



Robert's Rules of Order

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

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Overview

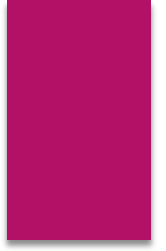
I. Introduction

II. Meeting Basics

III. Parliamentary Procedure



I. Introduction



**“School boards are
groups that take hours
to produce minutes.”**

*Mark Twain
Attributed*



Question

Why do public schools exist?



Question

Why does a board of education exist?



Question

How does a board of education do its work?



II. Meeting Basics

- a. Focus on student achievement*
- b. What is a meeting?*
- c. Agendas*
- d. Meeting tips*



Meeting Basics

Keeping Student Achievement First and Foremost

We encourage you to remain focused on student achievement.

The chair should remind the other members of the board to remain focused on achievement as a priority.

Agenda items should relate to learning wherever possible.

Meeting Basics



"To insure that we keep this meeting
under thiry minutes, I'll just
set this timer."



Meeting Basics

What is a Meeting?

- The law defines most gatherings of the board of education as “meetings.”
- Bringing together members of a board of education to discuss business is subject to various laws.
- It is a major responsibility of the board chair to see that the board follows the rules.



Meeting Basics

Special meetings

- Can be called at any time, provided proper notice is sent out. The meeting announcement must include the topic of the meeting, and list possible actions (agenda). At no time can the board discuss or take action on anything not listed in the meeting agenda.
- Workshops, retreats, grievance or disciplinary hearings or other non-regular meetings are just ***special meetings*** and subject to the same rules and regulations.



Meeting Basics

Agenda

The agenda is the most important document at any board meeting.

It is the first key to an effective meeting or the place where disaster strikes.

The board chair can play an important role in determining whether the board will spend most of its time on policy making, “administrivia” or other areas by making sure the agenda contains items that are appropriate for discussion.



Meeting Basics

Tips for successful meetings

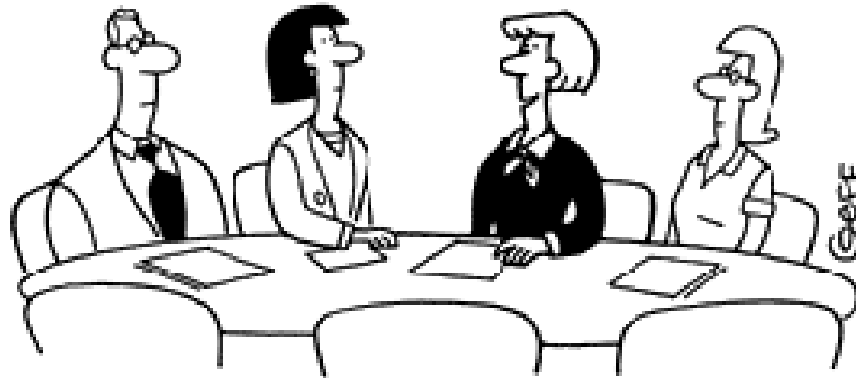
- Start meeting on time!
- Use (but don't abuse) Consent Agenda.
- Chair limits discussion to agenda topic.
- Agenda set with time limits.
- Superintendent should limit staff presentations.
- Superintendent must prepare adequate board packet.



III. Parliamentary Procedure

- a. Brief history of parliamentary procedure*
- b. Framework of Robert's Rules*
- c. How it all works*

Parliamentary Procedure



"Now we've reached the important part of the meeting. Those in favor of pretzels for our snack, raise your hands."

Parliamentary Procedure



Parliamentary Procedure



- Derived from the method used to maintain order in England's Parliament.
- Thomas Jefferson published the first book on procedure - *Manual of Parliamentary Practice* in 1801.

Parliamentary Procedure



- General Henry Roberts, an army engineer, wrote *Robert's Rules of Order*, which quickly became the standard from its inception in 1876.



Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules are designed to:

- Ensure the rights of the majority.
- Protect the rights of the minority.
- Defend the rights of individual members.



