

Parliamentary Procedure - Learning the Basics



Welcome to PA DeMolay's Parliamentary Procedure resource document!

This article will be helpful to Chapter Master Councilors, Advisory Council Chairman, Chevalier Court Commanders, LOH Preceptory Deans, or any presiding officer of any organization, DeMolay or otherwise.

These pages will teach you how to use major motions and other parliamentary procedure items that will help you run a fair and efficient business meeting.

What is Parliamentary Procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is a method for conducting a business meeting using an organized system of motions and rules. The system establishes who may speak and when, how topics may be presented for decision, how to come to consensus on a topic, what kind of votes are needed for various decisions, and other similar issues.

The most commonly used system of parliamentary procedure (at least in the U.S.) is the one outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order*, introduced in the late 1800's by General Henry M. Robert of the U.S. Army. Robert wished to make the rules of procedure used in the U.S. Congress available to other organizations. Copies of his full rules are readily available in a local library or bookstore.

The term "parliamentary procedure" is used because these systems of rules are largely patterned on those developed to govern the English Parliament, many years ago.

Why Parliamentary Procedure?

Using parliamentary procedure can be, at first, a confusing task. So why bother with it? A standard system of rules of order, when properly used, accomplishes several things:

- It provides an *opportunity for every member* of the organization to have their opinion heard and considered, and ensures that all who are entitled to a part in the decision making process get that part.
- It helps to maintain an *organized and efficient* way of conducting business. Properly used, a meeting run by rules of order can run much faster, while still completing all necessary work, than one run less formally.
- It *prevents* one person or group of people from *unfairly controlling* the decision making process against the will of the majority. It enables the presiding officer to LEAD the group without RULING the group.

Who Should Learn Parliamentary Procedure?

Anyone involved in an organization that runs its meetings by rules of order will find a basic knowledge of parliamentary procedure helpful. It is particularly important for any presiding officer to have a working knowledge of the system.

Some organizations make use of a "Parliamentarian." This officer's job is simply to be handy with the system of procedure, to have access to the detailed rules of order, and to advise the organization on proper procedure in any given decision.

Motions

Much of parliamentary procedure involves a series of "motions." These are points of action introduced by a member and (usually) voted on by the group.

Most motions, to become a decision of the group, must be made by a **voting member**, **seconded**, **debated** and **amended** if needed, and approved by a **vote**.

The language used to make a motion is usually "***I move ...***" or "***I make a motion to ...***" **Don't** say "***I motion that ...***" -you're probably not "*motioning*" anything, unless you're playing charades or directing traffic. Motions may generally be made and seconded by any voting member of the group, except the presiding officer. A presiding officer may "***entertain***" (request) a motion to be made, but may not introduce a motion himself.

The **chart of motions**, also available in the Resources section of www.pademolay.org will be helpful while learning Parliamentary Procedure.