

**Robert's Rules of Order Cheat Sheet and
Bylaws Rules and Procedures Quick Reference Guide**

Robert's Rules of Order (RRO) – Top 10 Cheat Sheet

Action/Motion	Purpose	Can member interrupt speaker?	Does it require a seconder?	Can it be debated?	Can it be amended?	Votes required?
Move a motion	To introduce an item requiring approval.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority (50%+1) (unless bylaw change = 2/3 majority of members present)
Amend a motion	When a member wants to propose an amendment to an item before it goes to a vote. NB: the amendment cannot be such that its intent or approval would be to reject or nullify the main motion.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority (50%+1) (unless it is a “friendly” amendment = general consent, where Chair declares amendment if there is no objection)
Postpone ¹ consideration of a matter to a set time [commonly referred to as “deferred”] [often erroneously referred to as a “motion to table” ²]	Delays a vote, normally based on a request for additional information, or while awaiting conclusion of another matter, or until after a certain event.	No	Yes	Yes, but limited to the question to postpone; should not include debate on the main question.	Yes, but only as relates to the time for when the main motion will come back.	Majority (50%+1)
Request to withdraw a motion	When the mover wants to withdraw consideration of a motion.	Yes	No (unless it must be voted on - see last column)	No	No	No vote – treated as general consent, where, if no one objects, the Chair declares the motion withdrawn Majority (50%+1) - If there is an objection, the Chair can put the request to withdraw the motion to a vote.

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End debate on the motion [formally known as “to move the previous question”; commonly referred to as “calling the question”]	When it is felt that further debate will not be fruitful and that the main motion should be voted on.	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Point of order	To enforce the rules or question the correct procedure	Yes – must be made <i>immediately</i> at the time the rules violation occurs	No	No	No	Chair decision
Appeal		Yes – move to appeal is not in order unless made <i>immediately</i> following the decision of the chair.	Yes	Yes, unless it relates to indecorum or rules of speaking; priority of business; or if made while the immediately pending question is non-debatable.	No	Majority (50%+1)
Point of Information	When a member is seeking clarification on the facts of the matter at hand	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Reconsider ³	To reconsider the vote on a previously approved or defeated motion	No	Yes	Yes, provided the motion to be reconsidered is debatable	No	Majority (50%+1)
Rescind	To rescind a motion previously adopted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority (50%+1), if notice given 2/3 or majority vote of entire membership, if no notice 2/3 and notice for bylaws

¹A motion to postpone indefinitely avoids a direct vote on an item and ends consideration of the item for the full session (academic year). It is an indirect rejection of the main motion and should be used rarely as members should vote on the main motion to express their support or rejection. However, it “is useful in disposing of a badly chosen main motion that cannot be either adopted or expressly rejected without possibly undesirable consequences.” (RRO, p. 126). It is not amendable, but it is debatable and requires a simple majority vote.

²A motion to postpone to a definite time or “to table” is only to be used “to lay the pending question aside temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen or when something else needs to be addressed before consideration of the pending questions is resumed” (p.209). It requires a majority vote without debate. It is “out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a measure.” (RRO, p.210)

³A motion to reconsider must be made by a member who voted on the *prevailing* side of the motion to be reconsidered; must be made during the same meeting in which the motion to be reconsidered was decided; and cannot be subsequently reconsidered. Their motion to reconsider “[c]an be applied to the vote on any motion except:

- a) a motion which can be renewed;
- b) a negative vote on a motion which, at the time the motion to Reconsider is made, would be out of order because:
 - i) it conflicts with a motion previously adopted and still in force,
 - ii) it conflicts with a motion which has been temporarily but not finally disposed of and which remains within the control of the assembly, or
 - iii) it would conflict with a pending motion if that motion were adopted;
- c) an affirmative vote whose provisions have been partly carried out;
- d) an affirmative vote on a contract when the party to the contract has been notified of the outcome;
- e) any vote which has caused something to be done that is impossible to undo;
- f) a vote on a motion to Reconsider; or
- g) when practically the same result as desired can be obtained by some other parliamentary motion.” (RRO, pp. 318-319)

Motions and Speaking Rights (RRO, sections 42 and 43)

1. Members may not speak without first being recognized by the chair.
2. Once a motion is moved and seconded, the item is open for debate.
3. The mover is entitled to speak first and close debate (RRO and Senate bylaw 2). The “maker of a motion, while [they] can vote against it, is not allowed to speak against [their] own motion. [They] need not speak at all, but if [they do they are] obliged to take a favorable position. If [they change their] mind while the motion [they] made is pending, [they] can, in effect, advise the assembly of this by asking permission to withdraw the motion.” (p. 393)
4. Where there is an item which generates or may generate greater debate (whether on a motion or on an item for information), the Chair may impose the speaking limits set out in Robert’s Rules of Order. In accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order, each member may speak twice, for ten minutes each time, on an item. A member may not speak a second time, until all members who wish to speak to the item have had the opportunity to do so once (pp. 43, 379, 387-389)