Parliamentary Procedure

It is the responsibility of all members to:

- Treat one item at a time.
- Extend courtesy and fairness to all.
- Let the majority rule.
- Guarantee the rights of the minority.



Parliamentary Procedure

- Robert's Rules allow for flexibility when small (under 12) groups meet.
- Boards may adopt the rules as written, or modify them in any way they see fit.
- The key to a successful meeting is consistent, fair application of the rules.



Parliamentary Procedure

- The chair is the key to an effective meeting
- The chair's tool to accomplish this is *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- Only one person may speak at a time and only after being recognized by the chair.



Parliamentary Procedure

- When a person raises a hand, the chair must recognize the person before he or she can speak. Unless the agenda allows otherwise, the recognized speaker may only discuss what is on the agenda.
- While large group rules would require a motion to be made prior to *any* discussion, small groups sometimes need more flexibility.

Parliamentary Procedure

State Law and Robert's Rules

When there is a conflict between Robert's Rules and state law, **state law wins**

In other words, there are certain procedures that are allowed under Robert's Rules, but are not okay because of state law

Two examples on the next slides . . .

Parliamentary Procedure

Example One of “not okay under state law”

Motioning to take an item from the table, IF . . .

- the item is from the previous meeting,
- AND it is not included on the current meeting's agenda

Explanation: under Robert's Rules, an item can be taken from the table that was tabled either at the current meeting, or at the previous meeting, HOWEVER, a board can only discuss or act upon items that were noticed in the agenda so an item cannot be discussed if it is not on the agenda

ALSO BEWARE: an agenda that includes an item that only states “Old Business,” with no additional information; this would not be okay for similar reasons (items were not noticed)

Parliamentary Procedure

Example Two of “not okay under state law”

Entering into executive session with a simple majority vote

Explanation: state law is very clear that entering into executive session requires a 2/3 majority vote. See *Section 1-225(f)* of the FOIA

ALSO BEWARE: many Robert's Rules guides say that a majority vote is needed to **end** executive session, but under state law only discussion is allowed, so NO VOTING IN EXECUTIVE SESSION and this also likely includes a prohibition on voting to end the executive session (because you are technically still in executive session)



Parliamentary Procedure

Motions follow two basic principles. Some motions affect the **order** of the meeting, while others generate the **substance** of the meeting. A number of motions are procedural in nature, while others help the board frame the decisions that required them to meet in the first place.

Parliamentary Procedure

Three central types of motions:

- **Main motion:** brings an issue before the board for debate or action
- **Subsidiary motion:** alters how the main motion is dealt with (substance or procedure)
- **Incidental motion:** relates to other motions, usually a type of procedural interjection or inquiry, but can also relate to substance

Parliamentary Procedure

Main Motion: brings an issue before the board for debate and action if necessary

Example: “A Motion to adopt the proposed new board policy entitled Policy on XYZ”

Motions to Reconsider and **Motions to Rescind** are also types of main motions (the purposes are in the titles of each: to reconsider a past issue or action, and to rescind a past action, respectively)

Parliamentary Procedure

Subsidiary Motion: alters how a Main Motion is dealt with (procedure or substance)

Examples of subsidiary motions:

Motion to amend- changes the language/content of the main motion

Secondary amendment- changes the language/content of the amendment
(sometimes called a **motion to amend the amendment**)

Motion to lay on the table- a means to temporarily postpone an issue

Motion to postpone definitely- a means to delay action on an issue until a later date

Motion to postpone indefinitely- effectively “kills” the main motion and avoids a vote

Parliamentary Procedure

Incidental motion: relates to other motions, usually a type of procedural interjection or inquiry, but can also relate to substance

Examples of incidental motions:

Point of order- a way to challenge the procedure that has occurred (for example, if a member believes that the Chair did not ask for a second when one was required)

Parliamentary inquiry- a way to request information on the procedure necessary at a given moment, either under parliamentary procedure or Board Bylaw

Point of information- a way to request information on the issue being discussed (this is an incidental motion that relates to the substance of the issue)

Division of a question- to split a motion into two or more separate motions that will then be discussed and voted upon separately (sometimes called **Division of a motion**)



Parliamentary Procedure

There is a distinct hierarchy of motions, all designed to facilitate an orderly procession through the meeting. Motions can be **debatable**, to which members of the board may ask questions or speak for or against the motion. In some cases, motions are not debatable.

