

Quick and Easy Guide for Parliamentary Procedure



Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia

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Parliamentary Procedure Facts and Definitions

Parliamentary procedure is one of the most effective means by which individuals can take orderly action as a group. It provides the rules to conduct a business meeting.

Parliamentary procedure ensures that one topic at a time is discussed. It also allows for both sides of an issue to be heard. When parliamentary procedure is properly used, everyone in a meeting has the right to have her opinion heard by the group Members. In parliamentary procedure, the majority, or the largest number of people who agree on the issue, makes the decision for the group following democratic principles. Only one person speaks at a time

Enhancing your parliamentary procedure skills will help you in presiding over meetings and effectively encourage group interaction. These are important skills to have as you further develop your leadership and personal development skills.

Branch officers as well as Branch Members should learn the appropriate parliamentary procedures they are going to use in making Branch decision.

The most current version of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all meetings of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia.

Motions - Facts and Definitions:

The steps in making a Branch decision or making a 'Motion':

- 1. Motion** – A Motion is a formal statement of a proposal for action to be taken, or an opinion to be held, which is presented to the meeting for consideration and discussion and then voted upon. Once the Motion is placed on the floor, it must be discussed and then voted upon. Only one Motion should be placed before the group at one time. It is debatable and amendable.
- 2. Second** – Someone from the group must “second” the Motion, or agree to the Motion, so that it can be discussed.
- 3. Discussion** – All Members, addressing the pros and cons, etc., discuss the Motion “on the floor”.
- 4. Re-State the Motion** – The President re-states the Motion before the group votes.
- 5. Vote** – The group votes by voice; by show of hands; by standing; or by secret ballot.

What Makes A Good Women's Institutes Meeting?

Business leaders say that one-third of the time spent in business meetings is unproductive. Here's how 2 000 business leaders ranked the four most important ingredients of a good meeting.

- ❖ Adequate preparation
- ❖ Agreement on follow-up action
- ❖ Having an effective moderator (Chair, President)
- ❖ Staying on track

These are good points to consider about your Women's Institute meetings. Good meetings help to get things done. Poor meetings don't.

Value of Women's Institutes Meetings



- ❖ **Members gain:** understanding of how groups operate, learning how to participate in groups, and skills to lead groups
- ❖ **Branch benefits:** decisions are made, information shared, learning opportunities, fun of being in a Branch – attracting new Members
- ❖ **Community gains:** Members who know how to participate in a democracy can assist with other needs in the community; Members act as a resource people; create community leaders.

The President Conducts a Meeting

Each Women's Institute Member should know the proper order of business (agenda):

1. Call to order
2. Opening exercises – Mary Stewart Collect / O Canada (optional) / Flag Salute
3. Roll Call
4. Reading and approval of the Minutes of the last meeting
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Correspondence and Bills
7. Business Arising from the Minutes – Old (Unfinished) Business
8. Committee Reports
9. New Business
10. Program
11. Adjournment

Social time is held after the adjournment of the meeting.

In special circumstances, the agenda may be altered but all items should be dealt with at each meeting. For example, the program could be first as the speaker may want to present her/his topic at a certain time.



Order of Business for a Women's Institute Meeting



Now, let's visit the Sunnyville WI Branch and see how the Members use parliamentary procedure to ensure their meeting is run in an efficient and democratic manner.

1. Call to Order – (President stands, strikes gavel (optional) and speaks) -- “This meeting of the Sunnyville Women’s Institute will come to order. Please stand and recite the Mary Stewart Collect and the Flag Salute.” (The Members will face the Canadian flag.)

Generally, the President stands when talking and sits when someone else is delivering a report.

The Agenda is the list of items to be covered at the meeting, usually drawn up by the President. Some Branches provide a copy of the agenda for each Member, and others, only the President and Secretary would have one. The President asks, “Is there any business that the Members wish to put on the agenda?” If a member does or does not add an item to the agenda, the President would say, “Would someone call for a Motion to approve the agenda?”

2. Roll Call – “The Secretary will call the roll.” “The roll call will be answered by naming a country that belongs to ACWW.” (Sometimes roll call is answered by telling something special or by just answering ‘here’.)

