

Robert's Rules of Order is a set of parliamentary rules designed to help large or small organizations have more effective and efficient meetings. The Arizona State University Senate Constitution stipulates that the Senate will utilize these rules in their senate meetings (I.C.5). This brief guide is designed to assist all senators in participating fully in the senate and ultimately faculty shared governance.

First things first...

The ASU Faculty Senate is composed of faculty from all campuses and is considered a fairly autonomous organization. At the same time, it exists under the purview of the ASU Administration (e.g., the Provost's Office), as well as state laws, which limit some of the tools normally available in Robert's Rules. Robert's Rules also allow for individual organizational rules, traditions, and bylaws that may result in unique senate organizational processes. Members of the senate represent the entire faculty assembly (i.e., all ASU faculty).

The Agenda

Every month, senators will receive the agenda for the monthly senate meeting. The order of the agenda is set by the ASU Senate Constitution (2.C.4) in accordance with Robert's Rules. The first part of the meeting is reserved for guest speakers and sharing general information.

The next part of the agenda is "Unfinished business and general orders." This refers to actions that have been acted on previously in a meeting (such as returned to committee and brought back to the senate) or special actions (such as voting to approve a slate).

"New business" on the agenda is the heart of the meeting and getting things done. By tradition, we include "first reads" under new business. In territorial days, representatives were given first reads of laws and policies to take back to their constituents (or people who were literate and could read it to them). This would allow the representative to come back a month later and vote. We continue this tradition, which allows senators to read motions and discuss with their colleagues before acting on the motion at the next meeting. First reads are not up for action or discussion when presented.

"Second reads" are the actual business and action items of the meeting. It is at this point that senators can debate the motion, change it (if appropriate), and vote. Occasionally, senators may vote to "suspend the rules" of a first read and turn the first read into a second read action item. This happens when time is of the essence for a particular issue.

Finally, the meeting ends with reports from committees and an open forum. Because issues in open forum are not known to senators (or the general public) beforehand, open forum is meant only for information and not voting or bringing action items.

What's the Big Idea?

Here are some basic concepts to help you understand "the rules":

Motions

- **All main motions must be seconded.** Seconding a motion does not mean one agrees with it, only that one thinks it should be discussed. Most motions require a **simple majority** (abstentions do not count toward the total).
- **Motions coming from a committee** do not need to be seconded.
- Certain motions require **2/3** of the group to pass. These motions tend to be motions that limit power, such as a motion to halt debate or a motion to suspend the rules.
- **Most motions can be debated.** When debating, each member is limited in time (10 minutes) and number of times to speak (twice – once to make an initial comment and again after everyone has made an initial comment).
- During debate, **one should not "Call the question;"** rather, if one wants to halt debate, a motion should be made to halt debate.
- **Certain motions (such as those from the administration) cannot be amended. Any motion made by the senate or UAC can be amended.** Even motions to amend can be amended. Remember, when a motion is made, the motion now "belongs" to the senate and the senate can change it whatever way they want, even if it goes against the originator's intent.
- To **"lay a motion on the table"** means to temporarily **set the motion aside** to deal with unexpected business. It must be handled after the unexpected business.
- **Motions can be made to limit or extend debate.**
- **A motion to "postpone indefinitely" effectively kills the motion.** If one does not intend to kill a motion, then a motion can be made to postpone to a specific time
- **Motions that have passed or failed can be brought back in various ways for reconsideration.**

Fear the Fork



Robert's Rules of Order Helper Guide

If you want to...	You say...	Can you interrupt a speaker?	Need a second?	Debatable?	Can be amended?	Votes Needed
Introduce a main motion	"I move to..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by adding/striking/replacing..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Second a motion	"I second the motion."					Note: Seconding does not mean agreeing with the motion; it means that it should be discussed. No vote
Send a motion to a committee	"I move that this motion be sent to [committee]" state reason	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Return a motion to a committee	"I move that this motion be returned to [committee]" state reason	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Learn more information about something	"Point of information"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Extend or shorten debate	"I move that we limit/extend debate to ____" (5 minutes per person, 20 minutes, etc.)	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Overrule the chair's ruling	"I move to overrule the chair's ruling"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Point out incorrect procedure or force a rule	"Point of Order"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote; decided by chair

If you want to...	You say...	Can you interrupt a speaker?	Need a second?	Debatable?	Can be amended?	Votes Needed
Postpone a motion	"I move that we postpone this matter until _____" [give date]	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Address a personal issue (such as room temperature, noise)	"Point of privilege."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Table a motion (temporarily set motion aside to address another issue)	"I move to table motion # _____"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take up previously tabled motion	"I move to take from the table motion # _____"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Change the rules or take something out of order	"I move to suspend the rules and consider...."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3

Want to add or change something? Contact Denise Bodman, Parliamentarian, dbodman@asu.edu.