

Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Club Use

Why there is Parliamentary Procedure

Do you remember a time in which you joined a conversation among several people? In that group was an individual or two who seemed to do all the talking. It was difficult, if not impossible, for you to make a statement, state your ideas or participate in any way.

Consider what would happen if instead of joining a conversation, you were attending a meeting at which some goal or objective was to be accomplished. How would you feel if you were unable to state your view? Parliamentary procedure makes it possible for you, or anyone to be heard. Parliamentary procedure is an organized way in which the smallest minority (even just one person) can be heard, while preserving the right of the majority to prevail.

Think of the difficulties of conducting business to arrive at a decision if parliamentary procedure is not used. And think of how short, productive and easy business meetings become when parliamentary procedure is used. It is important for leaders and members alike to know how to conduct business meetings.

What are the rules of Parliamentary Procedure? One of the oldest and most popular set is Robert's Rules of Order. It is the set of rules used by most legislative bodies.

Most of the time meetings are small groups and issues are not contentious. In these cases only a few simple rules are needed. Often consensus (another method of conducting meetings) can be used to arrive at a decision. But if a decision is to be made on a difficult issue, it becomes necessary to strictly follow Robert's Rules.

Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Club Meetings

4-H & Parliamentary Procedure

In 4-H, we use parliamentary procedure as way of effectively involving members in decision making. Parliamentary is democratic series of rules and order by which a club operates. Parliamentary procedure does two things for your club. First, it provides a logical, step-by-step sequence for transacting business. Secondly, it provides a set of rules that insure an orderly and democratic meeting. 4-H meetings are a great place for youth to learn about parliamentary procedure and to use it effectively.

4-H continues to be a source of excellent educational opportunities on this topic. Clubs are encouraged to follow the "Informal Style" for club meetings. Meetings should include a flexible agenda; basis parliamentary procedures; elected officers; and controlled discussion. This type of meeting will allow clubs to effectively conduct meetings during which members can learn and practice good parliamentary procedures. The end result of participation and practice is a large group of skilled young people who are prepared to be effective leaders in other youth, and eventually adult organizations.

Tools of Parliamentary Procedure

In addition to providing a logical step-by-step outline for conducting the meeting, parliamentary procedure also provides a "toolbox" of instruments we use to insure an orderly and democratic meeting. A few of the more common "tools" are motions, amendments, and committees. It is your responsibility to make sure that all members of your club understand how to use these tools.

Motions: An important tool of parliamentary procedure is the motion. A motion is simply a suggestion made by a member for action to be taken by the group. To make a motion, a member is recognized and begins his motion with the phrase "I move that..." followed by what it is he would like to see the club do. In deciding the date for a club picnic, a member might be recognized and say "I move that the club picnic be held on Saturday, June 20."

Once the motion is made, another member of the club must "second the motion" that is, to make a statement of agreement with the original motion. To second the motion the member is recognized and states "I second the motion."

If a motion is not seconded, it "dies" or is no longer considered.

Motions are simply an orderly way of receiving input from members of the club. Once a motion is made and seconded, the president may call for discussion on the motion. When discussion is exhausted or completed, a vote on the motion is taken. In an informal style however, it is perfectly acceptable to allow discussion before a motion is made. In this manner the group may be able to reach a general agreement on what should be done and then finalize it with a motion, second and vote. This way, instead of having to take action on the first idea presented, discussion may eventually reveal the group's collective feeling on the issue.

Amendments: Sometimes during discussion of a motion a change in the wording of the original motion may be needed. If this is the case, a member may move to amend, or change, the motion to read differently. If a member wishes to amend a motion they must be recognized and state that they wish to "amend the motion to read that...", followed by the change. Amendments must be seconded and voted upon by the club before action on the original motion may be taken. Remember, the individual who made the original motion may withdraw or reword that motion at any time.

Committees: The president cannot do all of the work for the 4-H club. Therefore, he/she must be able to successfully delegate different tasks, jobs, and responsibilities to other officers, members, or groups of members to carry out. To delegate means to entrust another with the responsibility for completion of a task. We often delegate routine decision making and certain specific responsibilities to committees.

A committee is a group of people, usually a subdivision of an organization, assembled for a specific purpose and assigned a specific task or responsibility. Examples of committees may be a fund-raising committee, bake sale committee or a publicity committee. Effective clubs use committees to:

1. distribute the work load
2. remove trivial decision making from the business session
3. match members with specific skills
4. get more accomplished
5. develop leadership skills in members

Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure Terms

It is important for members to learn the terms that are a part of the Parliamentary Procedure jargon. Teaching members these terms will help them better understand the meeting process and lead to more effective club business meetings. See the "Tools for Teaching Basic Parliamentary Procedure" section for hands-on activities designed to teach members about parliamentary procedure.

