

# Essentials of Robert's Rules

For Miami Senators

AAUP Miami  
August 3, 2020

# Essentials of Roberts Rules: Agenda

- I. Discuss basics of Roberts Rules and how they apply in Miami Senate
- II. Optional if time: Practice Session



*I move to rename Webex  
"WebExit" so we can all leave as  
soon as the meeting starts*

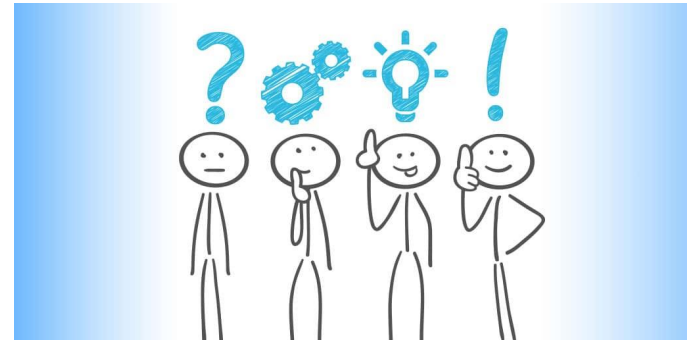
# Message from Provost and Executive Committee

"Senators, on behalf of the Senate Executive Committee, I hope that you find today's AAUP session instructive and beneficial for your work as a Senator. Please remember, as well, that the Senate Retreat is this coming Friday (9-12 via WebEx Teams), which will include a 'Senate 101' session. This session will address a number of procedural norms that our Senate follows and we hope it will be useful to everyone. Stay well, James" (August 3, 2020)

Please RSVP for the retreat here: <https://forms.gle/yqmwiqbTWrTazK9d6>

# Resources

- Senate Vice-Chair/Exec Chair (Dana or James)
- Parliamentarian (Rob Withers)
- [Senate Documents](#): Standing Rules, Bylaws, & Enabling Act
- [Miami University Senate FAQ](#)
- [Essentials of Robert's Rules](#) (these slides)
- [Robert's Rules Quick Reference](#) (1 page)
- AAUP: ["How Does Senate at Miami Work?"](#)
- AAUP [Shared Governance](#) Page



# Why do we use Robert's Rules?

Robert's Rules of Order were developed to ensure that meetings are fair, efficient, democratic and orderly. A skilled chairperson allows all members to voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard.

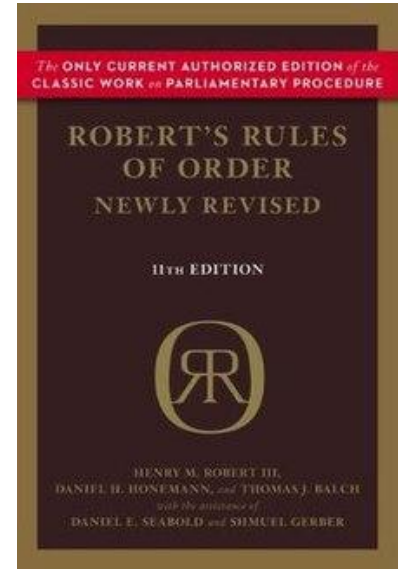


# Should I get a copy of the Rules?

This presentation relies on the complete version of the rules—

Robert, General Henry M. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised 11th Ed.* Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011.  
(12th edition to be published in September of 2020)

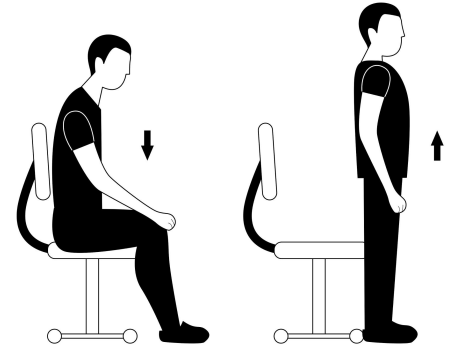
But the complete rules are more than most senators will need. We recommend senators obtain a copy of a shorter guide. Here's a one-page quick reference.



# Should I read the Senate documents?

Yes, at least skim the Standing Rules, Enabling Act and Bylaws.

Pay special attention to the sections on Meeting Procedures and Legislative Procedures and the material on Faculty Assembly, which explains how Senate decisions may be appealed.



A senator learns  
the Standing Rules

# How do items get on the floor for discussion?

Agenda is decided by Exec.

Typically includes

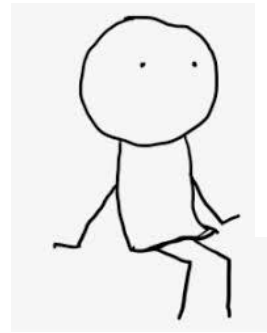
- Minutes
- Consent calendar
- Old (unfinished) business
- *New business*
- Report from Exec Committee



*Senate theme song*



# Should I read the agenda?



**Yes! ASAP. Why?**

- 1) To seek feedback from constituents (draw their attention to important items)
- 2) To make sure the minutes accurately report the last meeting
- 3) To check consent calendar for items that might need pulling off for discussion

# How does new business come before Senate?

Typically, Executive Committee decides on new business – reports, announcements, or topics for discussion and/or vote.

