

San Diego State University Senate: Quick Reference Guide for Actions & Voting

Robert's Rules of Order – Simplified

New Revised 12th Edition (2020)

Guiding Principles:

- Everyone has the right to participate in discussion if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- Only one thing (motion) can be discussed at a time.

To protect decorum, members are not allowed to carry on discussion directly with one another (33.9, p. 434). Further, all remarks need to be addressed through the Chair: “Members of an assembly cannot address one another directly, but must address all remarks through the chair. If, while a member is speaking in debate, another member wishes to address a question to him—which the person speaking can permit or not as he chooses, but which is taken out of his time if he does—the member desiring to ask the question rises and addresses the chair, proceeding as explained under Request for Information” (43:22, p. 561 and 33:6–10, p. 433).

IMPORTANT NOTE: *During debate, during remarks by the presiding officer to the assembly, and during voting, no member should be permitted to disturb the assembly by whispering, walking across the floor, or in any other way (e.g. online chat).* The key words here are: disturb the assembly. The presiding officer should watch that such activity does not disturb the meeting or hamper the transaction of business. (43:28, p. 561).

A motion is the topic under discussion (e.g., “I move that we add a coffee break to this meeting”). After being recognized by the Chair, any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table. A motion requires a second to be considered, *except agendas, minutes and items from committees which do not require a second.* If there is no second the matter is not considered. Each motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely).

How to do things:

- You want to **bring up a new idea** before the group.
After recognition by the Chair, present your motion. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for discussion, or consideration.
- You want to **change some of the wording** in a motion under discussion.

After recognition by the Chair, move to amend by

- *adding words,*
 - *striking words or*
 - *striking and inserting words.*
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- **You like the idea of a motion being discussed, but you need to reword it beyond simple word changes.** *Move to substitute your motion for the original motion. If it is seconded, discussion will continue on both motions and eventually the body will vote on which motion they prefer.*
 - You want **more study and/or investigation given to the idea being discussed.** *Move to refer to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee.*
 - You want **more time personally to study the proposal being discussed.** *Move to postpone to a definite time or date.*
 - You are **tired of the current discussion.** *Move to limit debate to a set period of time or to a set number of speakers. Requires a 2/3rds vote.*
 - You have **heard enough discussion.** *Move to close the debate. Also referred to as calling the question. This cuts off discussion and brings the assembly to a vote on the pending question only. Requires a 2/3rds vote.*
 - You want to **postpone a motion until some later time.** *Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3rds vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.*
 - You believe **the discussion has drifted away from the agenda and want to bring it back.** *Say, "I call for orders of the day."*
 - You want to **take a short break.** *Move to recess for a set period of time.*
 - You want to **end the meeting.** *Move to adjourn.*
 - You are **unsure the Chair announced the results of a vote correctly.** *Without being recognized, call for a "division of the house." A roll call vote will then be taken.*

- You are **confused about a procedure being used and want clarification.** *Without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The Chair will recognize you and ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.*

You have **changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side.**

Move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred

- You want to **change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.** *Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, a 2/3rds vote is required.*

Unanimous Consent: *If a matter is considered relatively minor or opposition is not expected, a call for unanimous consent may be requested. If the request is made by others, the Chair will repeat the request and then pause for objections. If none are heard, the motion passes.*

You may INTERRUPT a speaker for these reasons only:

- to get information about business –point of information to get information about
- rules– parliamentary inquiry
- if you can't hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. –question of privilege
- if you see a breach of the rules –point of order
- if you disagree with the president of the board's ruling –appeal
- if you disagree with a call for Unanimous Consent –object

Established SDSU Senate Practices:

Time for Debate: While Robert's Rules limits debate to two speeches, no longer than 10 minutes, it also suggests that time should vary to suit circumstances, SDSU Senate Practices have limited debate to no more than 2-3 minutes due to the large amount of business that needs to be covered at each meeting. The time, however, can be increased or diminished by a two-thirds vote.

Order of Agenda Items: SDSU Senate practice has been to prioritize important items of business before information and time certain agenda items.

MOTION, VOTING PROCEDURE/PRACTICE
add roll call vote

Action	Must be Seconded	Open for Discussion	Can be Amended	May be Reconsidered or Rescinded	RRO Vote Requirement	SDSU Practice Vote Requirement
Main Motion*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority**	Majority**
Amend Motion	Y	Y	N	Y	Majority	Majority
Kill a Motion	Y	N	N	Y	Majority	Majority
Limit or End Debate	Y	N	Y	Y	2/3rds	2/3rds
Close Discussion	Y	N	N	Y	2/3rds	2/3rds
Recess	Y	N	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Adjourn (End meeting)	Y	N	N	Y	Majority	Majority
Refer to Committee	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Postpone to a later time	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Table	Y	N	N	Y	Majority	Majority
Postpone Indefinitely	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Action Item from a Committee	N	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Other Action Item	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Informational Item	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Resolution	Y	Y	Y	Y	Majority	Majority
Roll Call Vote						

*If the main motion includes a change to the Bylaws, a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote is required. **All exceptions to the majority vote rule are documented in the [SDSU Senate Policy File Voting Notes document](#)