When a non-debatable motion is moved and seconded, the chair must call for an immediate vote.



Parliamentary Procedure

Motions also follow an **order of precedence**. There is an order to which motions can be made, and in some instances, a motion would not be allowable because it is **out of order**. It is the chair's responsibility to know the order of precedence, and to govern at which times motions may or may not be made for certain actions. It is up to the chair to ensure that all motions are clear and make sense.

Parliamentary Procedure

Additional note on precedence . . .

A **subsidiary motion takes precedence over a main motion** (and there is an order of precedence within subsidiary motions themselves), and incidental motions must be dealt with upon being raised

Parliamentary procedure

Suggestion when “getting lost in the woods” of parliamentary procedure

If the board has become so lost in the woods of procedure on any given issue, and would like a “do over” to get back on track, one way out of the mess is:

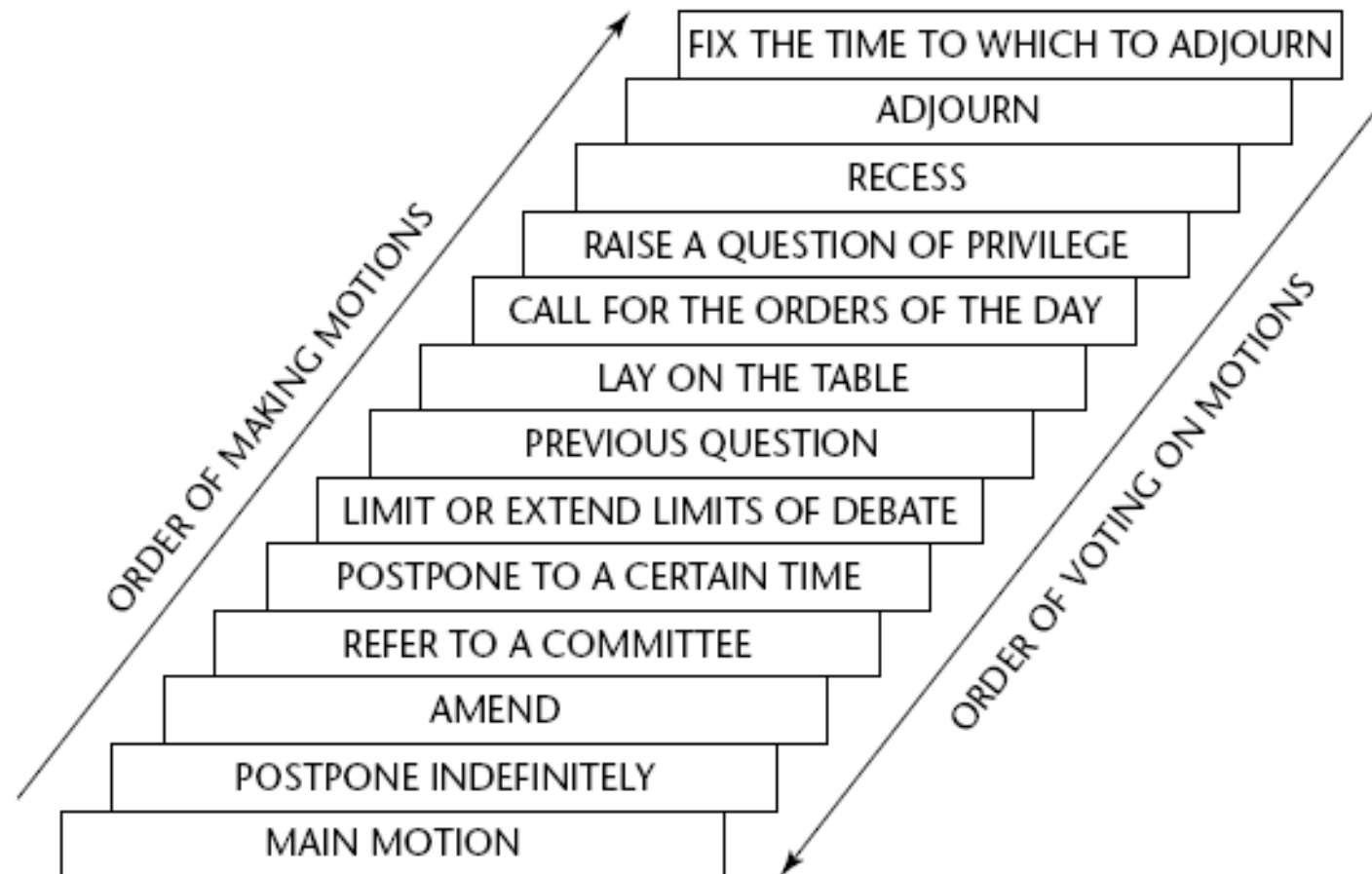
The person who submitted the main motion may withdraw it, which kills all related motions, via a **motion to withdraw** which requires no second and allows no debate, but does need a majority vote

