

# ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

**Parliamentary Inquiry** - asking if a procedure is in order.

Example: "Chairperson, is it in order for me to offer an amendment now?"

**Point of Order** - pointing out that something is out of order.

Example: "I rise to a point of order, there is already a motion on the floor."

**Point of Information** - asking for clarifying information

Example: "I would like to ask the speaker if this is a recurring situation or something that only happens occasionally?"

Example: "Would the maker please explain why we can no longer use the current answering service?"

## Description of Motions

The following descriptions are adapted directly from the 1989 WSC Rules of Order and may assist in conducting business on the CASC floor.

### A. Adjourn:

Means to close the session immediately.

### B. Amend (a pending motion):

Means to modify the wording of a pending motion and is considered a primary amendment that it applies directly to the main question. The amendment is voted on by itself and before the pending motion. If the amendment is adopted, the main motion is pending in the amended form; if the amendment is not adopted, the main motion is pending in its original form. An amendment is generally amendable. This amendment is considered a secondary amendment because it applies to the amendment and not the main question. The secondary amendment is disposed of by itself and before the primary amendment. If the secondary amendment is adopted, the primary amendment is pending in its amended form; if the secondary amendment is not adopted, the primary amendment is pending in its original form. A pending motion may be amended many times before final disposition; however, no more than one primary and one secondary amendment can be pending at any one time. A member's vote on an amendment does not obligate him to vote in a particular way on the main motion. Because primary amendments, secondary amendments, and pending motions are voted on separately, it allows each member the freedom to be in opposition to the amendment(s) but in favor of the motion, or vice versa. The motion to Substitute, a form of the motion Amend proposes that a substitution shall come before the assembly in place of the pending resolution. During the consideration of the motion to Substitute, debate can go into the merits of the pending resolution and the proposed substitute, and both may be perfected by secondary amendment, but any amendments to the original pending resolution will be taken up first. Once all amendments have been made and disposed of, the motion to Substitute is voted on. If carried, the substitution comes to the assembly for vote

C. Amend Something Previously Adopted:

Means to change a part of a motion already adopted. This motion can be moved by any member regardless of how they voted on the original question. There is also no time limit on when this motion can be made.

D. Appeal the Chair:

Means the ruling is taken from the Chair and decided by the assembly. By electing a Chair, the assembly delegates the authority and duty to make necessary rulings on questions of parliamentary procedure. However, members do have the right to appeal and have no right to criticize a ruling of the Chair unless they appeal the decision.

E. Commit or Refer to Committee:

Means to send the pending question or other issues to a committee so that the question or issue may be carefully investigated and put into better condition for the assembly to consider. The motion should specify which committee. If a special or ad hoc committee is needed, the committee can be formed in the same or amending motion.

F. Discharge a Committee:

Means to discharge the committee from further consideration of a question or subject. This is generally only advisable when the committee has failed to report with appropriate promptness, or when the assembly desires for some urgent reason to proceed without aid from the committee, or when the assembly wishes to drop the matter. There is no need for this motion when the committee has made its final report, since that in effect discharges it. So long as the question is in the hands of a committee, the assembly cannot consider another motion involving practically the same question. If the matter was originally given to the committee with the subsidiary motion of Commit attached to a pending motion, then the question comes immediately before the assembly. On the other hand if the matter was given to the committee with a main motion, the matter dies when the committee is discharged. Another main motion is needed to bring it up again.

G. Division of the Question:

Means the pending motion is divided into distinct and separate parts to be considered individually. The motion should state where the division(s) is to be.