3. Reading of the minutes – “The Secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting.” (Secretary stands, reads the minutes, and then sits.) The President stands and asks, “Are there any errors or omissions? Pause. If not, they stand as read.”

If there are corrections, the President asks that they be made and then says, “The minutes stand approved as corrected.” The President will then sign the minutes of the last meeting.

4. Treasurer’s Report – “We will now have the treasurer’s report.” The President sits, and the Treasurer reports on the following: Money received, money spent and the present balance. The Treasurer says, “I move the adoption of this report.” The President stands and calls for a seconder and then says, “Are there any questions on the Treasurer’s report? If not, the report is received as read.” Then the President calls for a vote.

5. Correspondence and Bills – “Is there any correspondence?” The Secretary will read the correspondence, and if there is correspondence that needs action, it is dealt with under new business.

6. Old/Unfinished Business – (Something discussed but not decided at a previous meeting or needed action) “Under old/unfinished business we have _____ to discuss.” The Members will discuss the unfinished business; if there are no items to be discussed, then the President says, “There is no unfinished business.”

7. Committee Reports – The President would ask committee Chairs to report on any existing committees or one that was formed at previous meetings. (If any reports call for an action of the Branch, usually the person making the report makes a Motion for the action to be taken, and another person on the committee usually seconds it. The President then repeats the Motion and asks for discussion. See below for “Motion.”)

8. New Business – (Business not previously discussed)

Motion

Member 1: “Madame President, I move that _____”

Member 2: “I second the Motion.”

President: “It has been moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that _____.
Is there any discussion?”

After the discussion is over...

It is important that the mover gives only a brief explanation before making the Motion, but discussion should not take place before the Motion is moved and seconded. The Motion must be seconded in order to proceed.

President: “All those in favour of (repeat Motion), say Aye (pause), opposed, Nay. Motion carried.”

9. Program –The President introduces the “Chair” of the program and allows the person to take charge during this part of the meeting.

10. Adjournment – The business portion of the meeting can be adjourned before the program. The President may say, “I will entertain a Motion to adjourn.” Receive Motion and seconded. No discussion. “The meeting is adjourned.”



Conducting Business Using Motions



Here are some examples of how Sunnyville WI should use Motions to present new ideas and actions.

Presenting the ‘Motion’ – Beginning of an idea for an action to be taken by the Branch

A member rises and asks for the floor.

Member 1: “Madame President”

President: “Member 1”

(When the President recognizes a member, we say she ‘has the floor’)

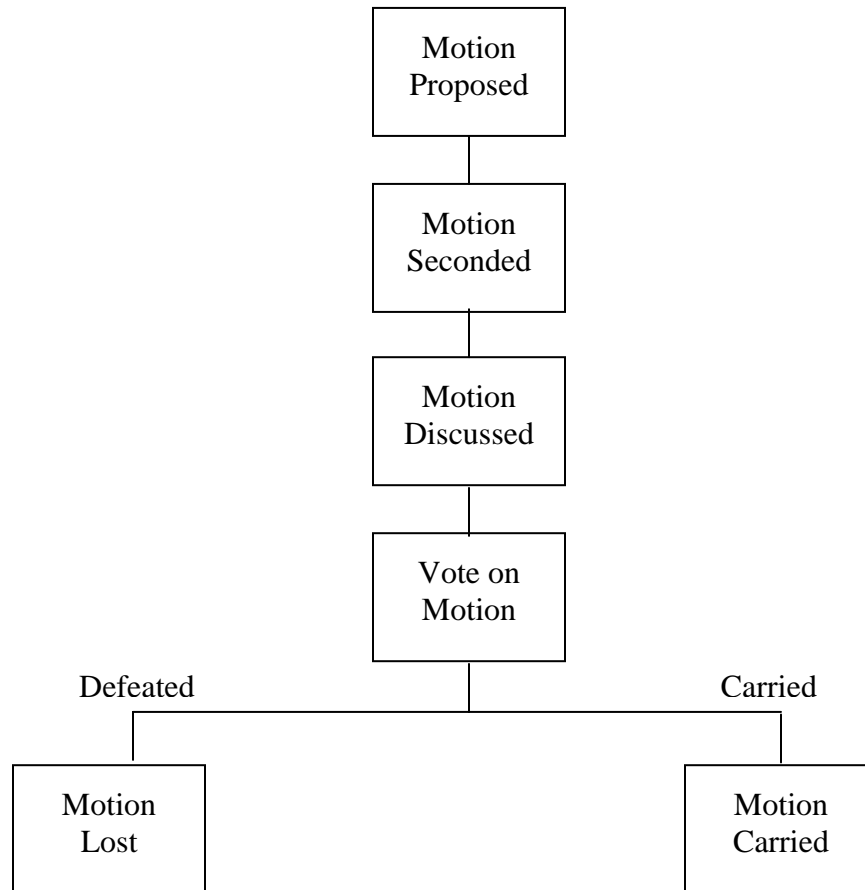
Member 1: “I move that we donate \$50 to John Smith for his school trip to Ottawa.”

