

Office of the Hunter College Senate  
**"Abriss" of Parliamentary Procedures**  
 (Based on *Robert's Rules Revised*)

This is a very condensed outline of prevailing parliamentary procedures. They exist so as (a) to enable an assembly to find its opinion on a given matter in order fashion, and (b) to protect each member's right to participate in this process under established rules of order.

<b>Main Motions</b>	<p>A member may move (propose) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Action proper to the jurisdiction of the assembly be taken;</li> <li>b. A recommendation be made to appropriate higher authorities;</li> <li>c. A resolution be adopted expressing the sense of the assembly on a given issue.</li> </ol> <p>As soon as seconded and stated by the Chair, such motions become the property of the assembly for debate and suitable disposal. A majority vote (of those voting on the issue) decides.</p>
<b>Debate</b>	<p>The bylaws of the assembly usually prescribe how long and how often a member may speak to the question. No one can speak a second time so long as anyone who has not yet spoken on the question desires the floor. A Hunter College Senate resolution (1972) limits speaking time on any one motion to two minutes per speaker (with the exception of the chair of the committees).</p>
<b>Secondary Motions</b>	<p>Once a main motion is before the assembly, the following secondary motions are proper and take precedence of a vote on the main motion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b><u>Motion to Amend</u></b> (the main question) by inserting, striking out, or substituting; it requires a second; majority vote decides. While an amendment (to the main question) is being considered, this amendment itself may be amended (<b><u>Motion to Amend the Amendment</u></b>), but such an "amendment of an amendment" cannot be amended. Any number of amendments (to the main question) may be moved in succession.</li> <li>b. <b><u>Motions to Postpone</u></b>, in three variations, each requiring second and majority vote, as follows:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Postpone Indefinitely</u></b> may be moved only while a main motion is being debated; while other secondary motions to the main motion (such as amendments) are pending, it is out of order. As soon as such secondary motions are disposed of, it is again in order, and takes precedence of the main motion. The <i>Motion to Postpone Indefinitely</i> can be debated but cannot be amended; if carried, it suppresses the main motion with all that adheres to it.</li> <li>2. <b><u>Refer to Committee</u></b> may be moved even while such secondary motions as to amend or to postpone indefinitely are pending, and takes precedence of them; if the main question arises out of a committee report, it is known as <b><u>Motion to Recommit</u></b>. This motion can be debated and amended.</li> <li>3. <b><u>Postpone Definitely</u></b> may be moved even while other secondary motions (such as <i>to postpone indefinitely, to amend, to refer or recommit</i>) are pending, and takes precedence of them. The postponement should be to a later time, or to the next session, or until after a certain event. It is debatable and can be amended. If carried, it becomes a general order of the meeting to which it is postponed. It can be made a special order of the meeting to which it is postponed by two-thirds vote (if, for example, it is to be taken up as the first item on the agenda).</li> </ol> </li> <li>c. <b><u>Motion to Limit Debate</u></b> requires a second and a two-thirds vote (of those voting on this motion). It is not debatable but may be amended by majority vote. It outranks all motions <u>except</u> <i>Previous Question, Suspend the Rules</i> and <i>Lay on the Table</i>.</li> <li>d. <b><u>Moving the Previous Question</u></b> is parliamentary jargon for shutting off debate, requires a second and a two-thirds vote. The motion cannot be debated or amended and, if seconded, must be put to a vote at once. If carried, it leads immediately to a vote on the question before the assembly; if lost, debate, amendments, etc. continue as before.</li> <li>e. <b><u>Motion to Lay on the Table</u></b> is strictly an emergency measure for clearing the docket temporarily; since it implies that the tabled question will be taken up again at a later time, it permits a mere majority vote to stop debate. If seconded, it must be put to a vote at once, since it is undebatable and cannot be amended. It should not be used to dispose of questions (see <i>Motions to Postpone</i> for this). It outranks all other secondary motions.</li> </ol>

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<b>Other Motions</b>	<p><b><u>Suspension of the Rules</u></b> is moved when an assembly wishes to do something that is normally not possible without violating its constitution (e.g., admitting outsiders to the assembly), its normal procedures (e.g., taking up a question for adoption without debate), or its order of business (e.g., taking items up out of proper order). Unless unanimous consent is given, the motion requires a second and a two-thirds vote (of those voting on the motion). The motion must specify the object of the suspension (e.g., admitting outsiders, etc.); it is undebatable and cannot be amended. It outranks all secondary motions except <i>Lay on the Table</i>.</p> <p><b><u>Motion To Take from the Table</u></b> is the converse of <i>Motion to Table</i>. Undebatable, no amendments. Precedence over main motions. Second, and majority vote.</p> <p><b><u>Motion to Reconsider</u></b> is a way of (a) stopping all action under an order made, and (b) bringing such an order before the assembly as though no vote had been taken. (It is supposed to be made only by one who voted with the prevailing side on the motion to be reconsidered, but this is actually ascertainable only if the previous vote was by roll call; if it was not, there is either a tacit assumption that the mover voted with the prevailing side, or the right to move to reconsider is given to any member regardless of whether he voted with the majority or not.) Any member may second it. The mover may interrupt another member having the floor at the time, but the motion to reconsider does not interrupt debate, etc. when another question is pending. Once the pending business is disposed of, the <i>Motion to Reconsider</i> has preference over all other main motions. If called up and supported by majority vote, it brings the vote to be reconsidered to the floor. It can be made only on the day the vote to be reconsidered was taken, or at the next session. It can be debated only if the question to be reconsidered was debatable; it cannot be amended.</p> <p><b><u>Motion to Rescind, or Repeal, or Annul</u></b> is used when the <i>Motion to Reconsider</i> cannot be used; it requires a second, and a two-thirds vote, but if previous notice was given in the call for the meeting, a majority vote decides. It is improper if action taken under the vote to be rescinded cannot be undone by the assembly.</p> <p><b><u>Additional (so-called) Privileged and Incidental Motions</u></b> are semi-emergency motions such as asking for information, making a point of order, objecting to the consideration of a question, dividing the question, division of the assembly, and others. Most of them have authority to interrupt and require no second. Appeals from the decision of the Chair on questions of order must be seconded and are resolved by majority vote.</p>
<b>Renewal</b>	<p>All secondary motions except <i>Postpone Indefinitely</i> are renewable. <i>Motion to Rescind</i> may not be renewed until the next meeting. Main motions, if defeated, may not be renewed until second session following.</p>
<b>Voting</b>	<p>Unless otherwise prescribed in by-laws, voting is by voice, by show of hands or by rising. If the vote was taken by voice or by show of hands, any member may call for a <b>Division of the Assembly</b> by having the affirmative rise, and then the negative, so that all may see how members vote. A member may call for a count of the vote, or for a roll call vote, or for a ballot vote; if seconded, a majority vote orders it.</p>