H. Lay on the Table

Means to set the pending motion aside temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen. The proper form of the motion does not state when the matter will be taken from the table. The matter must be taken from the table before adjournment or the matter dies for that session. However, the matter may be introduced at another session as a new motion. If the mover's intent is anything other than temporarily laying a matter aside until an emergency situation is taken care of, then the proper motions/actions are: Postpone Definitely; Postpone Indefinitely; Objection to Consideration; or vote against the motion. The motion my on the Table should be ruled out of order if its intended effect is to kill the motion for the current session. It is proper for the maker to state his reason or for the Chair to ask for the reason of Laying on the Table. Since a motion that has been laid on the table is still within the control of the assembly, no other motion on the same

subject that would substantially conflict or present the same question would then be in order. To consider a conflicting motion or a substitute, the tabled motion would first need to be taken from the table and disposed of.

I. Limit or Extend Debate:

Means the assembly can exercise special control over the total time of debate, the time each member has to debate, or the number of members who can speak on a pending motion or series of motions. This motion cannot impose an immediate closing of debate; the appropriate motion then would be Previous Question.

J. Main Motion:

The introduction of new business, or in some cases the reconsideration or amendment of previously adopted business.

K. Objection to Consideration of the Question:

Means the mover believes that the issue is so sensitive it should not even come before the assembly for consideration or discussion. This must be moved prior to any debate or the making of any subsidiary motions. The motion when stated by the Chair is phrased so members are asked to vote for or against consideration. Therefore, those who wish to prevent consideration of the question vote in the negative. If the mover merely disagrees with the motion, the proper action is to vote against the original pending motion. If the objection is sustained, the main motion cannot be reviewed during the same session except by unanimous consent or by reconsideration of the vote on the objection; however, the same motion can be introduced at any succeeding session.

L. Order of the Day, to Call for...

Means any member can require the assembly to conform to its own agenda, unless the assembly then "Suspends the Rules" or "Changes the Order of the Day".

M. Parliamentary Inquiry:

A question to the Chair for information on a matter of parliamentary procedure or the guidelines of the assembly bearing on the business being considered. It is the duty of the Chair to answer such questions when it may assist a member to make an appropriate motion, raise a proper point of order, understand the parliamentary situation, or understand the effect of a motion. The Chair is not obligated to answer hypothetical questions. The Chair's reply is not subject to Appeal, since it is an opinion, not a ruling.

However, a member has the right to act contrary to this opinion and if ruled Out of Order, to appeal such a ruling.

N. Point of Information:

Is a request directed to the Chair, or through the Chair to another member, for information relevant to the business being considered but is not a matter related to parliamentary procedure and requires no vote. A Point of Information is not used to create a discussion between two members. If the Point of Information is a question to a member who is speaking, the chair will ask the member who correctly has the floor if

be will yield to a Point of Information; the member has the right not to yield, since the time consumed for the Point of Information will be taken out of the speaker's allowed time. If the member does yield, the member raising the point is required to raise the issue in the form of a question to the Chairperson, but the Chairperson usually allows the member who correctly has the floor to answer. After the question is stated, the member raising the matter is obligated to remain silent and allow the member who has the floor to continue.

O. Point of Order:

Means a member believes the rules of the assembly are being violated and is asking for recognition from the Chair to make a determination as to whether or not the procedure that the member feels is pertinent is being violated. A Point of Order is not a method or procedure to dispute the accuracy of something that another member has stated, but a way to keep the assembly working on the business that it is supposed to be working on and in accordance with its guidelines and other rules of order. This point needs to be made immediately at the time the perceived breach occurs. If a member is uncertain there is a breach of order, he can make a Parliamentary Inquiry. Also, and it is undesirable to raise Points of Order on minor irregularities, if it is clear that no one's rights are being infringed on.

Q. Postpone to a Definite Time (definitely):

Means to put off action on a pending motion until a definite day, meeting or hour, or until after a certain event. This motion can be moved regardless of how much debate there has been on the pending motion. A question may be postponed to a more convenient time or because debate has shown reasons for holding off a decision until later. The question may not be postponed beyond when the time to which a question has been postponed arrives, but question can be postponed again if additional delay will not interfere with the proper handling of the postponed motion. When consideration of the question is resumed at the specified time, the business is in the same condition as it was immediately before the postponement, including any adhering motions. If the postponed motion is taken up on a different day, the business is in the same condition as it was immediately before postponement with all adhering motions, except the rights of debate begins over again as if it had never been updated.