New business turns into old business when it is not completed by the end of a meeting.



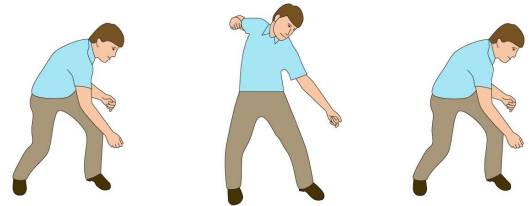
*...watching new business  
turn into old business*

# Can *I* propose new business for Senate?

Yes. You can make a “main motion” to bring new topics before Senate. Move...

- a new topic, usually in the form of a resolution (a formal written motion)
- to hear a report from a committee
- to consider recommendations made in a report

See [University Senate FAQ](#) for a good description of making a motion.



# New items you propose for discussion (= main motions)

- Can be moved by resolution or when no other business occupies the floor
- Require a second
- Are debatable
- Are amendable
- Require majority vote
- Can be reconsidered



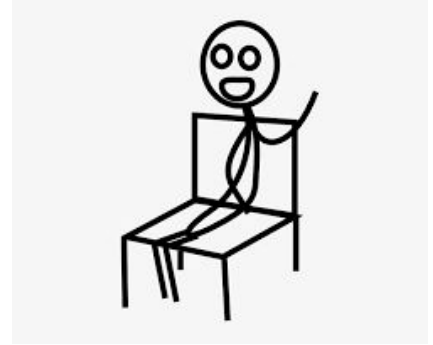
# How do I propose new business?

I.e., “How do I make a main motion?”

Submit a resolution to Executive Committee or move  
It from the floor.\*

Exec *may* refer it to committee for a recommendation, then put the recommendation on the agenda for senate. At times Exec may put the resolution directly on the agenda. (Standing Rules)

\*You can move a main motion only when there is no other business under consideration.



# Can I introduce a main motion from the floor?

...rather than through a resolution? Yes, you can:

- **move new business** if nothing else is under consideration  
OR if the motion is germane to an item on the agenda (for instance, relevant to a report being given)



- **“suspend the rules”**: can be used to interrupt the scheduled agenda and introduce a main motion from the floor. Must be seconded and voted on with a two-thirds vote. Use only if you have a very good reason.

*Example:* “I move to suspend the rules and [propose a new motion/reopen discussion of resolution X, which was tabled at the last meeting].”

(33, 260)

# If I make a motion, will it be debated?

Making a motion — whether in the form of a resolution or a motion from the floor — *does not guarantee* it will be discussed.



A motion needs to be

- **Seconded**, ensuring that more than one person believes it should be discussed
- **Stated by the chair**, so that everyone knows what's being considered

→ *Make your motion concise and unambiguous.*

(102–103)

# I submitted a resolution. When will it be debated by Senate?

Ask Exec to let you know.



Be aware that **Exec** can decide *not* to refer your motion to committee, and/or not to put it on the agenda. (Standing Rules).

This filtering process protects Senate from wasting time on irrelevant or inappropriate motions. It may also allow Exec members to keep controversial issues off the floor.



# Will Senate hear about my resolution?



Executive Committee must “report regularly to Senate concerning matters which it has referred to committees, as well as other actions taken which are pertinent to Senate.”

(Standing Rules)

*Question for senators:*

Should Executive Committee inform you about proposals it has decided not to refer to committee/put on the agenda?

# What other motions can I make?

“Subsidiary motions” regarding the main motion/  
resolution:

- **“Postpone to a certain time”**: perhaps until some news or info arrives, or to await another decision Senate is making
- **“Postpone indefinitely”**: kills a motion
- **“Refer to committee”**: for items that need more thought
- **“Table”**: defers discussion to enable time to discuss something else

-> *Cannot be moved when another member has floor.*

-> *All require a second and a majority vote.*



(62-64)

# What other motions can I make? (*cont.*)

- **“Call the question”**: motion to end debate and vote (aka “call the previous question.” Requires a second and a two-thirds vote—or, chair may ask body if there are objections to ending debate, and if not, a vote on the “call the question” motion can be skipped.  
→ *Avoid abusing “call the question” by trying to end debate before others seem ready.*
- **“Adjourn”**: requires no second, only voice vote.



