

# Parliamentary Procedure

*Parliamentary Procedure is a system of rules that keeps meetings organized and allows everybody an opportunity to share their opinions.*

*The most commonly used parliamentary procedure is “Robert’s Rules of Order.” These rules were established to assist in organizing meetings, making them effective and democratic.*



**Parliamentary procedure is governed by these general rules:**

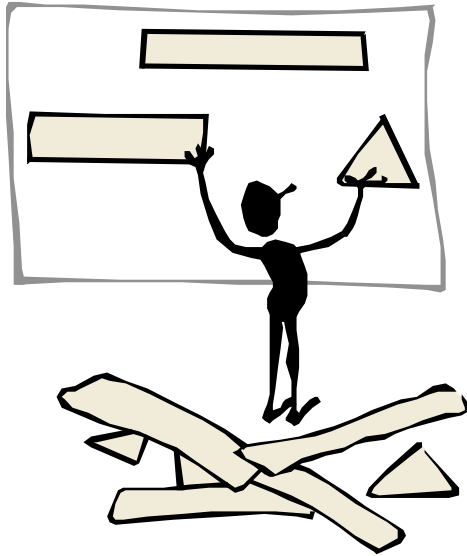
- The agenda sets the order of business.
- The chairperson must remain unbiased.
- Members must be recognized by the chairpersons before speaking.
- Only one item of business is discussed at a time.
- All members have the right to ask questions and to have these questions answered.
- Any member can stop the meeting if they do not understand what is going on.
- A member may debate once and may not debate again until all other members have been given the opportunity.
- The majority rules, however, the rights of the minority are respected.
- Business introduced by an individual becomes the property of the assembly.
- The assembly can always change its decision.

## **Summary: Four Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure**

- ✓ Justice and courtesy to all
- ✓ One thing at a time
- ✓ The rule of the majority
- ✓ The right of the minority

*Parliamentary procedure will only work as designed when all members of the assembly have an equal knowledge of the rules. This knowledge can only be gained through practice.*





## Parliamentary Procedures: The Agenda

*Agenda Definition - The written order of events for a meeting.*

At minimum, the president (and advisor) would plan for the meeting. Each organization decides for itself who should be involved in the advance planning. There are many elements in an agenda. The following list includes some, but not all of these elements.

- ❑ Call to Order – A formal, official beginning to a meeting. It notifies all participants that information conversation should stop.
- ❑ Opening Exercise or Ceremony – some organizations like to start with a patriotic exercise or some other type of small ceremony (special or traditional).
- ❑ Roll Call – This allows a secretary to account for members. A roll call is mostly needed for attendance data or if a quorum is required to conduct official business or take action on an item.
- ❑ Approval of the Agenda – To have members to look over the agenda can serve two purposes. First, it allows participants to see if anything they feel is important has been left out of the meeting, and second, it informs members when items will be discussed to they stay on the assigned topic and don't jump around in their discussions.
- ❑ Approval of the Minutes – This important item not only refreshes the members memory about what happened at the last meeting, but it allows for corrections or additions to be added to the record. (Minutes were originally recorded as a minute by minute account of a meeting.)
- ❑ Officers/Staff Reports – If there have been actions by officers/staff that will add to or effect the meeting, then these actions should be reported. (Usually included is a report from the treasurer.)
- ❑ Reports of Special Committees – after reports of standing committees are presented, be sure to include any special committee reports. Special committes may be ad hoc committees that were formed for the sole purpose of planning, conducting/implementing, and evaluating one activity or program.
- ❑ Unfinished Business – Items that were discussed before, an ongoing project or activity, or something that was delayed at an earlier meeting.
- ❑ New business – Items that have not been previously discussed or acted on.
- ❑ Program – A program is an optional item under business, but it is usually placed near the end of the meeting. It is usually a guest speaker or presentation.
- ❑ Announcements – A time to remind members of upcoming events, the next meeting time/date/place, etc.
- ❑ Adjournment – The formal, official end to a meeting.

# Writing Legislation

## WHEREAS:

Enter the **REASONS** that you are proposing this piece of legislation in the form of **WHEREAS** clauses. You may have as few or as many clauses as you feel adequately explain your motion. (The WHEREAS clauses are not debatable.)

## RESOLVED:

Enter the **ACTION** you wish to be taken in the form of a **RESOLVED** clause. You may have more than one ACTION in a piece of legislation as long as all ACTIONS are logically connected.



## Critical Questions:

1. **What** is the project or activity that you are suggesting? Write down what you want to do. Try to be specific without giving too many details.
2. **Why** do you want to do this activity or project? Write down all of the reasons you thought about for the project or activity. You might even want to include research data to support your thinking.