R. Postpone Indefinitely:

Means that the assembly declines to take a position on the main question. Its adoption kills the main motion for the duration of the session and avoids a direct vote on the question. It is useful in disposing of a badly chosen main motion that cannot be either adopted or expressly rejected without undesirable consequences.

S. Previous Question:

Means to immediately close debate and the making of any subsidiary motions, except lay on the Table, of a pending motion. If Previous Question is not adopted, debate continues. If adopted, the pending motion immediately goes to vote.

T. Question (Point) of Privilege. to Raise:

Permits a request or main motion relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly or any of its members to be brought up for possible immediate consideration because of its urgency, while business is pending and the request or motion would otherwise be out of order. The Chair rules (subject to Appeal) only on whether this matter should interrupt pending business. If the Chair rules yes, then the Question is handled depending on its original form. If originally phrased like a request, it is handled as such; if phrased like a main motion, the Question then requires a second, is debatable, amendable. etc., and is handled by the Assembly. If there is not urgency, a Question of Privilege can be brought to the assembly as a regular motion and handled in the normal course of business.

U. Recess:

Means a short intermission in the assembly's proceedings which does not close the meeting, and after which business will immediately be resumed at exactly the point where it was interrupted. If a recess is provided for in the agenda, the Chair simply declares the assembly in recess. If the Chair does not announce a pre-scheduled recess at the scheduled time, a member can Call for the Order of the Day. If the assembly wishes to postpone a pre-scheduled recess, it can move to Suspend the Rules.

V. Reconsider:

Enables a motion or amendment to be reconsidered if a member believes it was a hasty or ill-advised action or if new information or a changed situation has developed. However, it must be moved by a member who voted on the prevailing side (the seconded may have voted on either side) and it must be moved either on the same or next day of the original vote. If the Reconsider is adopted, the motion is brought before the assembly in the exact form as before the original vote was taken and is handled as if it had never been voted on, that is it follows whatever parliamentary rules are appropriate to that motion, whether it is debatable, amendable. etc. If the Reconsider motion is debatable, a member has the right to debate the Reconsider motion regardless whether his rights to debate were exhausted on the original motion. If the Reconsider is adopted the same day as the original vote, a member whose rights to debate the original motion were exhausted are still exhausted; if the Reconsider is adopted the next day, a member's rights to debate the original motion begin over again

W. Suspend the Rules:

Enables the assembly to do something without violating one or more of its own regular rules, for instance, to bring a matter up at a different time than originally scheduled. The Chair cannot move this, but can entertain another member to. To change the Order of the Day is an application of Suspend the Rules, and means to take a question out of its proper order of to consider one before the time to which it was postponed.

X. Take from the Table:

Enables the assembly to make pending again a motion that had previously been laid on the table. If a matter is not Taken from the Table within the same session as the motion to

Lay on the Table, the matter dies; although the matter can be reintroduced later as a new question. If the motion to Take from the Table is adopted, the original motion becomes pending in its exact form, including all adhering motions, as when it was laid down. If a matter is Taken from the Table the same day as laid down, members who had exhausted their right to debate cannot speak again; if Taken from the Table on another day, debate rights start over again.

Y. Voting. Motions about:

Enables the assembly to obtain a vote on a question in some form other than by voice or other than as described in the assembly's standing rules, or to close or reopen the polls.

Z. Withdraw/Modify a motion to grant the maker permission:

Means the assembly gives permission to the maker to alter or withdraw his motion. This permission is only required after the motion has been stated by the Chair. After the question is stated by the Chair, the motion becomes appending motion and the property of the assembly, which has to dispose of it in some way. A pending motion can be amended only by vote or unanimous consent even if the maker of the motion accepts the amendment. Before a question is stated by the Chair, the maker has the right to modify or withdraw it. If the maker of a motion modifies it before it is stated, the seconded has the right to withdraw his second. If the maker accepts a modification as suggested by another member, either before or after the motion has been seconded, the suggested has in effect seconded the modified motion, so no other second is necessary.

