



EXTENSION

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Putting it into action – Debating and voting

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Introduction

So far, Ashley and Samuel have learned the basic rules of parliamentary procedure, including what it's used for, the responsibilities of each main role and the steps and motions to conducting business. Now, they are ready to see these rules in action! They still have a couple remaining questions, though. What does debate look like? And how do members vote? The pair goes back to their resources one last time to make sure they have everything they need to know to help their club members successfully run a meeting.

Debate

After learning about the motions and minutes of a meeting, Ashley and Samuel are surprised to learn debate is arguably the most important part of a meeting. They figure that through debates their friends can express their interest in or concern for a pending motion. Their thoughts can help other members form opinions about whether to pass or fail a motion. Consequently, all members make decisions together for the entire Little Dreamers club. Therefore, it is very important to understand how to obtain the floor to begin debating. Ashley and Samuel try it out a few times so they can teach others:

- Samuel (acting as any member) stands up from his seat and calls out, "Madam Chairman" (or 'Mr.' if the chairperson were male) then waits to be called on by the chairperson.
- Ashley (acting as the chairperson) calls on Samuel to speak, saying "Samuel."
- After Ashley calls on Samuel, Samuel may begin his debate, expressing his stance on the current motion.
- When he is finished debating, Samuel sits down, signaling to other members that his debate is over and the other members may stand up.

This process continues until no one else wishes to debate or another motion is brought up. "Woohoo!" they think. They're doing it! The only thing left for Ashley and Samuel to figure out is how to vote.



Figure 1. Samuel and Ashley.

Voting

Ashley and Samuel discover that there are two primary ways to vote: by using a majority vote or by using a 2/3 vote, depending on what the motion calls for. Majority votes are used to approve action or demonstrate a group decision and are primarily used unless otherwise stated. In a room of 10 members, six votes in favor of a motion are needed for it to pass with a majority vote. A majority vote is a voice vote and may be taken by using the following steps:

- Chairperson: “We will now proceed to vote. All in favor of [*may read the motion word for word or simply say, “the motion”*], say ‘aye.’
- Members voting for the motion: “Aye.”
- Chairperson: “All opposed, say ‘nay’.”
- Members voting against the motion: “Nay.”
- Chairperson: “The [ayes/nays] have it, the motion [carries/fails].”

A 2/3 vote is used when a motion changes something that was previously adopted or limits members’ voices (Robert et al., 2011). In some cases, a 2/3 vote may be called when members want to see the results of the vote visually. In a room of 10 members, seven votes in favor of a motion are needed for it to pass with a 2/3 vote. This type of vote is carried out similarly:

- Chairperson: “We will now proceed to vote by visual means. All in favor of [*may read the motion word for word or simply say, “the motion”*], please [stand/raise your hand].”
- Members voting for the motion stand or raise their hand.
- Chairperson: [*Counts votes and taps gavel to signal affirming voters to sit*] “All opposed, same sign.” [*same as previously instructed*]
- Members voting against the motion stand or raise their hand.
- Chairperson: [*Counts votes and taps gavel to signal opposing voters to sit.*] “The [ayes/nays] have it, the motion [carries/fails] with a vote of [*number of winning votes to number of losing votes*].”

Wow! Ashley and Samuel think. This is so cool! They can’t wait to try it out with their friends at Little Dreamers.

Implementing parliamentary procedure

As they think about all they have learned about parliamentary procedure, Ashley and Samuel reflect on the main takeaways. Parliamentary procedure helps members follow the flow and order of a meeting, thereby allowing them to make decisions as an organization or group, ensuring every individual has the opportunity to share their opinion and vote on an action.

Samuel and Ashley believe that as novice parliamentarians it will be helpful to start small. They found where Carter (2008) outlined five steps to making a motion that can be helpful for their friends to practice. The Robert’s Rules of Order book is also a useful tool to reference for questions and scenarios.

Ashley and Samuel conclude that whether they want to help their Little Dreamers club enhance meeting discussions, improve their current meeting practices or just simply learn more about conducting business, parliamentary procedure can help!

Resources

- Bruynis, K., Hoyt, J., & Malone, B. (2015). Parliamentary procedure for community organizations and boards. Ohioline: Ohio State University Extension. Retrieved September 24, 2025, from <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/4H-11>
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