A person may then make another main motion to replace it

Parliamentary Procedure

Does the Chair have the final word?

Parliamentary Procedure





Parliamentary Procedure

The cornerstone to any debate is the **Main Motion**. It is ***debatable***, and must be passed by a majority of the board (not counting abstentions). The maker of a motion may not speak against the motion, but may vote against it. Sometimes after debating an issue for a while, the maker of the motion may withdraw it, thereby effectively killing any further discussion.



Parliamentary Procedure

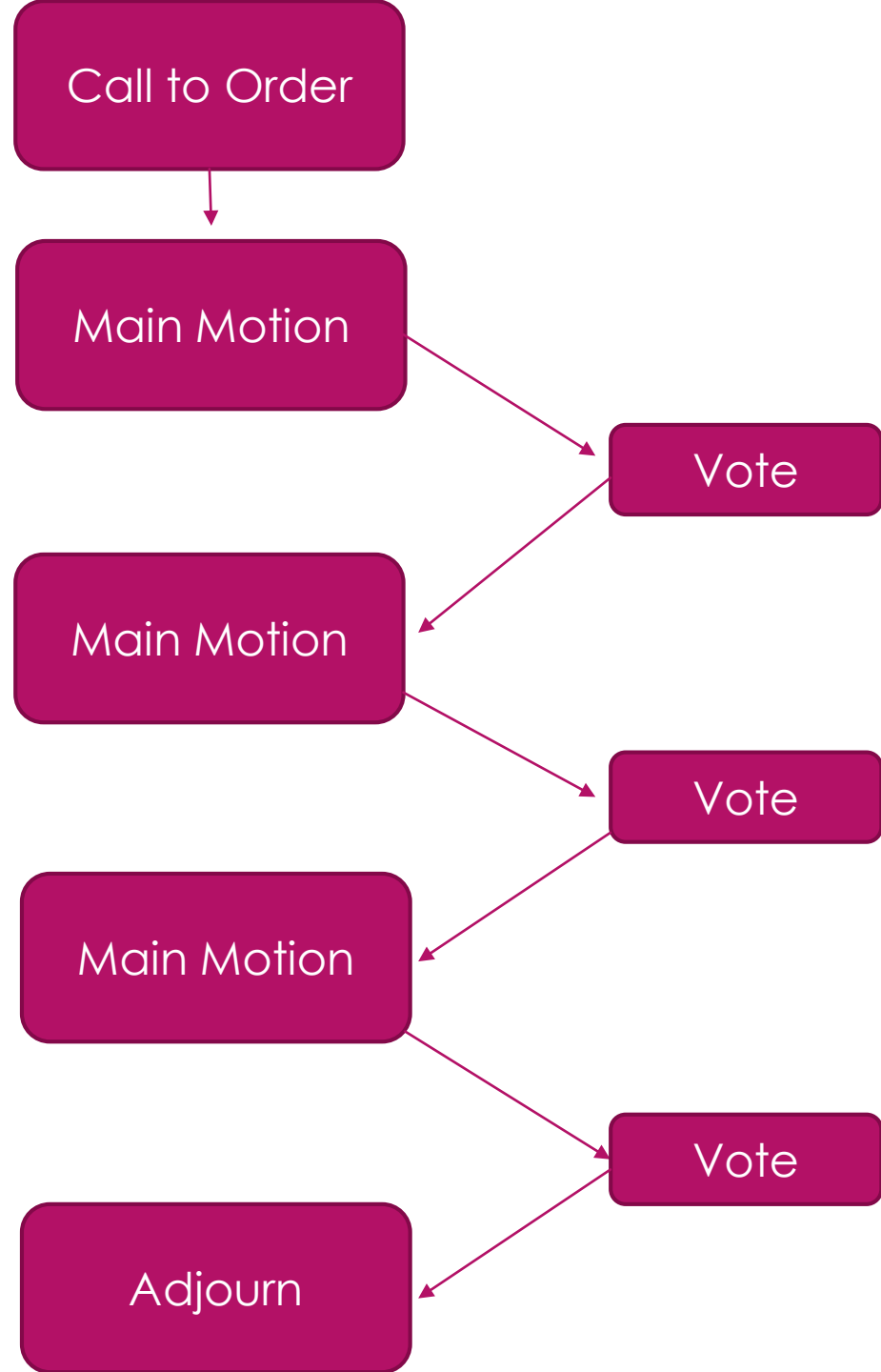
Action Motions

- Main Motion
- Subsidiary Motions
 - Amend
 - Division

Parliamentary Procedure

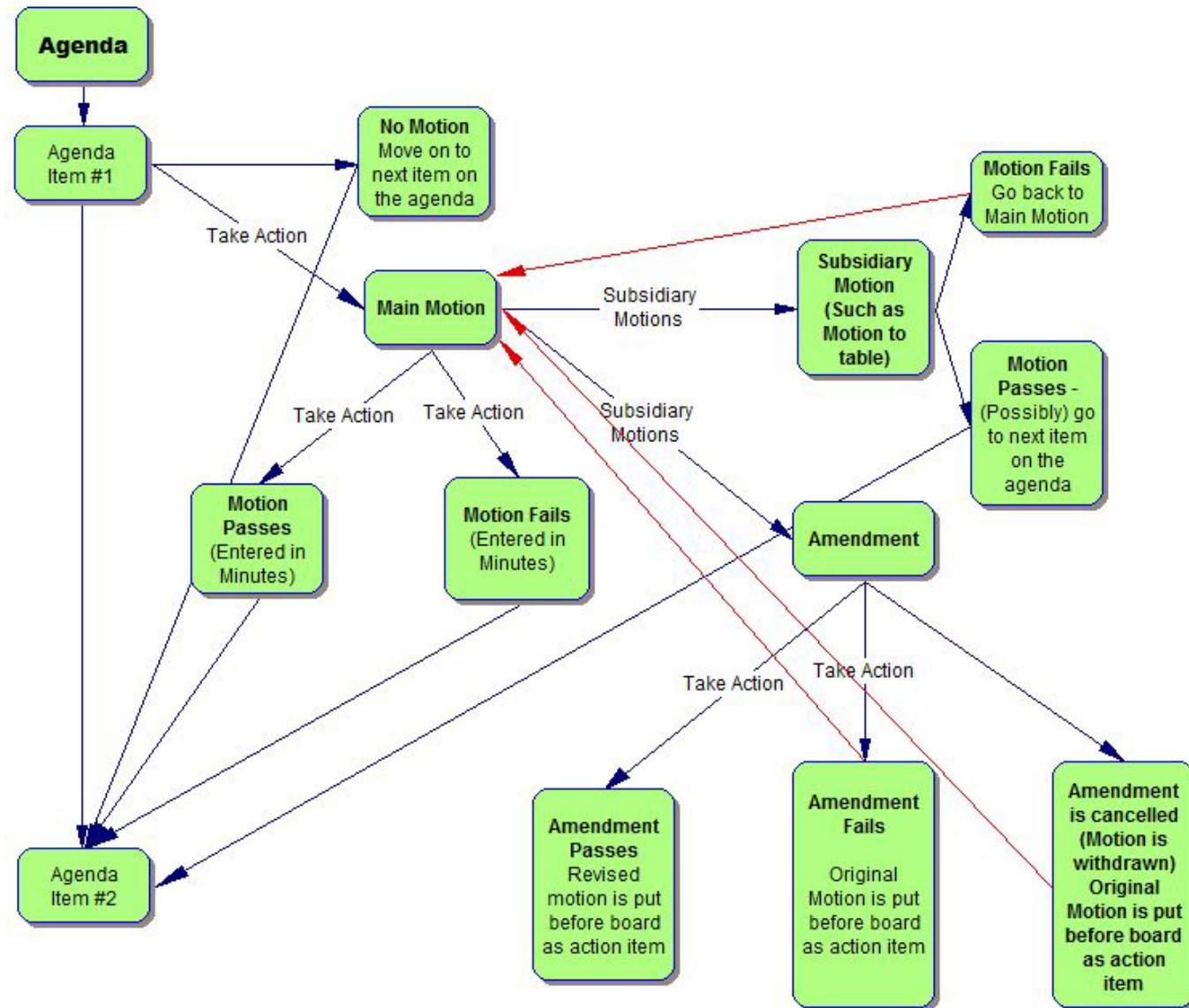


Visit Youtube.com and Search for "Carpentersville".



A Simple Meeting

The minutes must reflect any action (or inaction) of the board. Motions, seconds, votes, and even withdrawing a motion must show up in the minutes.





Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary Motions – Main Motions

Motion	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
1. Main Motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Reconsider	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Rescind	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority



Parliamentary Motions – Subsidiary Motions

Parliamentary Procedure

