

What Convention Delegates Need to Know About Robert's Rules of Order

The Conventions use Robert's Rules Of Order (RR) for the Parliamentary format . These rules are commonly known and widely practiced, such as being recognized to speak, making motions, and voting. Knowing the basic parliamentary rules will help you understand what is going on and how to participate.

The premise is that the majority rules but cannot deprive the minority of their rights. The minority has the right to be heard, but not to disrupt or impede a majority consensus. Therefore a 2/3 vote is required to do anything that reduces the rights of the delegates in the meeting, such as cut off debate.

In order to get anything done in a large meeting, there must be an increased level of formality – but you already know that! When you are having a conversation with 3 or 4 people, you wait until the other person has finished speaking, and then just start talking. But in a crowded classroom, you raise your hand and wait to be called upon. The basic principal is the same – ‘it's not polite to interrupt’ – but meetings are more formal.

To speak in the convention, you must be recognized by the Chair who assigns the floor. You ask to be recognized by waiting until no one else has the floor, and then, depending on the size of the meeting, raising your hand or by standing up and saying “Mr. (or Madam) Chairman”. In a VERY large meeting, such as a convention, there may be special rules, such as ‘you must come to the microphone to be recognized’.

In smaller meetings the Chair can take the time to answer questions, or even help you with the wording of a motion. In larger meetings however, it is best to be well prepared before obtaining the floor and avoid wasting everyone's time.

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Common Sense and Roberts Rules

Common Principal	Robert Rules For A Group
Don't interrupt another's speaking	Wait your turn 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.
The Chair is your guide	The Chair should help keep everyone on track by constantly reminding you of what is being discussed on voted on at that time. If you get lost, ask the people seated around you. If <u>nobody</u> knows what is going on, you can rise for a Point Of Information to ask the Chair for clarity
Anyone has a right to speak up if someone is breaking the rules	If you feel the rules are being broken, you may stand and say “Point of Order”. The Chair will then recognize you and ask you state your point. The Chair then rules if your point is “well taken” (you are correct) or not. If you are not sure of the rule, you can stand for a “Point Of Parliamentary Enquiry”. In large meetings it may be better to ask other delegates first, if you are not sure of the rule.
Cutting Off Debate	When someone wants to cut off debate they will Move The Previous Question. Remember that a vote is required to cut off debate. First you vote on whether you agree debate should be stopped. If that vote passes by 2/3, then you will vote on the motion being debated. If the motion to cut off debate does not get 2/3 vote, then debate continues.