

**PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR THE UNINTERESTED OR
How to Minimize Boredom at SMRG Meetings in a Few Easy Steps
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*Where there is no law, but every man does what is right
in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.*

--Gen. Henry M. Robert, USA

If you would like to keep SMRG business meetings short (who doesn't?), but still would like to get the necessary business transacted, then read this.

The application of parliamentary law is the best method yet devised to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on a maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.

--(From the Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised)

To take a full and effective part in the business of the Group, requires that you know a little bit about parliamentary procedure, and that bit is presented here. Most of the time, everyone is in agreement and we need little parliamentary procedure, but if there is disagreement, we must fall back on established procedure to insure that the majority rules, but allowing the minority a reasonable opportunity to be heard, with a minimum of time and effort.

MEETINGS To have a legitimate business meeting, it must meet four criteria. The meeting must be scheduled or called in a legitimate manner, we must have a Meeting Chairman (the Group Chairman or Vice-Chairman, or a substitute designated by one of them), and we must have a Secretary (anyone can be temporarily appointed as Secretary if need be). The fourth requirement is for a quorum, which means enough people to transact business. For SMRG, this means one-third of the total voting members, including Basics, Trainees, and Voting Associates.

COMMITTEE REPORTS Any item of business requiring more discussion than is reasonable in a business meeting should be referred to a committee. Anyone who is truly interested may voice his or her opinions on the committee without taking up everyone else's time at the business meetings. The committee discusses the question at its leisure, then at the next business meeting gives a brief report of its deliberations, presenting its recommendations in the form of a motion; only limited discussion is permitted before a vote. The main purpose of committees is to keep those

who are passionately interested in the details of a subject from boring the rest of us at a business meeting, and to give them time to discuss the subject in the proper depth without having to worry about the time pressure of a regular business meeting.

Standing Committees, such as the Training Committee, make a general report (again, briefly) and propose motions related to questions referred to the committee at the last business meeting. New ideas that a committee generates should be introduced in the new business section of the meeting.

NOTIONS The building block of parliamentary procedure is the motion, which is a proposal that the Group take a particular action or stand. In strict parliamentary procedure, all discussion is oriented to a particular motion; by stating the motion clearly before any discussion, there is no confusion about the exact nature of the topic.

At the very beginning of the meeting, just after the minutes are read, the Training Officer or his designate makes motions regarding membership matters; this allows newly-voted-in members to vote on the business during the rest of the meeting. After membership matters, any Special Orders for the Day are considered. These are items mandated for consideration at this particular meeting, for instance if the Bylaws state that elections must be held at this meeting, or if a vote at a previous meeting scheduled a particularly important question for this meeting. During the committee reports, the committee chairmen make motions regarding any business referred to the committee at the last business meeting. Unfinished business from the last meeting is taken up next. In new business, motions are taken from the floor; any voting member may, (upon being recognized by the chair), make a motion.

Anyone who wishes to speak must first be recognized by the chair. Of course, if everyone consents, we may ignore this requirement, but the chair always has the option of taking over whenever necessary (as when the discussion heats up a bit).

Any motion must receive a second before it may be considered; the member seconding need not be in favor of the motion, but just in favor of

talking about it (even if just to soundly defeat it). If necessary for clarity, the chair should then restate the motion to the membership. The chair then allows members to speak in favor and against the motion, allowing members two 2-minute speeches each, and alternating between positive and negative statements when possible. (The person who made the motion usually gets first crack.) If there is plenty of time, and the entire Group consents, we may use informal consideration, which just means that the two-minute and speak-twice-only rules are suspended. If, however, things start dragging on, it's time to either call the question or to refer to a committee. If you make a motion to call the question, and it is seconded, that means we have to vote on whether to vote on the main question or not. (Got that?) If your motion to call the question passes, then we must vote on the main motion without additional debate. When you "move we call the question" you're saying that you're bored and you think others are, too. If the question is important, but you're still bored or tired, the motion to make is to table it until the next meeting, or to refer it to a committee.

In voting on motions, the voting may be restricted to Certified (Basic and Rescue) Members, as with elections for ASRC delegates, or it may be open to all Group voting members, as with elections for Group Officers and with most general motions. Certified Members, Trainees, and Associates given the right to vote may vote in general Group elections. In a case where the entire membership seems behind a motion, the Chairman may say something like "unless there is dissent, I will accept this motion;" unless someone complains, the motion passes by unanimous consent. That doesn't mean everyone was in favor, just that nobody wanted to vote against it.

And that's it! A few rules that are really just good common sense. Remember: do your part to keep meetings from being boring.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The call to order
2. Introduction of visitors or guests
3. Reading and approval of minutes
4. Membership Matters (e.g. Election of Members)
5. Special Orders for the Day (e.g. Elections)
6. ASRC, PATC, MRA, and VSARC Reports (if any)
7. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees:
 - a. Chairman (report of actions of Board)
 - b. Operations Committee
 - c. Training Committee
 - d. Information Committee
 - e. Treasurer
8. Reports of Ad Hoc Committees and Projects
9. Unfinished Business
10. New Business
11. Adjournment
12. Training Program, if any