NB: “A member who has spoken twice on a particular question on the same day has *exhausted [their] right to debate* that question for that day.” (p. 43)
“Rights in regards to debate are not transferable... a member cannot yield any unexpired portion of his time to another member, or reserve any portion of this time for a later time – that is, if a member yields the floor before speaking [their] full ten minutes, [they are] presumed to have waived [their] right to the remaining time. If a speaker yields to another member for a question, the time consumed by the question is charged to the speaker.” (p. 388)

Decorum in debate: “Debate must be confined to the merits of the pending question [or item for information]. Speakers must address their remarks to the chair, maintain a courteous tone, and – especially in reference to any divergence of opinion – should avoid injecting a personal note into the debate. To this end, they must never attack or make any allusion to the motives of members.” (pp. 43, 391-394)

5. The Chair announces the results of the vote.

Guests do not have a right to address the assembly and may only do so with the approval of the chair.

Voting:

Motions require a majority of the votes cast to pass. Abstentions are not votes; they are by definition the absence of a vote. “The phrase ‘abstention votes’ is an oxymoron, an abstention being a refusal to vote. To abstain means to refrain from voting, and, as a consequence, there can be no such thing as an ‘abstention vote.’” (Robert’s Rules of Order, 11th Edition)

While it is practice to call for abstentions at this University, it is not required and, in fact, Robert’s Rules of Order states that there should be no such call. “The chair should not call for abstentions in take a vote, since the number of members who respond to such a call is meaningless. To “abstain” means not to vote at all, and a member who makes no response if “abstentions” are called for abstains just as much as one who responds to that effect.” (RRO, 11th Edition)

The number of members present at the meeting is only relevant to establish that there was quorum. Once quorum is established, the meeting can be held. From there, where a majority vote is needed, it is simply the majority of the votes cast that is needed to pass a motion. Majority vote means “more than half of the votes cast by persons entitled to vote, excluding blanks or abstentions”, which are not votes. (RRO, 11th Edition) (The bylaws will establish when a super majority is required (for approval of bylaws) or a majority of the members present is required (for RTP considerations)).

So, if a Senate Committee or Council is comprised of 20 members, quorum is 10 voting members (1/2 of the Committee members). Assuming only 10 members were able to participate, quorum has been reached and the committee can conduct its business. If 3 members vote in favour of a motion, 2 are opposed, and 5 abstain/do not vote, the motion passes since the total number of votes cast was 5 and there was a majority vote in favour with the 3 votes.

Members should note that by not taking a position, their abstention has the same effect as a vote for the prevailing side (whether the prevailing side is the “Yays” or the “Nays”). “While it is the duty of every member who has an opinion on the question to express it by his vote, yet he cannot be compelled to do so. He may prefer to abstain from voting, though he knows the effect is the same as if he voted on the prevailing side.” (RRO Online)

Of course, a member must abstain from voting in cases of conflicts of interest.

Secret Ballot Requirement

Where it is stipulated in a bylaw that voting shall be by secret ballot, a motion to change this requirement and allow voting by show of hands is not permitted, even if the motion were to be unanimously approved. A committee cannot override a bylaw requirement.

Requesting a Secret Ballot Vote

In cases where voting is by show of hands, a member may request that a vote be conducted by secret ballot. A request for a secret ballot vote must be in the form of a motion, moved and seconded. The motion to vote by secret ballot is not debatable, but is amendable. A simple majority is required to pass the motion.

Sources:

Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition, 2011; Robert’s Rules of Order Online

Senate Bylaws 2

Adapted in part from: <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/roberts-rules-of-order-cheat-sheet/>

Bylaw Rules and Procedures
Senate and Senate Committee Meetings – Quick Reference

Notice Requirement

Five calendar days' notice of a meeting must be given. The notice must include the agenda items, minutes of the previous meeting (as appropriate), and supporting documents (as appropriate) and notice of motion. Five calendar days' notice includes the day the notice was sent and the day of the meeting. (Bylaw 2)

E-Votes (does not apply to Senate)

At the discretion of the Chair, an e-vote may be issued on non-controversial matters (with the exception of appointments procedures for limited-term, tenure or tenure-track faculty, or promotion, tenure and renewal procedures, or selection procedures for Deans, Associate Deans and AAU Heads.) Any objection from a member within 48 hours of the issuance of the e-vote will result in the withdrawal of the e-vote and trigger an in-person meeting. (Bylaw 3)

An e-vote can also be conducted on matters that were discussed at a scheduled meeting at which quorum was not achieved. (Bylaw 3)

Quorum

Quorum is one-half of the voting members for Senate and Committees of Senate, with the exception of Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion Committees where quorum is one less than the voting membership. (Bylaws 3 and 22)

Summer quorum applies from May 1 – August 31 for Senate Committees, with the exception of Appointments Committees and Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion Committees. Summer quorum is 40% of the voting members, provided at least one student member is present. If there is no student member present, quorum reverts back to 50% of the voting members.