- * *Adjourn* - to end the meeting
- * *Chair* - the presiding officer
- * *Address the chair* - to rise and say, "Mr. President"
- * *House* - the organization or club
- * *Lay on the table* - put aside a motion for further discussion at another meeting
- * *Quorum* - the number of members necessary to carry on business
- * *Make a motion* - to suggest to the chair that certain thing be done
- * *Amend* - change or modify a motion
- * *Minutes* - the record of report of each meeting's work
- * *To Ballot* - vote by casting ballots
- * *Majority Vote* - the vote of more than half the members
- * *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 is acting in the absence of an officer
- * *Out-of-order* - not following the approved rules of procedure

Order of Business

Generally, the Business Section of a 4-H Club meeting follows this order:

1. **Call to Order** – The president rises and says, “This meeting will please come to order.” Meetings should begin on time, run smoothly and end promptly.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H Pledge** – The president or someone he/she assigns leads the group in the pledge. A thought for the day or a similar activity could be added.
3. **Roll Call and Introduction of Visitors** – The president stands and says, “The secretary will please call the roll.” The secretary remains seated and announces how roll call is to be answered and then calls the names of the 4-H’ers. Then all visitors are introduced to the group by the member who brought them.
4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** – The president stands and says, “The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting.” The secretary rises and addresses the chair, “Mr. (or Madam) President,” then reads the minutes and is seated.
5. **Approval of Minutes** – The president asks, “Are there any additions or corrections to these minutes? (waits a moment) If not, they stand approved as read.” Or if there are corrections, the corrections are made and the president continues... “Are there any further corrections to the minutes? (waits a moment) There being no further corrections, the minutes will stand approved as corrected.”
6. **Officer’s Report** – The president asks, “May we have the treasurer’s report?” The treasurer rises and addresses the chair, then reads the treasurer’s report and is seated. Other officers such as Reporter, Health, Safety, etc. may also have reports. At this time, the secretary should read any correspondence addressed to the group. Generally no action is required on these reports.
7. **Committee Reports** – The president asks the chair of each committee to report. The president says, “Will the chair of the _____ committee please report?” The chair rises, addresses the president, and gives the report. The president says, “Does any member wish to present a motion to accept this report?” At this time a motion is presented and carried out as described earlier in this booklet. (Your club may have the vice president in charge of all committees. In this case the vice president would call for each report.)
8. **Old Business** – Old business is business not completed at earlier meetings.
President: “Is there any old business?” If the answer is “Yes”, then that business is brought before the 4-Hers. If not, the president goes on to the next section of the meeting.
9. **New Business** – New business allows time for 4-Hers to submit new ideas for the group to consider.
President: “We are now ready for any new business.”
The 4-Her must address the chair and explain any new business to come before the club. Any action taken by the group must be stated as a motion (“I move we have a bake sale.”) and then follow the motion process.
10. **Announcements, Leader’s Report** – President: “Are there any announcements?” The program for the next meeting is announced by the vice president. The place, date and time of the next meetings and activities also are announced. The 4-H Leader may also want to make some announcements.
11. **Adjournment** – The president asks, “Is there a motion for adjournment?”
4-Her: “Mr. (or Madam) President.”
President: “John”
4-Her: “I move that we adjourn”
Second 4-Her: “I second the motion.”
President: “It is moved and seconded that we adjourn. All in favor say ‘yes:’ opposed ‘no’.”
The motion is carried and the meeting is adjourned.

Common Parliamentary Procedure Questions and Answers

Q. In parliamentary usage, what is the first thing to learn?

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

Q. How do you address the chair?

A. Madam or Mr. President, or if not the president, Madam or Mr. Chairman or by his special title if s/he has one.

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

A. By calling his/her name. In a 4-H group this is usually the first name of the person.

Q. What is the advantage in obtaining the floor?

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

Q. May a member assigned the floor be interrupted?

A. Yes, but only if his procedure is out of order.

Q. What is the correct form of a main motion?

A. "I move that..." Do not say, "I move you..." or "I make a motion..."

Q. What must follow most motions (all main motions)?

A. A second (another endorsement of the item of business).

Q. Should one rise to second a motion?

A. No. In large bodies, however, it may be best to rise and without waiting for recognition say, "Mr. or Madam President, I second the motion".

Q. What is a quorum?

A. The number of eligible voting members allowed to conduct business.

Q. Should it be a majority or minority?

A. A minority, usually.

Q. How long may a member of talk?

A. No longer than 10 minutes nor more than twice to a question and not the second time until all who wish have spoken once.

Q. What should follow the second?

A. The Chair must state the motion. He should not say, "You have heard the motion". The Chair may require any motion to be written.

Q. Why state the motion?

A. Until stated, it does not become the property of the House and may not be debated, amended, or otherwise acted upon.

Q. How does the Chair state a principal motion?

A. "It has been moved and seconded that the society (assembly, club, organization or convention)..."

Q. Are all main motions debatable?

A. Yes

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

A. "Is there any discussion?"

Q. Can members be compelled to vote?

A. Only in bodies having great power over the members, as in Congress. This is done by ordering the yeas and nays.

Q. Should the Chair stand to state a question?

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

Q. When does the Chair take the vote?

A. When the organization or club, not some individuals, is ready for it.

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

A. All in favor say aye; opposed, no. This is called putting the question. Speak both aye and no distinctly.

Q. May the Chair vote?

A. Yes, as shown under duties of the presiding officer.

Tools for Teaching Basic Parliamentary Procedures

1. What Do You Say When Activity– This is a paper and pencil activity in which members match the words that are said with the parliamentary procedure term they match.

2. Parliamentary Procedure Terms Activity - This is a paper and pencil activity in which members match parliamentary procedure terms with their definitions. You will need a copy of the activity sheet and a pen or pencil for each member. Members should attempt to match the correct definition with the parliamentary procedure terms.

3. Every Member Needs to Know Activity – This is a get-acquainted mixer. Members meet by matching parliamentary procedure terms and their definitions.

4 An Overview of Parliamentary Procedure in 4-H Club Meetings - This is an informative overview of Parliamentary Procedure with interactive lessons.

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