

Robert's Rules 2 Mastering Motions

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Jurassic Parliament

Association of Washington Cities
Vancouver, Washington
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1

Our topics

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

2

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I. Introduction

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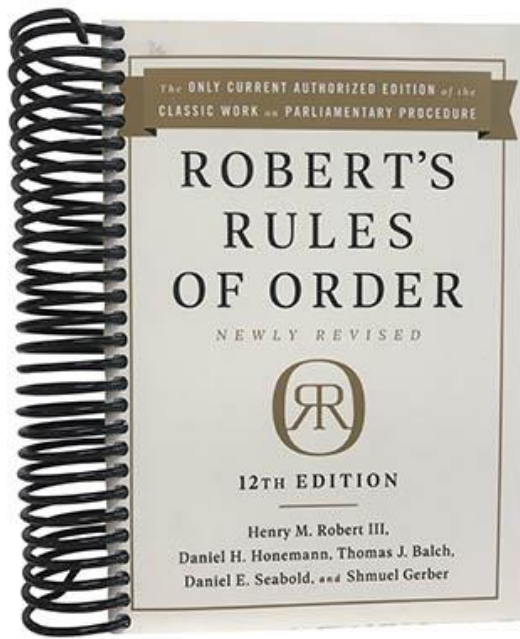
*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised,
12th edition*

**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.

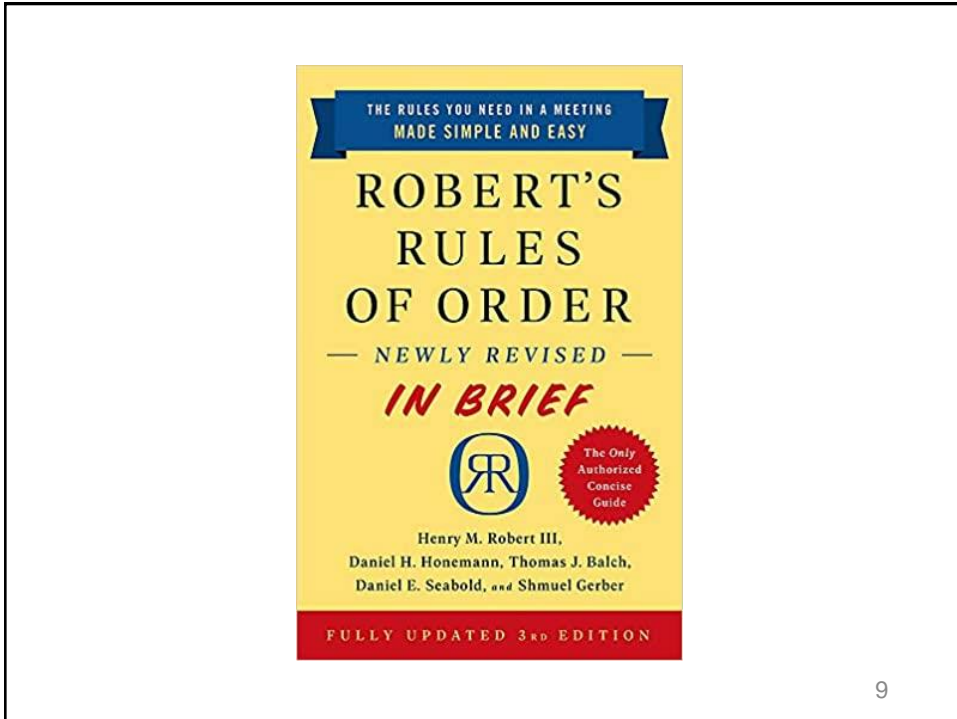
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**Jurassic
Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


II. Motions and amendments

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Dinopolis City Council

Regular meeting


The council has 7 members,
and all are present.

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 **Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

City of Dinopolis Regular Council Meeting

*Motto: We do our best for all our
residents, whether we like them or not!*

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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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Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

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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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Architect

I think this is a terrible idea! Catiois 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
Tyrannosaurus rex

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Main Motion

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

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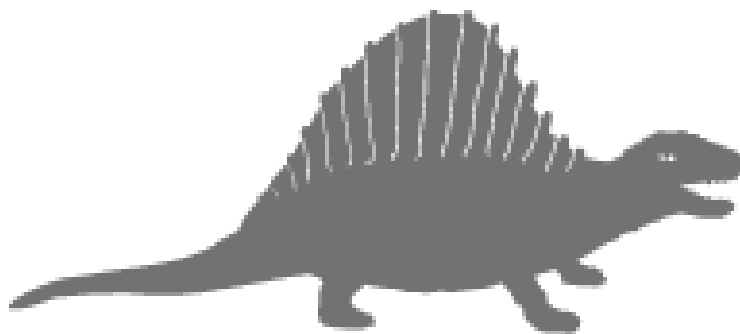
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Amendment

- 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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Amendment
Dimetrodon

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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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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.***

