

GOOD, ORDERLY DIRECTION FOR BUSINESS MEETINGS

Chaos is the number one offender: it destroys more business meetings than anything else.

Courtesy is one of “the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody,” according to *12 Steps & 12 Traditions*. Crosstalk is nearly non-existent in Recovery meetings, and its absence enhances Service meetings, as well. Competing voices are chaotic to hear. While we may not be feeling harmonious, we are practicing spiritual principles when we refrain from speaking while another has the floor (especially when we don’t like what we’re hearing), and when we actively avoid accusation and recrimination.

Good, orderly direction has been left for us by those with experience in deliberative assemblies—in and out of AA—much of it distilled in two slim volumes, called *Robert’s Rules of Order* (from outside AA) and *The AA Service Manual (Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service* by Bill W.) Along with AA Traditions, the use of even a few of these fundamentals does as much to alleviate chaos as the Steps do to eliminate resentment.

Adherence to rules of order helps us practice spiritual principles and allow the voice of our Group Conscience to be heard more clearly. Furthermore, since rules of order are a tradition of deliberative assemblies, the experience we gain in AA Business Meetings can be used outside AA. Nevertheless: “Under no circumstances should ‘undue strictness’ be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.”*

The following guidelines, gleaned from our experience, help keep chaos out and good, orderly direction in:

- Speak only when the Chair recognizes you: avoid crosstalk.
- Make a motion! No motion = no movement. Avoid discussion without a motion!
- Address the Chairman, not other members: avoid crosstalk.
- Avoid repeating points that have already been made in discussion; add something new, or prepare to vote.
- If discussion is becoming repetitious, *move to end discussion* (usually called *move the previous question*, or *move the question*).

Business Basics:

1. A motion is made and seconded. (Modifications may be made by the mover or suggested by other members to attain proper wording. Precise wording is recorded by the Secretary.)
 - a. A report may contain resolutions or recommendations; to accept the report is to adopt and approve those measures.

* www.robertsrules.org

Such measures may be moved to New Business by a motion properly carried to do so; otherwise, the measures are debatable under the motion to accept the report.

2. A motion without a second is not discussed.
3. Before the motion is restated by the Secretary or Chair, the mover may withdraw the motion, or the member seconding may withdraw the second.
4. The motion is repeated to the group by Secretary or Chair. (Once restated, the motion no longer belongs to the maker, but to the group, to dispose of as they wish.)
5. The motion may be discussed.
 - a. Maker of the motion has the privilege of speaking first.
 - b. No one speaks twice on the same motion until everyone who wishes has had opportunity to speak once.
 - c. During discussion, a member may obtain the floor and “call for a vote,” or “move to end discussion.” (Officially called *Move the Previous Question*.) If seconded, this motion immediately comes to vote, without discussion or interruption. If carried—requires 2/3 majority—the motion being discussed immediately comes to vote. If lost, discussion continues until the group is ready for the question or a motion to end discussion is carried.
6. Other motions may be proposed in their proper order, such as the *motion to amend*, *motion to refer to committee*, or the *motion to postpone*, etc. More information on the proper use of these motions may be found in *Robert’s Rules of Order*.
7. The motion on the floor is the last one stated by the Secretary or Chair.
8. If no one requests the floor, the Chair may once more repeat the motion and ask, “All in favor...all opposed?” and the Secretary records the vote. (Method of vote—voice, hand, stand, ballot—and its record—by roll, count or simply carried/lost—is according to group preference. Substantial unanimity votes must be tallied.)
9. “Substantial unanimity” is constantly strived for in AA business. After any split vote—especially a close vote—on a main motion which does not automatically require 2/3 majority or more, the Chair invites anyone voting with the minority to speak before moving on to other business. If one or more members do so, any member voting with the majority may “move for reconsideration.” If the *motion for reconsideration* is seconded and carries by simple majority, the main motion is again before the group, may be further discussed, and is voted on a second time. If the *motion for reconsideration* is not seconded, or fails, the vote stands as is. This ensures that the rights of the minority are protected, and there is a clearer group conscience on controversial matters.

