

# Ohio State University Fact Sheet

## State 4-H Office

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## Parliamentary Procedure

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Sometimes meetings are very chaotic when making group decisions. Everyone talks at once, trying to sway others to a different point of view. A basic knowledge of parliamentary procedure can make the group decision process more orderly. It is an important skill youth can use throughout life. Parliamentary procedure is used by most groups as they conduct their meetings. A few examples where parliamentary procedure is practiced include Congress, county commissioners, school boards, local fair boards and county 4-H clubs and committees.

### What Is Parliamentary Procedure?

It is an organized method for a group to accomplish their goals in an effective, fair, and efficient manner. It is effective by providing an orderly way to conduct the group's business and make decisions. It is fair because it is a democratic process for making a decision. It is efficient by keeping the group focused. One item of business is disposed of before going on to another. Most parliamentary procedure is based on Robert's Rules of Order which describes procedures on how to conduct items of business.

4-H meetings are often the first exposure young people will have to parliamentary procedure. There are volumes of material written on the fine points of parliamentary procedure, but only the basics are necessary for 90% of the business conducted at a local 4-H club meeting. Start with the basics of parliamentary procedure in this fact sheet, then continue to "learn by doing".

### The Motion

One of the basics of parliamentary procedure is how to move and dispose of a motion. Here are the steps to follow:

1. Recognition by the chair. A member seeks permission to speak to initiate a motion by simply raising his/her hand or standing and saying "Mister/Madam President..." When the president recognizes the member, that member has the floor and may speak.
2. The motion. A member should say, "I move that we buy a 4-H flag." It is not correct to say, "I

make a motion that ..."

3. Second. The motion must receive a second before any discussion begins. A member does not need to be recognized to second a motion but just states, "I second the motion" or simply "Second". Obtaining a second indicates that at least two people favor discussing the motion. If there is no second, the motion is dropped.
4. Discussion. Once the motion has been moved and seconded, its merits can then be discussed. A member of the group must first be recognized by the president. The member gives reasons for or against the motion to the group.
5. Vote. Discussion on a motion may end in three ways: (1) No one says anything; (2) A member says "I call for the question" which means that the member wants the motion brought to a vote, or (3) The president decides that there has been adequate discussion. Some methods of voting include: voice vote (aye/nay) , a show of hands, standing, roll call, or by secret ballot. The president should always call for both sides of the vote even if the vote appears to be unanimous. The president announces the result of the vote. "The motion passes/fails." A majority is needed to pass a motion. A majority is more than half of the members present and voting.

## **Amendments**

There are times when members of the group will want to change the motion while it is in the discussion phase. This is called an amendment. It is recommended that only one amendment be permitted per motion. An amendment generally strikes out, adds, or substitutes words in the main motion. A motion has been moved and seconded and is being discussed. To amend a motion:

1. A group member is recognized by the president to speak, then says, "I move to amend the motion to buy a 4-H flag by adding the words 3 ft. x 5 ft."
2. A second to this amendment is required.
3. Discussion follows and is for only the amendment, not the original motion. In the example, members may discuss the merits of a 3 ft. x 5 ft. size of 4-H flag, not if they are to purchase a flag (original motion).
4. When it is time to vote, the president conducts a vote to determine if the amendment passes. A majority is needed.
5. If the amendment passed, discussion follows on the motion as amended. In our example, "I move that we buy a 3 ft. x 5 ft. 4-H flag".
6. After discussion, a vote is taken on the motion as amended. A majority is needed.

7. If the amendment did not pass, discussion on the original motion continues, which in our example, is "to buy a 4-H flag."

8. After discussion, a vote is taken on the motion. A majority vote is needed.

Tip: For less formal meetings, such as 4-H club meetings, it may be best to introduce complicated ideas by discussion before the motion is made. This eliminates the need for most amendments.

## **To Lay On Or Take From The Table**

There are times when there is a reason to delay the decision on a motion. Perhaps there is not enough information to make a decision. The procedure to do this is called "laying on the table". This delays a decision until another time.

1. During discussion of a motion, a member is recognized by the president and says, "I move to lay the motion on the table".

2. Once again, a second is required.

3. There is no discussion permitted. The group proceeds directly to vote whether to table the motion or not. A majority is needed.

4. To bring back the motion so it can be discussed and acted upon, is called "taking from the table". While in old business, a member says, "I move to take from the table (motion's name)".

5. A second is required.

6. There is no discussion permitted. The group proceeds to vote whether to bring the motion from the table or not. A majority is needed. Once a motion has been brought back from the table, it is the next item of business.

Tip: Generally, a tabled motion comes back for consideration at the next regular meeting. Don't use the motion to table as a way to "kill" a motion.

## **Adjournment**

Adjournment is used to end the meeting.

1. To adjourn the meeting, a member is recognized by the president and says, "I move that we adjourn."

2. Once again a second is required.

3. There is no discussion permitted. The group proceeds to vote whether to end the meeting or not. A majority is needed.

A motion to adjourn can be given at any time during a meeting, but hopefully will not be misused by club members to adjourn prematurely when there is important business yet to be addressed.

## References

Robert, Henry M. (1970). Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Scott, Foresman and Company, Glenview, IL, 1970.

National Association of Parliamentarians Web site  
<http://www.filesource.com/parliamentarians/parlipro.htm>.

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