



Parliamentary Procedure Made Simple

National Conference of Family Medicine Residents and Medical Students – Kansas City, MO

Parliamentary procedure refers to a group of rules for how the order of business will be conducted. If these rules did not exist, the meeting would break down and nothing would be accomplished. The Congress Chair is responsible for enforcing the rules. A parliamentarian assists with this job. The current edition of the **American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure** is the resource that we utilize. The primary motions that you need to know are listed below in descending order of precedence (meaning the first one takes precedence over the ones that follow).

- (1) **Adjourn** – This is a motion to end the business session and should be held until all business is finished. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.
- (2) **Recess** – This is a motion to stop and rest for a while. It is used to end business between sessions. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.
- (3) **Question of Privilege** – This is a device that allows anyone to interrupt debate to provide important information. It does not require a vote.
- (4) **Table** – It allows you to move an issue to the end of debate to allow more time for preparing arguments or substitute resolutions. It requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (5) **Close Debate** – If discussions are running too long, this can be used to move directly to a vote. As this takes away the right of some to speak, it requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (6) **Limit Debate** – This motion is used to shorten the allotted time to discuss each issue. As this takes away the right of some to speak, it requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (7) **Postpone to a Certain Time** – This motion is used when you need a little more time to work on debate or to construct amendments to resolutions. This allows other business to go on in the meantime. It requires a second and a simple majority vote. It is necessary that you specify how long you want the issue postponed.
- (8) **Refer to Committee** – This motion has no true place in our business session because we don't have committees in which to refer unresolved issues.
- (9) **Amend** – This motion is used to reword a resolution. It requires a second and a simple majority vote. If passed, the new reworded resolution becomes the item to be considered in subsequent debate.
- (10) **Main Motion** – This is the resolution itself. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.

Don't let these motions confuse you.

- If you want to say something, but are not sure of the proper procedure, the Chair can provide assistance. The important thing is to become involved and learn on the job.
- If you are not sure of the proper procedure for resolving an issue, you can make a **parliamentary inquiry**.
- If you want to take back what you did before it is voted on, you can **withdraw a motion**.
- If you agree with one resolved statement in a resolution, but do not support another, you can ask for a **division of question**.
- If you feel that there was no way the Chair could have said that the “ayes” beat out the “nays” and would like a hand count, you ask for a **division of assembly**.
- If you think the Chair has gotten everything mixed up, you can make a **point of order** to suggest the correct order of business.

Appendix C

SOURCE – American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (Current Edition)

BASIC RULES GOVERNING MOTIONS

<i>Order of precedence¹</i>	<i>Can interrupt?</i>	<i>Requires a second?</i>	<i>Debatable?</i>	<i>Amendable?</i>	<i>Vote required?</i>	<i>Applies to what other motions?</i>	<i>Can have what other motions applied to it?⁵</i>	<i>Renewable?</i>
PRIVILEGED MOTIONS								
1. Adjourn	No	Yes	Yes ²	Yes ²	Majority	None	Amend, close debate, limit debate	Yes
2. Recess	No	Yes	Yes ²	Yes ²	Majority	None	Amend, close debate, limit debate	Yes ⁶
3. Question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None	None	None	Yes
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS								
4. Table	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Main motion	None	No
5. Close debate	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Debatable motions	None	Yes
6. Limit or extend debate	No	Yes	Yes ²	Yes ²	2/3	Debatable motions	Amend, close debate	Yes ⁶
7. Postpone to a certain time	No	Yes	Yes ²	Yes ²	Majority	Main motion	Amend, close debate, limit debate	Yes ⁶
8. Refer to committee	No	Yes	Yes ²	Yes ²	Majority	Main motion	Amend, close debate, limit debate	Yes ⁶
9. Amend	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Majority	Rewordable motions	Amend, close debate, limit debate	No ⁶
MAIN MOTIONS								
10. (a) The main motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	None	Subsidiary	No
(b) Specific main motions								
Adopt in-lieu-of	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	None	Subsidiary	No
Amend a previous action	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Same Vote	Adopted main motion	Subsidiary	No
Ratify	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Same Vote	Adopted main motion	Subsidiary	No
Recall from committee	No	Yes	Yes ²	No	Majority	Referred main motion	Close debate, limit debate	No
Reconsider	Yes ⁴	Yes	Yes ²	No	Majority	Vote on main motion	Close debate, limit debate	No
Rescind	No	Yes	Yes	No	Same Vote	Adopted main motion	Subsidiary, except amend	No

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

<i>No order of precedence</i>	<i>Can interrupt?</i>	<i>Requires a second?</i>	<i>Debatable?</i>	<i>Amendable?</i>	<i>Vote required?</i>	<i>Applies to what other motions?</i>	<i>Can have what other motions applied to it?⁵</i>	<i>Renewable?</i>
MOTIONS								
Appeal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority ⁷	Ruling of chair	Close debate, limit debate	No
Suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Procedural rules	None	Yes
Consider informally	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Main motion or subject	None	Yes
REQUESTS								
Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None	Procedural error	None	No
Inquiries	Yes	No	No	No	None	All motions	None	No
Withdraw a motion	Yes	No	No	No	None ⁸	All motions	None	No
Division of question	No	No	No	No	None ⁸	Main motion	None	No
Division of assembly	Yes	No	No	No	None ⁸	Indecisive vote	None	No

¹ Motions are in order only if no motion higher on the list is pending. Thus, if a motion to close debate is pending, a motion to amend would be out of order; but a motion to recess would be in order, since it outranks the pending motion.

² Restricted.

³ Is not debatable when applied to an undebatable motion.

⁴ A member may interrupt the proceedings but not a speaker.

⁵ Withdraw may be applied to all motions.

⁶ Renewable at the discretion of the presiding officer.

⁷ A tie or majority vote sustains the ruling of the presiding officer; a majority vote in the negative reverses the ruling.

⁸ If decided by the assembly, by motion, requires a majority vote to adopt