Member 2: “I second the Motion.”

(A member doesn’t have to be recognized to second the Motion.)

President: “It has been moved by Member 1 and seconded by Member 2 that we donate \$50 to John Smith for his school trip to Ottawa. Is there any discussion?”

THE STEPS OF A MOTION



Voting on Motions – The President decides on the method of voting:

1. Voice vote: “All those in favour, say aye, opposed, nay. Those abstaining?”
2. By raising of hand
3. By standing
4. By ballot (Scrutineers are appointed by the Chair to distribute, collect and count the ballots.)

The President votes only to break a tie vote. She does not show favouritism in a meeting.

Amending a Motion – An amendment can be presented in the follow ways:

Only two amendments can be made to any Motion.

1. **Inserting or adding a phrase**
“I move to amend the Motion by adding the words ‘we request a presentation upon his return’.”
2. **By striking out a word or phrase**
“I move to strike the word ‘school’ from the Motion.”
3. **By substituting a word, phrase, or entire statement**
“I move that we amend the Motion by substituting the words ‘\$60’ with ‘\$50’.”

Amending A Motion – Changing the main Motion by presenting an amendment

Member 3: “I feel that \$50 is not enough and feel that \$60 is a more reasonable amount.”

Member 4: “I think that we should request that John Smith visit our Branch after his trip and do a presentation.”

Upon hearing no more discussion, the President asks, “Would you like to make an amendment to the Motion?”

