PART II

Getting Started

The Basic Steps for Handling Motions

What is the procedure for obtaining the floor to introduce a motion?

Before making a motion, a member must obtain the floor. To do so, the member rises (or goes to a microphone in a larger assembly or seeks recognition during an electronic meeting) and addresses the chair by title (3:30-31; 42:2). "The term *the chair* refers to the person in a meeting who is actually presiding at the time, whether that person is the regular presiding officer or not" [i.e., president, chairman, speaker, or moderator]." (47:5) The chair recognizes the member by announcing the member's name or title. In large conventions, delegates state their names and unit represented prior to speaking. Members are not required to rise in committees and smaller boards to be recognized (3:31n4; 42:2n1; 49:21).

What are the steps for handling a motion?

There are six steps for handling a main motion and other debatable motions. *Robert's* divides them into three steps for bringing forward a motion and three for considering a motion:

1. A member makes the motion by stating, "I move that . . ." (4:2-8). (Do not add the unnecessary words "I make a motion that . . .")
2. Another member seconds the motion by calling out, "Second!" (4:9-14).
3. The chair states the motion, "It is moved and seconded that . . ." (4:15-24). (Do not say "It *has been* moved and seconded"—*has been* sounds passive; while *is* is active.)
4. Members debate the motion (4:27-32).
5. The chair takes the vote (or "puts the question to a vote") (4:34-40).
6. The chair announces the result of the vote (4:41-49).

These steps may vary depending on the parliamentary situation and whether the motion is debatable, requires a vote, etc.

When a motion is open to debate, what guidelines should the chair follow in directing debate?

1. The maker of the motion is recognized first. This act is both a courtesy and allows the proposer to give reasons as to why the motion should be adopted (4:6; 4:27; 42:9).[19]
2. Members who have not yet spoken must be recognized before other members are allowed to speak a second time (3:33; 4:28). No member has the right to speak a second time until every member has had an opportunity to speak. The chair might ask, "Is there someone who wishes to speak who has not yet spoken?"
3. Debate should alternate pro and con (3:33). Language to facilitate this might be: "Since the last speaker spoke in favor of the motion, is there someone who wishes to speak in opposition?" (3:33).

How should the chair put a voice vote to the assembly?

The chair states, "Those in favor of the motion, say 'Aye.' Those opposed, say 'No'" (4:37). (*Robert's* has several alternative forms, including "All those in favor" or "All those who are in favor" or "As many as are in favor," but keep it simple with "Those in favor . . .") Some chairs make the mistake of saying "Those in favor, say 'Aye.' Opposed?" or even worse, "Those opposed, same sign," both of which will confuse members.[20]

When the chair omits the negative cue ("Those opposed, say '*No*'"), the negative votes may be voiced as a string of "No," "Aye," "No," which deprives members the opportunity to vote in unison and gives an advantage to the affirmative. (Some voters in the negative will say "No" immediately following "Opposed?" Some will wait for the cue "say 'No.'" Others will say "Aye" because they don't know what to say.) As chair be equal: *always give a similar cue such as "say aye" and "say no" for both the affirmative and negative*. "Say 'No'" may seem minor, but it is not. Members become irritated with the chair not because of major errors, but due to the sum of many little things. With a bit of preparation, the little things can be eliminated, and the delegates will return home happy. Practice