

# Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a method of conducting a meeting in an orderly and fair fashion. The rules protect everyone's right to be heard, and allow decisions to be made without confusion. It is the best known technique for conducting formal business. The most popular form of parliamentary procedure used in the United States is Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

Parliamentary procedure is based on some basic principles.

- All members are equal; there is courtesy and justice for all.
- A quorum must be present for the group to act.
- Only one issue is addressed at a time.
- Discussion is not in order unless there is a pending question (a motion must be made and seconded to open an issue for discussion).
- No person may speak until recognized by the Chair.
- Only one member has the floor (right to speak) at any one time.
- A majority vote decides.
- There is respect for the rights of the minority.
- Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
- A two-thirds vote is necessary if a member's fundamental rights are being reduced or taken away.
- Silence is regarded as consent.

Sometimes, however, parliamentary procedure can become so highly technical and complicated that it obstructs or hinders group discussion and action. People may be intimidated or confused by the rules of order. However, these very rules actually can make meetings easier to conduct and ensure that every person may be heard. Therefore, this section has been specifically designed to help SCC members in understanding and practicing the basic procedure for conducting orderly and democratic meetings.

# Ten Steps in a Main Motion

## This is an option for a more formal group meeting

The SCC chairperson should determine when each of the options of conducting a meeting would be most appropriate for the desired outcomes of the meeting.

### THE MEMBER

1. Rises (not necessary in a small, less formal meeting) and addresses the chairperson. (he/she must obtain the floor) *"Mr./Madam Chair."*
2. Awaits recognition (he/she must be recognized by the Chair as having exclusive right to be heard). *"The Chair recognizes...."*
3. Makes the motion (and resumes the seat). *"I move that...."*

### ANOTHER MEMBER

4. Seconds the motion (Until seconded, the Chair will not state the motion. The person seconding the motion does not need to be recognized by the Chair.) *"I second the motion."*

### THE CHAIR

5. States the motion (Until the Chair states the motion/question, the motion is not on the floor). *"It is moved and seconded that (states the motion)"*
6. Asks, "Is there any discussion?" *"Is there any discussion?"*

### MEMBERS

7. Members debate the motion (unless undebatable).  
Order in which people get recognized to speak.
  - a. Member who made the motion.
  - b. Member who has not yet spoken a first time.
  - c. If possible, alternate between those for and against.

### THE CHAIR

8. Asks, "Are you ready for the question?" (Debate is over and it's time to vote.) *"Are you ready for the question?"*
9. Puts question to a vote/takes the vote (Voice vote) *"The question is on (states the motion)."  
"Those in favor of the motion, say aye."  
"Those opposed, say no."*
10. Announces result of vote. *"The ayes have it, and the motion is adopted/carried/passed."  
"The noes have it and the motion is lost."*

# Voting

## Methods of Voting

**1. Voice vote: “aye” or “no”**

A vote by voice is the regular method of voting on any question that does not require more than a majority vote for its adoption.

**2. Show of hands**

As an alternative to the voice vote or as a way to verify an inconclusive result, members show their vote by raising their hand. A vote by show of hands should be limited to very small meetings.

**3. Roll call**

A roll call vote has the effect of placing on record how each member votes. The vice-chairperson conducts the roll call vote.

**4. Ballot**

Voting by ballot is used when secrecy of the member’s votes is desired. Voting by ballot is sometimes required in certain cases by the bylaws. Any vote relating to charges or proposed charges against a member or an officer should always be by ballot.

**6. General consent**

General consent used when business is routine. “If there is no objection, the minutes stand approved as read/circulated.”

## Kinds of Votes

**1. Majority** – more than half of the votes cast, excluding blanks and abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum.

**2. 2/3** – two-thirds of the votes cast, excluding blanks and abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum. Cannot be a voice vote; must be by some visible means. The chair must be able to determine whether or not at least two-thirds actually voted for the motion.

**3. Plurality** – used only in elections if in accordance with the bylaws. One candidate gets more votes than any other, but not a majority of the votes cast.

**4. Tie vote** – equal number in affirmative and negative. In this case, the motion is lost. SCC bylaws may provide that in the event of a tie vote, the chairperson may cast a second vote to break the tie.