# Moving to amend

You can propose significant or minor changes to resolutions/main motions. **Amendments....**



- May be introduced from the floor or submitted to Exec
- Must be germane (relevant)
- Require a second
- Should be stated by chair
- May be debated
- Voted on separately from main motion
- Can be amended; amendments to amendments require a second and a separate vote

(130–133)

# “Friendly amendments”



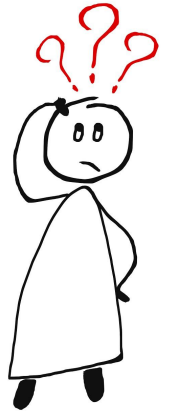
If you **move to amend a motion** and the mover agrees, the mover can say “*If there are no objections, I will accept the change as a ‘friendly amendment.’*”

It is important that the mover find out whether there are objections before accepting the “friendly amendment.” Once on the floor, motions belong to the whole body and require a vote, unless adopted by “unanimous consent” (= no objections).

# Motions that can be used at any time

Essential to know. Use if necessary. Just interrupt: *you do not need to be recognized by the chair.*

- **“Point of information”** when you’re lost
- **“Parliamentary Inquiry”** when you suspect a rules error
- **“Point of order”** if the meeting has strayed from the rules



→ *If the meeting is proceeding fairly and without confusion, there is no need to interrupt business to point out a minor breach of the rules.*

(72, 247)

# Motions that can be used at any time during discussion: Details

*These motions are very important to know. They exist to ensure everyone understands what is happening and that discussion is proceeding fairly and according to the rules. You do not need to be recognized by the chair to use them—just call out—but to avoid wasting time, use them only when necessary.*

**Point of information:** When you do not understand what is happening (for instance, you are not sure what you are voting on).

**Parliamentary Inquiry:** When you suspect that the rules may have been breached, but you're not sure. The chair will clarify or refer the question to our parliamentarian, Rob Withers.

**Point of order:** When you think the rules have been broken. Must speak up at the time the rule is broken. For instance, if a motion does not receive a second and it seems discussion is commencing anyway, you may interrupt discussion to say “Point of order” and you will be recognized (you do not need to be recognized first, or raise your hand). Then you explain the problem (“The motion has not been seconded”) and the chair can decide whether the problem needs to be corrected. This rule is to ensure discussion is fair. So there is no need to apply it when a small slip in the rules has taken place that will not affect fairness.

# If a resolution is approved by Senate, is it now Miami “law”?

**No.** The Board of Trustees will decide on whether or not resolutions are approved at its next meeting.

But because the Board of Trustees delegates curriculum, programs, and course offerings decisions to Senate, resolutions on those matters can be assumed effectively approved upon Senate vote. (Enabling Act)

*Resolutions about anything else are “advisory” and are called “Sense of the Senate” resolutions.*



# If a resolution is approved by Senate, is it now Miami “law”? (*cont.*)

No. By Ohio law, the Board of Trustees has deciding power over all aspects of the university. *If* the Board considers your motion, it may decide against it or decide to approve only part of it..

Your motion may be received by the Board without being discussed or voted on. Check the minutes of the next meeting of the Board of Trustees to see whether the Board discussed your motion.



....or maybe not.

# Chair of Senate

**Chair of Senate:** At Miami, Provost. Has relinquished chair to Vice-Chair. (A Provost serving as Chair of Senate is very unusual; so is having a University Senate rather than Faculty Council/Faculty Senate.)

**Vice-chair (Exec Chair):** At Miami, presides over discussion in Chair's stead.



# Debate

- Members should address comments toward chair & always be courteous



*These senators should be addressing their smart comments to the Chair*

- All members who wish to speak should be allowed to speak before a member speaks a second time

# Debate

## Presiding officer (at Miami, Vice-chair)

- Maintains appearance of impartiality. Endeavors to seek speakers on both sides of question.
- If presiding officer wishes to express an opinion on a debate, they must relinquish the chair. Officer of next rank takes chair until vote has been taken.
- A Senate Chair who has relinquished chair permanently (e.g., our Provost) participates in debate as other regular members do—though will likely be turned to with questions more often than other members.



## *Parliamentary Motions Guide*

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)*

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2 <sup>ND</sup> ?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§21 Close meeting	I move to <b>adjourn</b>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20 Take break	I move to <b>recess</b> for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19 Register complaint	I rise to a <b>question of privilege</b>	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18 Make follow agenda	I call for the <b>orders of the day</b>	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17 Lay aside temporarily	I move to <b>lay</b> the question <b>on the table</b>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16 Close debate	I move the <b>previous question</b>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§15 <b>Limit or extend debate</b>	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§14 <b>Postpone to a certain time</b>	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§13 <b>Refer to committee</b>	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§12 Modify wording of motion	I move to <b>amend</b> the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§11 Kill main motion	I move that the motion be <b>postponed indefinitely</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
§10 Bring business before assembly (a <b>main motion</b> )	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

On [miamiaaup.org](http://miamiaaup.org)  
SHARED GOVERNANCE  
page—scroll to bottom

Questions?

Practice time?



***“Motion to adopt  
Total Frat Dance  
Moves as new  
Miami logo.”***



Your move, Senators.

