

Appendix 1 to GSA By-Laws

Roberts Rules of Order - Summary

1 TEN FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF PROCEDURE

- a. Principles
 - i the right of the majority to decide
 - ii the right of the minority to be heard
 - iii the right of individual members
 - iv the right of absentees
- b. All members are equal and their rights are equal. These rights are:
 - i to attend meetings
 - ii to make motions and speak in debate
 - iii to nominate
 - iv to vote
 - v to hold office
- c. The rights of GSA supersede the rights of individual members; should a conflict arise between the rights of the GSA and the rights of a member, the rights of GSA prevail.
- d. A quorum must be present to do business: a majority of members must be present in order to prevent an unrepresentative group from taking action in the name of GSA. Therefore it is imperative that Council members attend every meeting.
- e. Majority rules: this is basic to the democratic process. Once a decision has been reached by the majority of members present and voting, the minority must respect and abide by the decision.
- f. Silence is consent: Those who do not vote agree to go along with the majority vote by their silence.
- g. Two-thirds rule: applies usually for votes that change something.
- h. One question at a time and one speaker at a time: only one speaker recognized by the Chair has "the floor" without interruption and no motion is in order if it does not directly relate to the question under consideration.
- i. Debatable motions must receive full debate: motions will continue to be debated by members who wish to do so. A debate can also be ended if the Chair has put the question to a vote or it is suspended by a two-third vote of members present.
- j. Personal remarks in debate are always out of order: Debate must be directed to motions and not motives; principles and not personalities. Not complying with this rule may lead to ejection from the meeting.

2 MOTIONS

a. Main Motions

A main motion is defined as a proposal that certain action be taken or an opinion be expressed by the group. Main motions allow the GSA to do its work. They are the decisions to spend money, adopt projects, make procedural changes, etc.

- i All main motions must be submitted to the office manager at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- ii A main motion brought toward the GSA will be read to the Council by the chair.
- iii A main motion must be seconded in order to proceed to presentation and/or debate.
- iv People presenting the motion may make a short presentation outlining the action, event, or business.
- v Debate is held. Anyone with an opinion or question to the presenters must raise their hand in order to speak. The Chair recognizes members who wish to speak by stating their name. In the case of multiple speakers, a cue will be established by the Chair.
- vi In the case that debate becomes circular, members are encouraged to raise their hand in the air making a circle with the thumb and forefinger and raising the remaining three fingers. This signifies that the member believes that a point has been stated too many times just in different ways or that an established argument has not been supported by any new ideas or evidence. If the Chair feels that enough of these ‘zeros’ are being held up, he/she may limit or close debate.
- vii Debate should continue as long as members wish to discuss the question unless the chair has put the question to a vote or secondary motions have been adopted to either limit or close debate
- viii When a main motion is put to question, the chair again restates the motion. Voting members are instructed to raise their hand when those in favour, opposition, or abstention are called by the chair.
- Ix Voting results are counted by the chair and the decision on the main motion is announced to the Council.

b. Secondary Motions

A secondary motion is one that can be made while the main motion is on the floor and before it has been decided. There is a common misconception that the Council cannot have two motions on the floor at the same time. More than one motion can be on the floor but only one question. All pending motions must relate to the main motion on the floor, no new business may be introduced.

Secondary motions have rank among each other. They are arranged in a specific order in which they must be considered and acted upon, some motions taking precedence over others. The purpose is to avoid confusion when they are applied to a main motion. A motion of higher rank can be made at the time that a motion of lower rank is on the floor.

THE RANKS OF SECONDARY MOTIONS

- i Call to question
- ii Limit or extend limits to debate
- iii Postpone to a specific time
- iv Commit or refer

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v Amend

vi Main motion

Rank can be symbolized by the rungs of a ladder. Those motions on the lower rungs must yield to the motions on the rung or rungs above. For instance, call to question (to call for an immediate vote) takes precedence over all motions below it. All secondary motions must be seconded and are debatable.

3 WHAT DO I SAY?

Secondary motions arranged from lowest to highest rank:

a Amend

Amend is the most frequently used and most important of the secondary motions. There are three ways to amend a motion:

i To add words or phrases.

ii To strike out words or phrases.

iii To substitute by striking out and inserting words substituting an entire motion or paragraph.

The first speakers to respond to a proposed amendment are the presenter or presenters of the main motion. If they choose to adopt the amendment, it is deemed friendly and does not need to be voted upon and the main motion has changed. The Chair must then read the new main motion on the floor. If the presenter(s) do not choose to adopt the amendment, it is deemed unfriendly or hostile, and the chair must hold a vote to adopt it. Any prior debate on the unfriendly amendment is acceptable.

b Commit

To commit a motion sends the question on the floor to a small number of people so that it can be carefully studied and put into proper form for the Council to consider. This is a very useful motion when all the facts may not be known. It prevents long and pointless debate and protects the Council from making a poor decision. The motion should include specific directions as to where the questions should go.

c Postpone

The motion to postpone delays action on a question until later in the same meeting or until another specified meeting. This motion is useful when information regarding the pending motion will be available at a later time, a member realizes his or her delegation is not present for the vote, or it is time for recess or adjournment.

d Limit Debate

Limit debate is the motion by which the Council can exercise special control over the debate by:

i Reducing the number and length of speeches allowed.

ii Requiring that debate be limited to a period of time, at the end of which, the vote must be taken.

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e Call to Question

Call to question is the motion used to cut off debate and to bring the group to an immediate vote on the pending motion. This motion can be ruled out of order by the chair if the motion is debatable and has received debate.