## Parliamentary Procedure

All the business of CASC shall be conducted in accordance with the TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS, the TWELVE CONCEPTS, and within the boundaries set by these guidelines. Parliamentary procedure shall be assisted by Robert's Rules of Order as they apply to our guidelines. (See next section)

On the following pages you'll find a simple set of "rules of order". They have been adapted from Robert's Rules of Order, which in turn are based on the Rules of the US House of Representatives. These sample rules differ in some details from Robert's Rules; to cover such differences as defined by our service structure. We have not made the decision to accept these rules as authoritative, but as guidelines to assist us in running our Area meeting. Therefore, they have been adapted to conform to our service structure, our Traditions and our Concepts.

### Decorum statement

Meetings will be conducted according to these rules of order, adapted from Robert's Rules of Order. This time-honored system for conducting business is the clearest way yet devised for getting a maximum amount of business done in a minimum of time, and to get it done regardless of the degree of disagreement among the participants. By following these rules of order, we strive to be sure that we are making decisions on the basis of principle, rather than personality. In keeping with that spirit, we encourage all participants to become familiar with these rules of order, and to conduct themselves accordingly. Once the meeting is under way, only one matter will be before the committee at any one time, and no other discussion is in order. Please respect the chairperson's right to be in control of the process of this meeting, so that you can have maximum benefit of its content.

### Debate Limits

Debate is the formal exchange of views on an idea. Unless otherwise specified, debate on both main motions and parliamentary motions is usually limited to two or three pros and two or three cons (speakers for and against the motion). Speakers addressing a motion in debate usually have two or three minutes in which to speak their minds.

### Motions

There are two basic types of motions. It is important to understand the difference between them. The two kinds of motions are main motions and parliamentary motions.

### Main motions

A motion is a statement of an idea a committee member wants the committee to put into practice. After being recognized by the chairperson, the member says, "I move that such-and-such be done by (this committee, one of its subcommittees, or a particular individual) under these terms." The person making the motion then, speaks briefly about why he feels the idea is important--this is called speaking to the intent of a motion. Because the exact wording of all motions must be recorded in the minutes, the maker of the motion should write it out whenever possible. This is especially important for complicated or long motions.

Every motion requires a second--the backing of another person who also wants the idea put into practice, or who simply wants to see further discussion of the idea take place. The chairperson will ask, after one person makes a motion, whether the motion has a second. The seconded simply raises his hand and, when recognized by the chair, says, "I second that." If nobody seconds a motion, the chair will say, "The motion dies for lack of a second." This means that the idea will not be discussed any further because there is not enough interest in it. The committee

then moves on to other business.

Once a motion has been made, the chairperson may rule it out of order. A motion may be ruled out of order for any one of a number of reasons: the motion goes against the committee's standing policy, clearly contradicts one of the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service or Twelve Traditions, or is inappropriate at the particular point in the meeting at which it is made. Robert's Rules of Order can be consulted for more specific examples of motions which are out of order at any given time.

Any member of the committee who wishes to challenge a ruling made by the chairperson may appeal that ruling, as described below. If no appeal is made, or if the decision of the chair is upheld, the committee moves on to other business.

#### Parliamentary motions

Parliamentary motions can be best understood as "sub-motions" that are made during debate on a main motion, which affect in some way the main motion. There are many more of these than space and practicality permits us to include here, but a few that seem to be the most practical are discussed here.

##### 1. Motion to AMEND

Simple half plus one required

DEBATABLE. This is perhaps the most commonly used parliamentary motion. During debate on a motion, if a member feels that the motion would benefit from a change in its language, they can say, "I move to amend the motion..." and suggest specific language changes in the motion. If an amendment has been moved and seconded, debate then turns to the merits of the amendment. When debate on the amendment is exhausted, the body votes on the amendment. Then, debate resumes on the merits of the main motion (as amended, if the amendment carried). When debate is exhausted on the merits of the main motion itself, it is transcribed in the minutes as such, and the body moves on to the next item of business.