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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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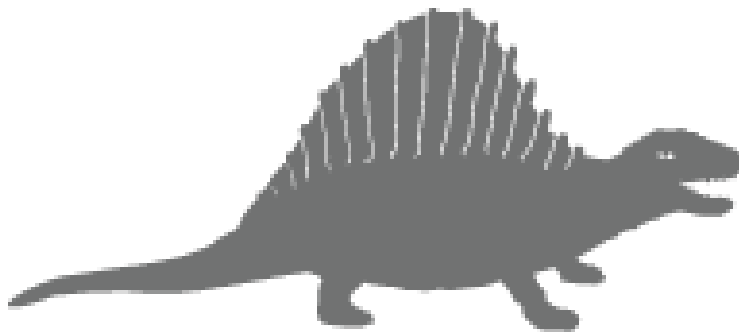
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Secondary amendment

- 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

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Secondary Amendment *Small Dimetrodon*

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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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If adopted, amendment will read:

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

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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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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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“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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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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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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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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III. Precedence of motions

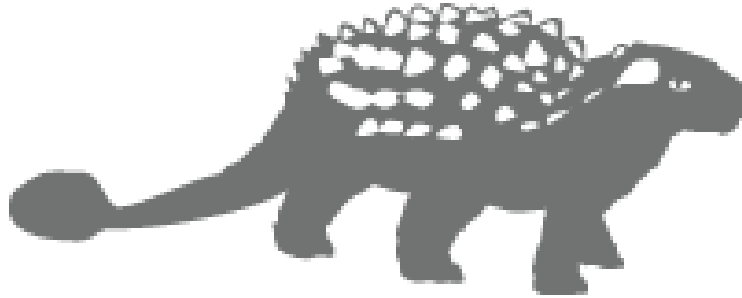
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Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

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Refer to Committee
Ankylosaurus

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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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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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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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Call the Question
Triceratops

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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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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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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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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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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.

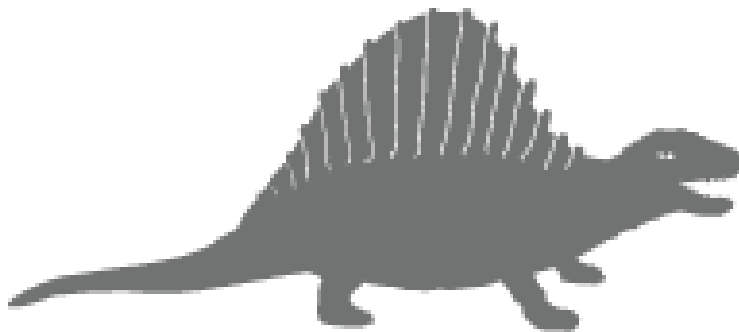
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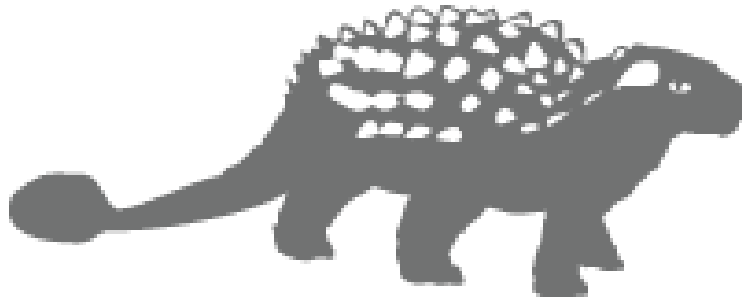
1 - Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

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3 - Amendment
Dimetrodon

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4 - Refer to Committee
Ankylosaurus

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7 - Call the Question
Triceratops

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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

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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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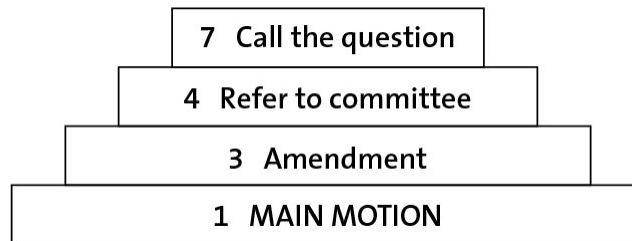
Why are we not going in numerical order?

