

## Using Robert’s Rules of Order to Facilitate A Smooth Meeting

The Central Committee uses Robert’s Rules of Order (RR) for the Parliamentary format. These rules provide order in meetings and are commonly known and widely practiced (e.g., being recognized to speak, making motions, and voting). Knowing the basic parliamentary rules will help you understand what is going on.

However, Central Committee members should NOT feel they must become parliamentary experts in order to participate. The chair has a duty to assist members. If you don’t know the parliamentary way to do what you want, you can just stand up and say what you have in mind and the chair can put it in the correct phrasing, or you can ask a question about how to do it (“Parliamentary Inquiry”).

The chair also has a duty to see that parliamentary forms are not used to frustrate the will of the majority. RR Page 331- “Parliamentary forms are designed to assist in the transaction of business. ...every deliberative assembly has the right to protect itself from the use of these forms for the opposite purpose”.

The premise of Parliamentary procedure is that the majority rules but cannot deprive the minority of its rights. The minority has the right to be heard but not the right to disrupt or impede a majority consensus. A 2/3 vote is required to do anything that reduces the rights of the minority. For example, a 2/3 vote is required to cut off debate because halting debate takes away the group’s right to speak on an issue.

The Chair should help keep everyone on track by constantly reminding the body of what is being discussed or voted on at that time. If you get lost, ask the people seated around you. If nobody knows what is going on, you can – and should - rise for a Parliamentary Inquiry to ask the Chair for clarity the current motion or vote.

<b>To Do</b>	<b>Robert Rules</b>	<b>How</b>
Ask a question about the topic being discussed	Point Of Information	Say “Mr. Chairman, Point of Information.” Wait to be recognized, then state your question. May interrupt another speaker if urgent. This is for <u>getting</u> information only, not for giving information or argument.
Ask how to do something or for explanation of a parliamentary rule.	Parliamentary Inquiry	Say “Mr. Chairman, Parliamentary Inquiry”. Wait to be recognized, then state your question. Can interrupt another speaker only if urgent.
Cutting Off Debate on a motion	Previous Question or Motion to End Debate	Wait to be recognized (may not interrupt another person), then say “Mr. Chairman, I move the Previous Question” or “I move to close debate”. The Chair will ask for a second, and then take a vote on whether debate should be stopped. If that vote passes by 2/3, then there will be an immediate vote on the motion being debated.
Temporarily put aside a parliamentary rule that is hindering the work of the body.	Suspend The Rules	Wait to be recognized, then say “Mr. Chairman I move to suspend the rules so that .. “ state what it is you want to do that requires the rules to be suspended. If seconded, the chair immediately calls for a vote without debate. Requires 2/3 vote. Certain rules, including those that protect individual rights (such as secret ballot), as well as the constitution and bylaws, can never be suspended.
Change A Motion	Amendment	Wait to be recognized, then say “Mr. Chairman I move to amend the motion by ...” and say what you want to change. The amendment is debated and voted on. Then discussion returns to the motion.

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