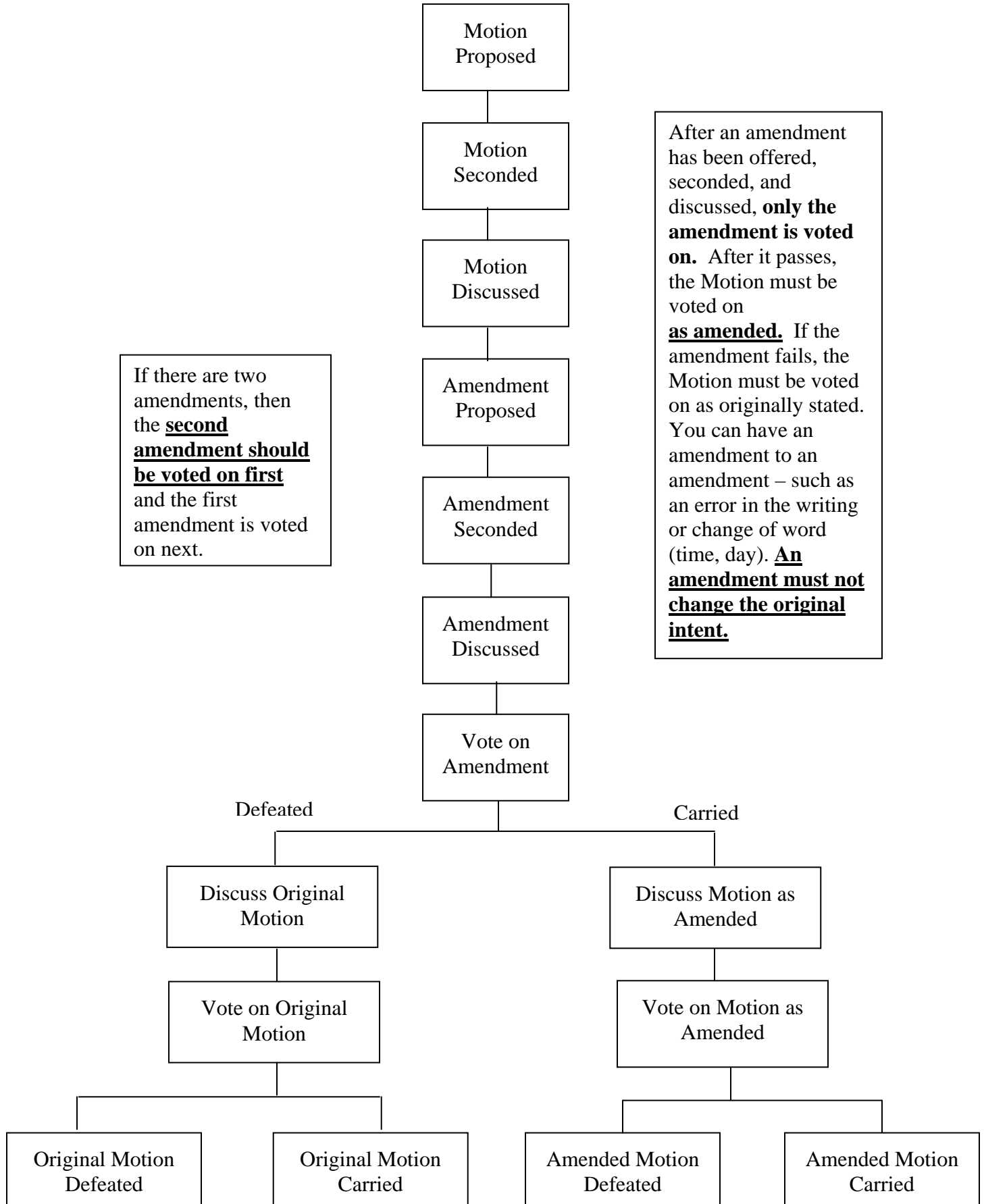
Member 4: “I move that we give John Smith \$60 for his trip to Ottawa and request a report upon his return.”

Member 3: “I second the Motion.”

President: “It has been moved by Member 4 and seconded by Member 3 to amend the Motion by substituting the donation of \$50 to \$60 and that we request a presentation upon his return. Is there any discussion?” Hearing none, then the President would state, “Are you ready for the Question?” “All in favour say aye, opposed, nay. The Motion is amended to read...” The President then reads the Motion as changed.

“Is there any other discussion on the Motion as amended?” Hearing none, then the President would state, “Are you ready for the Question?” Then the President would say, “We will vote on the amended Motion that we give John Smith \$60 for his trip to Ottawa and we request a report upon his return. All in favour raise your hand. All opposed, raise your hand. The Motion is carried.”

THE STEPS OF AN AMENDMENT TO A MOTION



If there are two amendments, then the **second amendment should be voted on first** and the first amendment is voted on next.

After an amendment has been offered, seconded, and discussed, **only the amendment is voted on**. After it passes, the Motion must be voted on **as amended**. If the amendment fails, the Motion must be voted on as originally stated. You can have an amendment to an amendment – such as an error in the writing or change of word (time, day). **An amendment must not change the original intent**.

Tabling a Motion – to set aside or to delay a decision

- Only a Motion that has not been voted on can be tabled.
- Someone says, “I move that we table the Motion to the (next meeting, after lunch, etc.)”
- Motion to table must be seconded and there is no discussion.
- Members vote in favour of the Motion to table (and discuss the issue at a later time) or against the Motion to table (and make the decision on the original Motion now)
- If the Motion was specific for the next meeting, the tabled Motion will be the last item of business under the Old/ Unfinished Business section of the agenda.
- At the next meeting, someone says, “I move that we take that Motion from the table.”
- The original Motion can now be voted on, or amended.

