

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary law is an orderly set of rules for conducting meetings of organized groups for the purpose of accomplishing their goals fairly.

Principles of parliamentary law are:

- Justice and courtesy to all
- Rights of the minority protected;
- Rule of the majority reflected
- Partiality to none
- Consideration of one subject at a time.
- *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, is the parliamentary text that governs the PTA where the PTA bylaws do not apply. The California State PTA Bylaws and Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units always take precedence over Robert's Rules of Order.

A parliamentarian can assist the president when questions of procedure arise. If a parliamentarian is not appointed and ratified, the president should appoint one (pro tem) for each meeting to assist the president in conducting an orderly meeting.

TERMINOLOGY

- **Bylaws** – The bylaws are specific rules that govern a unit, council or district. They are the “Articles of Organization”. They may not be set aside, waived or suspended, even by a unanimous vote. Upon discovery of such action, the action may be declared null and void. All PTA bylaws have specified sections in common. Any change in bylaws requires a review by the state Parliamentarian, followed by a 30-day written notice and a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership.
- **Chairman** – The presiding officer
- **Majority vote** – More than one-half (1/2) of votes cast
- **Motion** – A formal proposal made to bring a subject before an assembly for discussion and vote

- Quorum – The number of members that must be present at a meeting, as set forth in the bylaws, in order legally to conduct business
- Standing Rules – Rules outlining procedures of the organization that are not included in the bylaws and that do not restate or conflict with the bylaws. They may be amended at any time by a two-thirds (2/3) vote or, if written notice has been given, by a majority vote.

EIGHT STEPS TO MAKING A MOTION

A motion to take action is introduced by a member, seconded, discussed and is voted upon. Only those who have been members for at least 30 days are allowed to make motions, discuss and vote. The eight steps to making a motion are:

1. Member stands and waits to be recognized.
2. Chairman recognizes the member.
3. The member presents the motion by stating, “I move...” (The secretary records the exact wording of the motion once there is a second.)
4. Another member seconds the motion. This shows that more than one person is interested in bringing the business before the group for discussion. (If there is no second, there is no motion and nothing is recorded in the minutes.)
5. The chairman restates the motion. This ensures all members understand what is to be discussed.
6. Discussion is held on the motion. During discussion, all members participate fully, but not until they have been recognized by the chairman.
7. The chairman puts the motion to a vote by stating, “All those in favor say ‘aye.’” (Pause for vote) “Those opposed say ‘no.’” (The chairman may restate the motion before taking the vote.)
8. The chairman announces the result of the vote to assure all members know whether the motion was adopted or defeated.

AMENDMENTS

An amendment is a way to change a motion already on the floor before a vote is taken on the motion. It may be amended by:

- Inserting or adding words
- Striking words
- Striking words and inserting others
- Substituting one paragraph or resolution for another.

Examples:

Main motion: “I move we have a parenting program at the park.”

Inserting: “I move to amend the motion by adding ‘in October’ after ‘program’ [effect of amendment if adopted: “I move we have a parenting program in October at the park.”]

Striking: “I move to amend the motion by striking “at the park” [effect of amendment if adopted: “I move we have a parenting program in October.”]

Striking and inserting: “I move to amend the motion by striking ‘October’ and inserting ‘November on the school grounds’ [effect of amendment if adopted: “I move that we have a parenting program in November on the school grounds.”]

Substituting: “I move to substitute the following for the motion on the floor: ‘that we have an ice cream social’.” [Effect of amendment if adopted: “I move that we have an ice cream social.”]

MOTION LANGUAGE

Almost every motion begins with the simple words “I move....” To accomplish other types of motions follow the [PTA motion chart](#) adapted from Roberts Rules of Order.

FAQ'S

Here are some short answers to commonly asked questions. For more detail, please consult the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Latest Edition, or In Brief*.

Q: Do I have to stand to make a motion?

A: In a small group, it's okay just to raise your hand, but in a large group, it's

easier to get the chairman's attention if you stand, and also easier for the group to hear your motion.

Q: What's the proper way to make a motion?

A: The proper form is to say, "I move..." or "I move to..." or "I move that..."

Examples: "I move approval of the program committee's recommendations." "I move to adopt the audit report." "I move that we hold a sea life assembly."

Note that they all begin with "I move."

Q: What does "lay on the table" mean?

A: This is a motion to temporarily stop the business at hand in order to deal with something that has some urgency. Example: Your principal can only be at your meeting for a few minutes because of a prior commitment, but would like to give an update to your members. When the principal arrives, the chairman entertains a motion to lay the current item on the table so that the principal may speak. (The president can also ask for consensus: "If there is no objection, we will lay this item on the table to allow the principal time to speak.") Once the principal is done, the chairman entertains a motion to take the item of business from the table, and the regular progress of the meeting resumes.

Q: What if I want to wait until the next meeting to consider an item of business?

A: The motion that makes this possible is a motion to postpone ("I move to postpone this item until the next meeting.") See Robert's Rules for a chart of motions or the [PTA motion chart](#).

Q: What is a consensus vote?

A: Consensus votes happen when the chairman says: "If there is no objection..." Example: "If there is no objection, we will extend debate on this item for five more minutes." If any member objects, then there must be a formal motion and vote. Another common consensus item is the approval of the minutes: "If there are no corrections, the minutes stand approved as printed" has the same effect as a motion to approve the minutes as printed. Is there a question you'd like to ask? Send it to parliamentarian@capta.org.