view, they are essential to democratic action! Using them correctly requires education. Thank you, gentle reader, for educating yourself and your group on these critical rules. Rules, after all, are based on principles, and we study and follow them in order to act in a principled way in our meetings.

Related articles:

[How to call the vote at meetings](#)

[Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of democracy](#)

[Unraveling the mysteries of "Second the Motion!"](#)

[When can you withdraw a motion?](#)

[You must call for the negative vote](#)

Minor mistakes don't invalidate action

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