

Bourinot's Rules of Order

Rules of order are procedures by which meetings can be conducted in an orderly fashion, issues debated and motions passed according to the majority but with due regard to the rights of the minority. For the most part, Rules of Order are based on common sense and the need to move through an Agenda expeditiously.

Duties of the Chair or Speaker:

The Chair conducts meetings, preserves order and decorum, and interprets the Rules of Order. The Chair is impartial and may not take part in the debate nor vote.

Agenda and Minutes:

The Agenda is the order of business for the meeting. It describes the items for consideration and gives the order in which they will be taken up. The Agenda must be passed or adopted before the meeting can commence. The adoption of the minutes of the last meeting ratifies any decisions taken at that time. Any changes in the Agenda or minutes must be proposed and considered before the Agenda and minutes are adopted. An item on the Agenda may be taken out of sequence and disposed of only by majority consent.

Motions: A motion is a proposal made pursuant to an item of the agenda that certain actions be taken, certain views become policy, etc. which is then debated, possibly amended and voted on. There are also motions that propose procedures for considering other motions, e.g. Motions to Table, to Divide the Question, to Put the Question, to Adjourn, to Amend.

Any member may move a substantive or procedural motion as long as it is 'in order'.

A substantive motion or “an important motion, or one containing a number of considerations, should be prepared in writing and given to the chair, preferably in advance of the meeting.”

The mover of a motion is allowed to speak first on the motion followed by the seconder. Then by custom, opponents and proponents alternate in debate. Questions about the motion are directed to the Chair thence to the mover or person to whom they are addressed. Since procedural motions are in order when considering a substantive motion and take precedence over it, it is not always possible that the mover may speak last on the motion. The mover may withdraw her/his motion with majority consent.

Amendments: A motion to amend a (main) motion must be relevant to that motion and properly moved and seconded. An amendment may propose: (a) to leave out certain words, (b) to insert or add certain words, (c) to leave out certain words in order to insert or add other words. When 'in order' an amendment takes precedence over the main motion and becomes the subject of debate. It must be accepted or rejected before debate reverts to the main motion. If accepted, the main motion as amended is debated. If it fails, the main motion is unchanged.

A sub-amendment may be proposed to an amendment under the same conditions as an amendment is moved to a main motion.

At no time may there be more than one main motion, one amendment and one sub-amendment on the floor. When all three exist, the Chair submits them in the reverse order to which they were moved.

A motion once defeated cannot be re-introduced as an amendment to some other motion. The mover with the consent of his seconder may incorporate a 'friendly' amendment into the main motion if the mover and seconder of the amendment are agreeable.

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Quorum: The quorum of a meeting is the minimum number of members required by the Constitution to conduct business. When the absence of a quorum is brought to the attention of the Chair the meeting adjourns and sets a date for a future meeting. The agenda item then being considered dies for that meeting but may be re-introduced at the next meeting. Motions passed and items considered prior to the absence of a quorum being noticed are valid and may stand..

If there is no quorum, the Chair will adjourn the meeting. However, if the members remaining wish to continue discussion they may do so informally. Any decisions taken must be ratified at a following meeting.

Bourinot's Rules at a Glance

To Do This:	You Say This:	May Interrupt the Speaker?	You Must be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Majority is Required?
Move a motion	I move....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Change a motion. You may not merely amend to negate)	I move that the motion be amended to read...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
End debate on a motion	1) I call the question. 2) I move that council proceed to the next order of business	1) No 2) No	1) Yes 2) Yes	1) Yes 2) No	1) No 2) No	1) Motions on which question is called will be debated at the next meeting and the motion fails 2) Majority
End the meeting - the chair can simply call adjournment without a motion if all business is complete.	I move that the meeting adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Consider something out of its scheduled order	I move the agenda be amended in order to deal with the following item ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Postpone further discussion on a motion until later in the meeting	I move that the motion be tabled until ...	No	Yes	Yes – only to time	Yes	Majority
Postpone consideration of a motion until a future meeting	I move that the motion be postponed until ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Have a motion studied more before voting on it	I move that the motion be referred to	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

To Do This:	You Say This:	May Interrupt the Speaker?	You Must be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Majority is Required?
Raise a matter previously tabled (if at a different time from when was decided)	I move that the motion about ... be lifted from the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Reconsider a motion already voted on earlier in the meeting	I move that the motion about ... be reconsidered at the next meeting and provide written notice requesting that the matter be raised at the next meeting	No	Yes	Yes	No	2/3 Majority
Object to something which prevents your continued participation (e.g. excessive noise)	Point of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	Vote taken, chair rules.
Seek clarification from the previous speaker	Point of Information	Yes – If urgent	No	No	No	Vote taken, chair rules
Overturn the ruling of the chair	I challenge the chair on ...	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Enquire about procedure or consequences	Point of Order	Yes	No	Yes, only on the point No....	No	Vote taken, chair rules
Object to incorrect procedure being used	Point of Order	Yes	No	Yes, only on the point; No	No	Vote taken, chair rules