Rescinding a Motion – happens when a Member feels a decision needs to be taken back

- Someone says, “I move to rescind the decision to, (original Motion)”
- Motion to rescind must be seconded
- The group then discusses the pros and cons of rescinding the Motion
- Vote in favour of rescinding (taking back the decision) or against rescinding (keeping the original
- Voting on a Motion to rescind has two important rules:
 1. If Members are *notified ahead of time* about the intention to rescind or take back a past decision at the next meeting, *51% of the Members need to vote in favour* of the Motion to rescind, so the past Motion can be rescinded. Members can be notified by phone call
 2. If no advance notice of the Motion to rescind has been given, *two-thirds must vote in favour* of the Motion for it to pass. The *Chair is responsible for keeping track* of how many people vote in favour and against this Motion and making sure all the rules of parliamentary procedure have been followed.

Withdrawing a Motion: A Motion that has been moved, seconded and stated can only be withdrawn with the consent of the meeting. The mover of the Motion, with the consent of the seconder, asks permission to withdraw the Motion. The presiding officer then asks the question, “Is it your pleasure that the Motion be withdrawn?” If there are no objections, she announces, “The Motion is withdrawn.” If there are any objections to withdrawing the Motion, then to withdraw must be moved, seconded and put to the Members.

Some ways of delaying action on a Motion are to move to:

- Refer to a committee;
- Postpone to a definite date;

<p>The member making the original Motion is the only one who can request that the Motion be withdrawn.</p>

Sometimes during the discussion of a Motion it becomes apparent that the meeting is not in favour and in fact, some other course of action is preferred. The mover will often state that she is willing to withdraw ‘her Motion’ if the seconder will agree. Once a Motion is accepted by the Chair, it becomes the property of the meeting. The mover and the seconder do not have any proprietary right to withdraw it or alter the wording in any way.

Example: Member 1 has made a Motion to donate \$50 to John Smith for his school trip to Ottawa. Member 2 has seconded this Motion. Let’s pretend that during the discussion Members state various reasons why they do not agree with this action. There is a general consensus that the Motion is not a

good idea. Member 1 can ask the Chair to consider the withdrawal of the Motion. If agreed, the Chair may ask the Members, “Is it your pleasure that the Motion be withdrawn?” If there are no objections, the President announces, “The Motion is withdrawn.”

Motion to Adjourn: A Motion to adjourn has the highest priority of all Motions. It is not open for discussion; it cannot interrupt a speaker; it does require a seconder; it cannot be amended except as to the time, and in order to be adopted, it must receive a majority vote.

Point of Order: The purpose of the Point of Order is to draw attention to an omission or a violation or mistake in procedure. It can interrupt a speaker because mistakes need to be rectified as soon as possible; it cannot be discussed and amended; it requires no vote; and it takes precedence over other Motions. This can be one of the most difficult situations for a Chair because it involves an abrupt change in the orderly sequence of activities.

A member can call a “Point of Order” if she feels a mistake is being made in any procedure or Motion during the meeting. The Point of Order cannot be discussed and amended; it requires no vote; and it takes precedence over other Motions.

Example: Member 1 makes a Motion to donate \$50 to John Smith for his school trip to Ottawa. Member 3 initiates a discussion without allowing anyone to second the Motion. Member 4 recognizes this error and says, “Madame President, I would like to call a Point of Order.” The President will then ask Member 4 to explain the point. “Madame President, there was no seconder recognized for the Motion being discussed.” The Chair can then rectify the situation.

Other Pertinent Rules about Motions

- 1 Only one main Motion may be on the floor at one time. It must be postponed, sent to committee, or voted on before another main Motion can be made. A Motion to postpone or to send to committee is not a main Motion and can be offered to clear a main Motion from the floor. Motions to postpone or to send to a committee require a majority vote to pass.
- 2 With the approval of the Members who made and seconded a Motion, it can be withdrawn from the floor without a vote.
- 3 If a Motion doesn’t receive a second, it dies (is no longer considered)
- 4 Generally, the seconder of a Motion agrees to second a Motion to get the Motion on the floor; she may not necessarily agree with the Motion.
- 5 If debate on a main Motion drags on and on, any member may call for the vote.