## Wording of Your Legislation:

1. The **what** becomes the words "BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED." This just makes your idea more formal.
2. The **why** becomes "WHEREAS." It also is just a formal way of saying why you want something.

## Formatting of Your Legislation:

1. Your "WHEREAS" reasons are listed first...put them in order of weakest to strongest reasons. Try to have at least three reasons. Five reasons are great. These reasons must be stated accurately and correctly, as they may not be amended later! ***Research is important!***
2. Your "BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED" is listed last. It is the final statement or "bottom line" on what you want the result to be. Sometimes you can divide your "Be it Hereby Resolved" statement into a two-part action. This may make it easier to discuss and amend.

# Parliamentary Procedures - the Easy Way !!!

*Previous Question - a request to end discussion (requires a 2/3 vote to pass)*

**I have an idea**  
main motion

*Unanimous Consent - a request that says "we all agree, no need to discuss" - passes unless there is an objection*

**I agree with the idea**  
second

let's talk about why the idea is good  
**pro debate** (the author goes first)

(one person speaks at a time - go back and forth)

let's talk about why the idea isn't good  
**con debate**

**NOW WHAT HAPPENS ???**

Let's talk about this at another meeting  
**table or delay**

**VOTE**

**YES pass**

**NO fail**

I have an idea for a change  
**amendment**

I agree with the idea for a change  
**second**

**VOTE on the idea**

**YES pass**

**NO fail**

let's talk about why the change is good  
**pro debate** (the author goes first)

(one person speaks at a time - go back and forth)

let's talk about why the change isn't good  
**con debate**

**VOTE on the change**

**YES - we like the change pass**

**NO - we don't like the change fail**

I have another idea for a change  
**amendment**

Go back to talking about the main idea with the new change  
**debate**

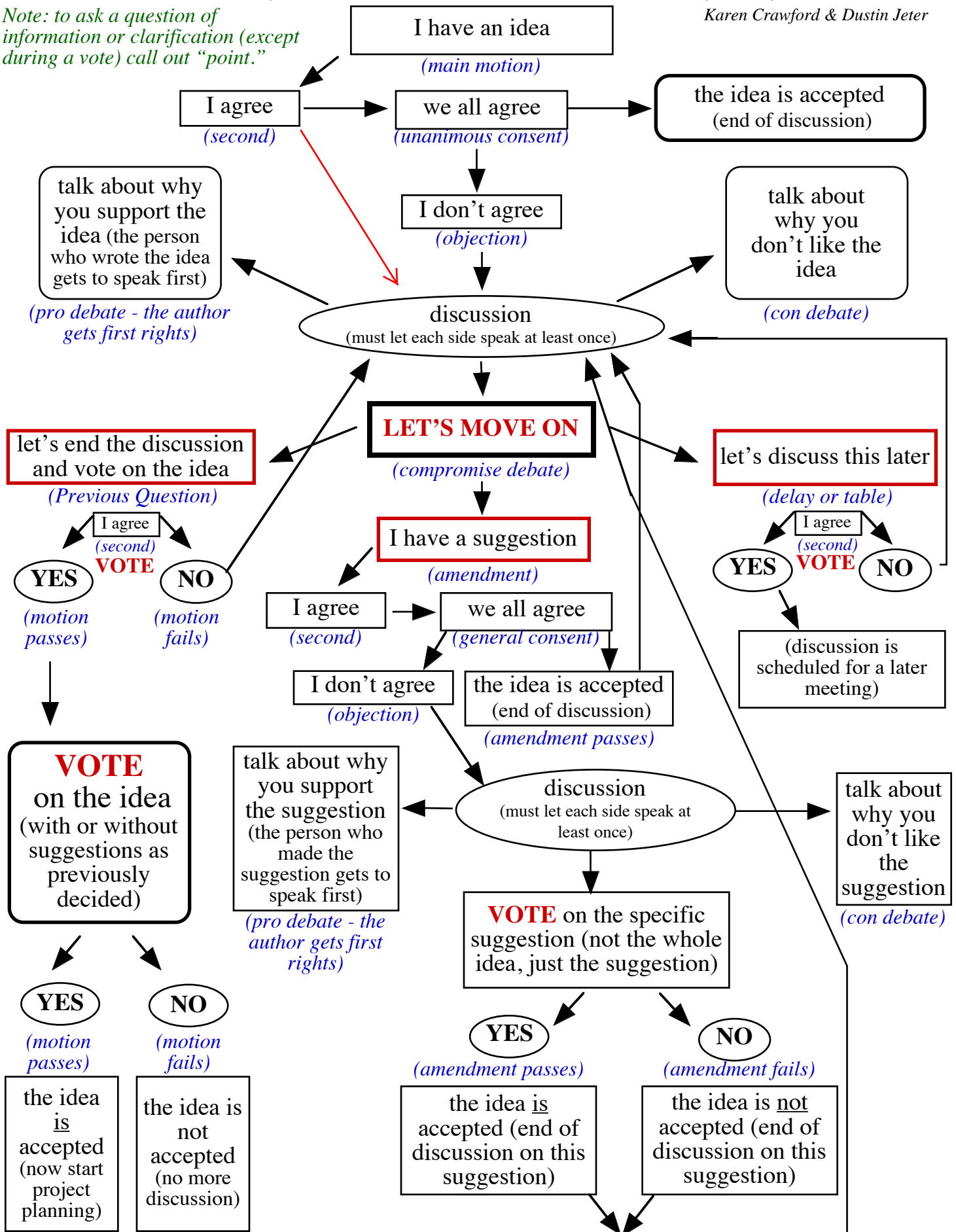
Go back to talking about the main idea.  
**debate**