Motion	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
2. Postpone Indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
3. Amend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
4. Amend Amendment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
5. Refer to Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
6. Postpone Definitely	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
7. Previous Question	Yes	No	No	2/3
8. Lay on the Table	Yes	No	No	Majority

Parliamentary Motions – Subsidiary Motions

Parliamentary Procedure

Motion	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
2. Postpone Indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
3. Amend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
4. Amend Amendment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
5. Refer to Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
6. Postpone Definitely	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
7. Previous Question	Yes	No	No	2/3
8. Lay on the Table	Yes	No	No	Majority



Parliamentary Procedure

Conduct of Meeting

Common (and often misused) Motions - CONDUCT

Motion	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
Point of Order	No	No	No	None
Parliamentary Inquiry	No	No	No	None
Divide a Motion	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Withdraw or Modify a Motion	No	No	No	Majority



Parliamentary Procedure

Less Common (and often misused) Motions

Motion	Requires Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
Point of Information	No	No	No	None
Appeal the Decision of the Chair	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Object to Consideration	No	No	No	2/3
Suspend the Rules	Yes	No	No	2/3
Raise a Question of Privilege	No	No	No	None

Parliamentary Procedure



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Simplified Chart of Parliamentary Motions

Motion	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Required
8. Adjourn	No	No	Majority
7. Recess	No	Yes	Majority
6. Close Debate	No	No	2/3
5. Postpone Definitely	Yes	Yes	Majority
4. Refer to Committee	Yes	Yes	Majority
3. Amend the Amendment	Yes	No	Majority
2. Amend or Substitute	Yes	Yes	Majority
1. Main Motion (Resolution)	Yes	Yes	Majority
Reconsider	Yes	No	Majority
Rescind	Yes	Yes	Majority (with notice)
Motions Dealing with General Conduct of Meeting No Order of Precedence			
Point of Order	No	No	None
Parliamentary Inquiry	No	No	None
Appeal from the Decision of the Chair	Yes	No	Majority
Division of the Assembly	No	No	No
Suspend the Rules	No	No	2/3
Divide a Motion	No	Yes	Majority
Withdraw or Modify a Motion	No	No	Majority

From Notes and Comments on Robert's Rules, by Jon Ericson,
Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

QUESTIONS?

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