##### 2. Motion to call the PREVIOUS QUESTION

TWO-THIRDS majority required

NOT DEBATABLE

For our purposes, this may be the most important parliamentary motion. Use it often. This motion is made by a member saying, "I call for the question," or "I move to the previous question." "It is another way of saying, "I move that debate stops right now and that we vote immediately." This is one of many that can be used to prevent needless, lengthy debate once an issue is clearly understood. This motion is in order after any speaker is finished. You need not be called on. The chair must recognize you when you make this motion, and a vote must be taken with no debate. If two thirds of the body feels that no more debate is necessary, then it is time to vote and move on. One point worth making about this motion is that you must be careful not to squelch debate before an issue has been thoroughly aired. Be sure to -vote "no" to this motion if you are still confused about the issue, or if you are unsure of how to vote. By allowing debate to continue, we avoid half-baked decisions about half understood questions. On the other hand, the liberal use of this motion makes it unnecessary for the chair to be heavy-handed in stopping discussion, because he knows you will stop it soon enough.

##### 3. Motion to TABLE

SIMPLE half plus one required

NOT DEBATABLE

One way of disposing of a motion that is not ready for a vote is to table it. This is done by saying, "I move we table this motion until such-and-such a date or meeting." "This motion is not



debatable; if it is made and seconded, it is voted on immediately. If it fails, debate continues on the motion itself. If it passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. The tabled motion will be included in the committee agenda on the date specified.

#### 4. Motion to REMOVE FROM THE TABLE

SIMPLE half plus one required

DEBATABLE

A motion that has been tabled can be taken up before the time originally set in the motion to table. This is done by saying, "I move to remove from the table the motion to such-and-such." If this motion passes, the motion that had been tabled becomes the main motion, and debate on it begins again. If the motion to remove from the table fails, the body moves on to the next item of business.

#### 5. Motion to REFER

SIMPLE half plus one required

NOT DEBATABLE.

Sometimes the committee does not have enough information to make an immediate decision on a motion. Such motions can be removed from debate and sent to one of the subcommittees for further study; or, it can be sent to a special or ad hoc committee. This can be done by a member saying, "I move to refer the motion to the such-and-such subcommittee." If the motion to refer passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. The subcommittee to which the motion is assigned will take it up at its next meeting. The subcommittee will report back on what it has come up with at the next meeting of the full committee.

#### 6. Motions to RECONSIDER or RESCIND

TWO-THIRDS majority required

DEBATABLE.

Sometimes a member feels that a motion the committee has passed will prove harmful. He can move to either reconsider (reopen for debate and voting) or rescind (void the effect of) the original motion.

There are a few conditions on motions to reconsider or rescind:

The motion must have been passed in either the last business meeting or the current meeting.

The member making the motion must have information on the issue that was not available in the original debate on the motion.

The member must have been with the winning side in the original vote.

These limits are placed to protect the committee from having to reconsider again and again the motions it passes, while still allowing it to examine potentially harmful situations it has created inadvertently. If any of these requirements are not met, the chairperson will declare the motion out of order.

#### 7. Request to WITHDRAW A MOTION

UNANIMOUS CONSENT (Of Officers and GSR's) required

NOT DEBATABLE.

Once a motion is made and the debate begins, the maker of the motion may move to withdraw it. The chair asks if there are any objections. If there is even one objection, the motion stays on the floor, and debate resumes. If there are no objections, the motion is withdrawn and the body moves on.

#### 8. Offering a SUBSTITUTE MOTION

SIMPLE half plus one required

DEBATABLE

A substitute motion is the same thing as an amendment to a main motion. The only difference is that it is offered to entirely replace the original idea, instead of merely revising a portion of it. It is handled in the same way an amendment is handled.