I have another idea for a change  
**amendment**

# Parliamentary Procedure Flow Chart - the Easy Way !!!!

Note: to ask a question of information or clarification (except during a vote) call out "point."

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# Parliamentary Procedure Vocabulary

Adjourn	to end the meeting
Amend	to change part of a bigger motion that is already being discussed
Amendment	a modification of the main motion - must pertain to the main motion
Appeal the Chair	to try to change a decision the chairperson made
Author	a person who writes and introduces a main motion or amendment...author has first right of debate
Call for Division	to have the chair count the votes individually when it is hard to tell which side won just by a voice vote or by raising hands
Chairman or Chairperson	single person presiding at a meeting...is not allowed to demonstrate a bias towards a topic of discussion
Compromise Debate	debate which follows pro and con debate allowing for amendments, delay, or ending debate
Con	debate against the motion
Debate	a discussion of a motion
Delay	to postpone the discussion of the motion until a later time
Extend or Limit Debate	to set or change how much time will be spent on debate

# **Parliamentary Procedure Vocabulary**

<b>General Consent</b>	a motion for unanimous support of a main motion
<b>Main Motion</b>	to make a proposal (when there are no other matters being considered)
<b>Nominate</b>	used during elections to nominate someone for an office
<b>Orders of the Day</b>	to keep the meeting on the schedule written in the agenda
<b>Point</b>	interrupts business to ask a question or get clarification on what is going on
<b>Previous Question</b>	to stop debating and vote on a motion
<b>Pro</b>	debate in favor of the motion
<b>Second</b>	a motion which affirms the main motion for consideration
<b>Simple Majority</b>	50% plus 1 of the voting population... abstentions count as a vote against the motion
<b>Table</b>	to postpone deciding on a motion until later (can be until a definite time or day, or can be indefinitely)
<b>Withdraw a Motion</b>	when the person who made a motion changes his/her mind and says he/she doesn't want to make that motion anymore

# Commonly Used Parliamentary Motions

Motion	Description	A	B	C	D	E	F
Adjourn	to end the meeting		X				maj.
Amend	to change part of a bigger motion that is already being discussed	X	X	X	X	X	maj.
Appeal the Chair	to try to change a decision the chairperson made	X	X		X	X	maj.
Call for Division	to have the chair count the votes individually when it is hard to tell which side won just by a voice vote or by raising hands	X					none
Delay	to postpone the discussion of the motion until a later time		X				maj.
Extend or Limit Debate	to set or change how much time will be spent on debate		X	X		X	2/3
Main Motion	to make a proposal (when there are no other matters being considered)		X	X	X	X	maj.
Nominate	used during elections to nominate someone for an office		X		X		maj.
Orders of the Day	to keep the meeting on the schedule written in the agenda	X					maj.
Point	interrupts business to ask a question or get clarification on what is going on	X					chair
Previous Question	to stop debating and vote on a motion		X			X	2/3
Table	to postpone deciding on a motion until later (can be until a definite time or day, or can be indefinitely)		X				maj.
Withdraw a Motion	when the person who made a motion changes his/her mind and says he/she doesn't want to make that motion anymore				X		maj.

## KEY

- A: Can interrupt the speaker
- B: Requires a second
- C: Can be amended
- D: Can be debated
- E: Can be reconsidered
- F: How many votes required to pass it