Member 1: “Madame President, I move the previous question.”

Member 2: “I second the Motion.”

The Motion to move the previous question may not be debated and requires a 2/3 majority to pass. If it passes, a vote is taken immediately on the main Motion.

Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure Terms

It is important for Members to learn the terms that are a part of the Parliamentary Procedure jargon.

- **Adjourn** – to end the meeting
- **Chair** – the presiding officer
- **Address the Chair** – to rise and say, “Madame President” or “Madame Chair”
- **Lay on the Table** – put aside a Motion for further discussion at another meeting
- **Quorum** – the number of Members necessary to carry on business, or to make a Motion. A quorum of regular monthly, annual or specially called meetings of a WI Branch shall consist of one-fourth of the Membership. Where a Branch Membership is less than fifteen, four Members shall constitute a quorum. A quorum for meetings of a Branch Executive Committee shall be one-half of the Members of the Executive.
- **Make a Motion** – to suggest to the Chair that certain thing be done
- **Second** - someone who agrees to “second” the Motion so that it can be discussed
- **Amend** – change or modify a Motion
- **Minutes** – the record of each meeting’s work
- **To Ballot** – vote by casting ballots
- **Majority Vote** – the vote of more than half the Members (50% + 1)
- **To obtain the floor** – receive from the Chair the right to speak. No one speaks unless recognized by the Chair
- **Pro-tem** – means “For the time being”. The person who take the position of an officer in her absence. This is usually for one meeting only. If it’s a Secretary Pro-tem, she will sign the minutes as Secretary Pro-tem.
- **Out of order** – not following the approved rules of the procedure
- **Scrutineers** – Scrutineers, usually appointed by the Chair, count the votes during elections or discussions that are decided by voting. Scrutineers announce the count to the membership. Scrutineers do not have a vote.

Common Parliamentary Procedure Questions and Answers

Q. In Parliamentary Procedures, what is the first thing we learn?

A. To rise and address the Chair to obtain the floor.

Q. How do you address the Chair?

A. Madam Chair, or Madam President, or if the President is not presiding; Madam Chair or by her special title, if she has one.

Q. How does the Chair recognize a member and assign her the floor?

A. By calling her name.

Q. What is the advantage in obtaining the floor?

A. The Chair is compelled to defend a member in her right to the floor and to state her Motion or opinions.

Q. May a member assigned the floor be interrupted?

A. Yes, but only if her procedure is out of order – i.e Point of Order.

Q. What is the correct form of a Motion?

A. “I move that ... Do not say, “I move you ...” or “I make a Motion ...” or “I Motion...”

Q. What must follow the moving of a Motion?

A. Someone agrees to ‘second’ the Motion.

Q. What is a quorum?

A. The number of eligible Members necessary to carry on the business which is generally 25% of the Members.

Q. How long may a member talk?

A. No more than twice to a question and should not speak the second time, until all who wish to speak, have spoken once.

Q. What should follow the seconder?

A. The Chair must state the Motion. She should not say, “You have heard the Motion”. The Chair may require any Motion to be written.

Q. Why does the Chair re-state the Motion?

A. Until re-stated by the Chair, it is not officially put on the floor and cannot be debated, amended or otherwise acted upon.

Q. How does the Chair state a Motion?

A. “It has been moved by (Name of a member) and seconded by (Name of a member) that (and state the remainder of the Motion)

Q. Are all Motions debatable?

A. Yes

Q. What should the Chair say after stating the Motion?

A. “Is there any discussion?”

Q. Is anyone compelled to vote?

A. Member(s) can choose not to vote by abstention.

Q. Should the Chair stand to state a question?

A. Yes, she should always stand to put the question to vote.

Q. When does the Chair put the question to vote?

A. When the debate appears to have closed, the Chair says, “Are you ready for the question?” Members do not answer with the word “Question”. If no one rises to speak further she proceeds to *put the question* — that is, to take the vote on the question.

Q. What is the best form in taking a vote?

A. All in favour say Aye; those opposed, Nay.

Q. May the Chair vote?

A. The Chair only votes when there is a tie. The general rule is that the Chair votes in the negative.