#### 9. Motion to ADJOURN

SIMPLE half plus one required

NOT DEBATABLE.

Any voting member may move to adjourn at any time. This motion is always in order, is not debatable, and requires two-thirds to pass. Obviously frivolous motions to adjourn may be ruled out of order. After all business is finished, the chair may declare the meeting adjourned without a motion.

#### Other procedures

In addition to parliamentary motions, there are other ways in which members may alter or clarify the proceedings. Here are a few of the most common.

**Order of the day.** If a committee member feels that business is going too far astray from the original agenda, he can help get things back on track. He says, "I call for the order of the day." This means, "I move that the chair bring us back on track and conduct the meeting according to procedure, adhering to the agenda." This does not require a second, and is not debatable.

Regardless of what else is going on at the time, it requires an immediate vote.

**Point of order.** If a committee member feels that something that is happening is in violation of the rules of order, and if the chairperson does not appear likely to do anything about it, the member can raise a point of order. She need not raise her hand, but may simply say out loud, 'Point of order. "The chairperson then says, "What 'is your point of order?" The member then states how she feels the rules of order are being violated. If the chair agrees with her judgment, he says "Your point is well taken," and the situation is cleared up. If he does not agree, he says, "Overruled." This decision, as all others, can be appealed.

**Point of appeal.** Any time the chair makes a decision, that decision may be appealed. Any voting member who wishes to appeal a decision may do so by saying, "I appeal the decision of the chair." The chair then says, "On what grounds?" The member states his reasons. The chairperson then speaks briefly to the intent of his ruling. A vote is taken, requiring two-thirds half plus one to overrule the decision of the chair.

**Parliamentary inquiry.** If a committee member wants to do something, but doesn't know how it fits in with the rules of order, all he has to do is ask. Without raising his hand, he simply says out loud, "Point of parliamentary inquiry." The chairperson must immediately recognize him, so that he may ask how to do such-and-such. The chair will answer the question, possibly by referring to a specific passage in this document in his explanation.

**Point of personal privilege.** If the smoke is getting too heavy for you, the air conditioner or heater is on too high, or if there is too much noise in the room, you can ask that something be done about it. You may interrupt the proceedings by saying, 'Point of personal privilege" The chair must recognize you immediately. State the situation, and ask that it be corrected. The chair will request that whatever needs to be done, and is reasonable, be done to help make you comfortable.

#### Voting Procedures

There are several ways that votes can be taken. Three of them are described here.

**Written Ballot:** In the Brooklyn Area it is policy that all motions and nominations that have gone to the Groups shall be voted by written ballot at the next regular session of the BCASC.

**Show of hands:** This is the most commonly used method. Votes will be taken by a request from

the chair to see the hands of all in favor, then all opposed, then all abstaining on each issue. The chair should ask for all three categories every time, just to be thorough, even when the half plus one is overwhelming.

Roll call vote. Sometimes when a vote is taken on a controversial issue, or a very important one, members may call for a roll call vote. This request must be honored, whether or not it is made after a show-of-hands vote was already taken. The secretary calls out the group or position titles of all the voting members and asks for their voice vote, yes or no. Each person's vote is then recorded in the minutes by position title or group.

Committees There are two kinds of subcommittees: standing subcommittees and ad hoc committees.

Standing subcommittees. These are the regular subcommittees of the area, such as H&I and P.R. The basic descriptions of these, and how they relate to the committee as a whole, are detailed elsewhere in the BASIC Guidelines.

Special (ad hoc) committees. Sometimes a question or special project needs to be referred to a subcommittee, but the question does not fit in with the focus of any existing subcommittee. In such cases, the motion can be made to refer to a special committee. These special committees are set up for specific purposes, and they have limited lives--when they have finished their jobs and have reported back, they are disbanded. A motion to refer to a special committee should specify what the committee's purpose will be.