

# Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

## CLASSIFICATION OF MOTIONS

### 1. MAIN

- Brings business before the assembly
- Is in order only when no other business is pending
- Has the lowest precedence

### 2. SUBSIDIARY

- Assist the assembly in the treating and disposing of main motions
- Examples
  - Postpone indefinitely
  - Amend
  - Reference: Postpone to a certain time
  - Limit or extend debate
  - Previous question
  - Lay on the table

### 3. PRIVILEGED

- Have to do with special matters of immediate and overriding importance, which should be allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else
- Examples
  - Fix the time to which to adjourn
  - Adjourn
  - Recess
  - Raise a question of privilege
  - Call for orders of the day

### 4. INCIDENTAL

- Deals with questions of procedures arising out of other pending motions or items of business
- Examples
  - Point of order
  - Appeal
  - Suspend the rules
  - Division of the assembly
  - Point of information
  - Point of privilege

## AMENDMENTS

1. Must be decided before you can vote on the main motion (precedence)
2. Must be germane
3. Are debatable, but debate must pertain to the amendment, not the main motion
4. Requires a majority vote even if the main motion requires a 2/3 vote.

5. Amendments may be amended.
6. May be made informally by the proposer of the motion IF there are no objections.
7. Proper wording:
  - To insert or add
  - To strike out
  - To strike out and insert
  - To substitute

### PREVIOUS QUESTION

- Say, "I move the previous question."
- Means to end debate immediately and vote on the impending motion
- Is not debatable or amendable
- Requires a 2/3 vote under Robert's Rules and a majority under Mason's\*\*
- If passed, you must vote on the pending question immediately.

### POINT OF ORDER

- May interrupt speaker
- Does NOT require a second
- Is not debatable
- Purpose is to correct a breach of rules
- Example:

Someone begins to debate whether the previous question should be called. Say, "Point of order." You may have to repeat until you gain the attention of the chair. State, "The previous question is not debatable." You have now explained why the action is out of order.

### PRINCIPLES OF DEBATE

- The proposer of the motion or bill should speak first or be given the first opportunity.
- Debate should alternate back and forth between Pro and Con.
- No person should speak twice on the same question as long as there are members who have NOT spoken AND who desire the opportunity to do so.
- Debate should be confined to the merits of the pending question. Leave personalities and personal remarks out of the debate! Direct comments to issues and ideas, not at an individual.

### MOST MOTIONS

Require a second

Cannot interrupt a speaker (Exceptions: point of order, point of information, point of privilege)

Require a majority vote. Almost all motions under Mason's require a simple majority. However, under Robert's Rules of Order, motions which place limitations on debate (previous question,

close nominations, extend debate, and limit debate) and motions which change standard procedures (suspend rules, amend constitutions or by-laws, rescind, and reconsider) require a 2/3's majority.

\*\*The Michigan Legislature and Michigan Youth In Government use Mason's Rules of Order.

#### TIPS FOR RUNNING A MEETING

1. Know how to quickly find a ruling. (You don't need to memorize all the rules!)
2. Rule with confidence. (Even wrong rulings work!)
3. Don't be afraid to correct errors. (Use common sense.)
4. Remember the BASICS. (If in doubt, get a second, don't interrupt, and go with the majority rule.)