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

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Precedence of Motions



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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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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

105

Dinosaur Precedence of Motions



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IV. Reconsider, Table, Postpone

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Changing your mind

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

- Amend something previously adopted
- Rescind
- Reconsider

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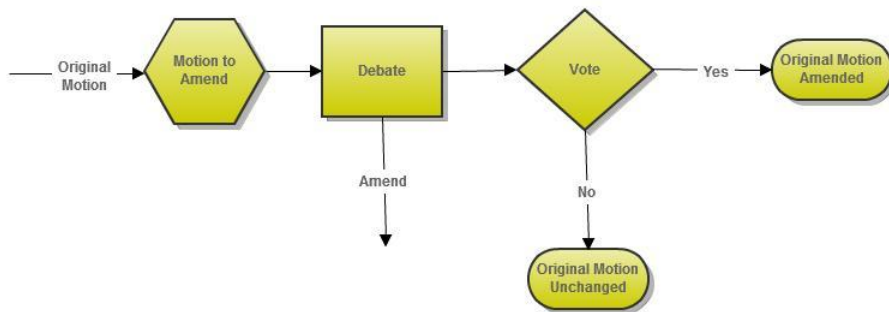
Amend something previously adopted

- 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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Amend Something Previously Adopted



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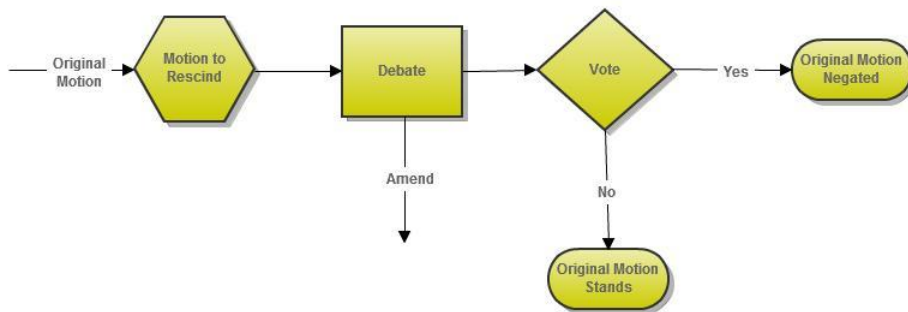
Rescind

- 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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Rescind



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Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord

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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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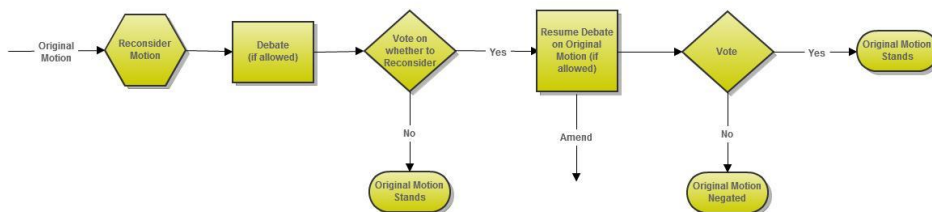
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Reconsider

- 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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Reconsider



116

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.

117

117

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 \$4,000 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.

118

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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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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V. Censure

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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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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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Don't do this lightly!

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

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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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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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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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- 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.

128

128

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

129

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.

130

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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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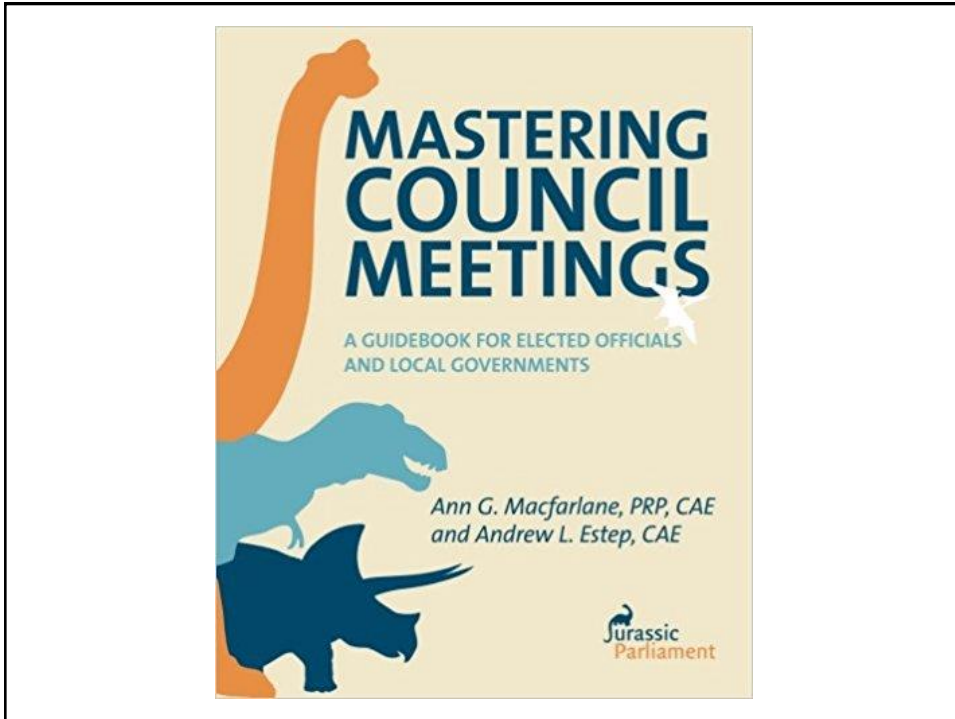
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After taking this workshop you will be able to:


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

134

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135

 **Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

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*

136

136

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