

What Precinct Chairs Need To Know About Robert's Rules of Order

The state Party has adopted Robert's Rules of Order (RR) for the parliamentary format of our meetings. These rules are commonly known and widely practiced, such as raising your hand to speak, making motions, and voting. Practically every high school uses and teaches Robert's Rules, such as in student council.

These rules are used by decision-making groups to keep order and fairness. "Fairness" here means that everyone should have a chance to be heard, but the business of the meeting should not be disrupted by a few people. Like the Constitution, RR preserves the rights of the minority, but allows a majority of 2/3 or more to override the minority.

RR is used to make meetings less complicated, not more so. The formality of the meeting is adjusted based on the size of the group – but you already know that! When you are having a conversation with 3 or 4 people, to avoid interrupting others you wait until the other person has finished speaking. But in a crowded classroom, you raise your hand and wait to be called upon. In this example, the basic principal is the same – 'it's not polite to interrupt' – but the formality is adjusted based on the circumstances.

Before your caucus meeting, please review the following charts. You can also ask someone who knows the rules to act as your Parliamentarian, with the duty to advise you, the chair, on keeping the meeting on track.

Most important are fairness and confidence. If your audience feels you are misusing the rules, or that you don't know what you are doing, then you will lose control of the meeting. Create confidence by explaining things as you go along. Keep things as simple as possible while still keeping order and fairness.

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Common Sense and Roberts Rules

Common Principal	Robert Rules For A Group
Don't interrupt another's speaking	Raise hand to be recognized by the chair, unless there is an emergency (e.g., someone is breaking the rules [Point Of Order]).
Talk about one thing at a time	The matter currently under discussion is called a "Motion". Someone states "I move..." and states exactly what is to be decided. Members should confine their discussion to that topic.
To make good decisions, ideas must be shared	Every "main" motion should be discussed before taking a vote. The chair says, "It has been moved and seconded that...", and states the motion so everyone knows what is being discussed. "Is there any discussion?" Elections are not debated. Instead, the candidates speak.
Avoid the appearance of evil	Give people on both sides of the issue a chance to speak. Don't let one person dominate the discussion. If you are a candidate for office, you should not conduct the election for that office.
The leader is responsible to be sure everyone knows what is going on at all times. Explain things as you go. (If people are saying "what are we voting on?", you have erred.)	When no one else wants to speak for or against the motion, the chair says, "Hearing no more debate we will now vote on the motion," AND STATES THE MOTION AGAIN. "All in favor say aye." "Those opposed say nay." Then announce the vote (e.g., "The ayes have it and the motion passes.") Then announce the next item to be considered.
The leader helps members follow the rules	If someone breaks a rule, the chair says, "That is out of order", then explains how to accomplish the objective within the rules.
KISS (keep it simple ...)	Meetings should be open to participation by any member, not just parliamentary experts. Do not allow people to use parliamentary forms to confound and confuse the majority.