

Robert's Rules of Order Overview



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PGSS Speaker 2021-22

Presentation Overview:

1. Introduction to Robert's Rules
2. The Basics
 - a. Motions
 - b. Flow
3. When to Use Points
4. Questions?

What is Robert's Rules?

- A system for managing meetings based on British parliamentary procedure
- Intended to protect the speaking rights of participants; ensure efficient and smooth running of the meeting
- Can also be inaccessible and cumbersome

The Basics

- Speak when you're called
- Speak for two minutes
- Keep things respectful

The Basics: What is a motion?

Moved by: Adrienne; Seconded by: Dakota

WHEREAS Cellphone use can be distracting in class;
AND WHEREAS Students need to stay focussed in order to learn;

BIRT: The Student Union lobby the administration for a complete ban on the use of cellphones in class;

BIFRT: The Student Union dedicate \$200 from the campaigns budget for this purpose.

What makes a good motion?

- Concise and clear.
- Within the purview of Council/AGM
- Information properly organized:
 - WHEREAS: Why?
 - BIRT: What? How?
- Define your terms, e.g. “BIRT the PGSS lobby GPS and Angela Campbell’s office in collaboration with ADELFIES to support language learning at McGill.”

Example

Whereas, McGill currently prohibits doctoral students from registration past PhD7 except for final thesis submission;

Whereas, the current global public health crisis created by Covid-19 will delay research progress for many doctoral students through campus and institutional closures, interruption in research funds, and restrictions or risks presented by travel;

Whereas, under normal conditions, around half of McGill doctoral students do not complete their PhD within six years and the current public health crisis will harm McGill's completion rate;

Whereas, the ability to remain a registered student confers essential capabilities necessary for doctoral students to complete their education, including but not limited to access to health insurance and on-campus health services, access to libraries and institutional resources, the ability to apply for on-campus jobs, extend study visas, apply for research visas in foreign countries, and to apply for external funding;

Whereas, McGill has offered tenure-track faculty the option to defer their tenure application by one year but has not yet offered a similar option to graduate students;

BIRT, the Post-Graduate Students Society (PGSS) Council confirms the need for an option to extend the limit on registration to seven years (PhD8) for all current doctoral students;

BIFRT, the PGSS Council directs the current and incoming Secretary-General and Academic Affairs Officer to work with the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to develop this solution.

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Clearly written BIRT clauses tell the councillors exactly what they are voting on, and what they are getting the Society to do.

doctoral
and on-
campus
ending;
the year

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This is useful, but not all necessary. The mover could bring this up in their motivation speech.

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The Basics: Flow of a Motion – *20 Minutes*

1. Motion is moved and seconded
2. Motion is read aloud by the Speaker
3. Motivation by mover or seconder
4. Questions - *2 minutes per speaker*
5. Debate - *2 minutes per speaker*
 - a. In favour or against
 - b. Comment must be relevant.**
6. Right of Reply/Summation
7. Vote

The Basics: Flow of a Motion – 20 Minutes

1. Motion is moved and seconded
2. Motion is read aloud by the Speaker
 - a. “Dispense” - stops Speaker from reading it aloud.
 - b. Should be used sparingly
3. Motivation by mover or seconder - *2 minutes*
 - a. Why should the motion pass?
4. Questions - *2 minutes per speaker*
 - a. These are short, clarifying questions for the mover (e.g. “Would iPads fall under a cellphone ban?”, “What would the money be used for?”)
 - b. These are **questions, not statements.**

The Basics: Flow of a Motion – 20 Minutes

4. Debate - *2 minutes per speech..*
 - a. Councillors raise their hand to be added to the Speaker's list. The speaker goes down the list in that order
 - b. They may speak in favour or against
 - c. They may bring up motions to amend or divide the question
 - d. **Comment must be relevant.** For example, you cannot bring up a point on a motion that was already passed, or one that is later in the meeting

The Basics: Flow of a *Motion* – 20 *Minutes*

5. Summation

- a. A two minute response by the mover to the debate. They may respond to points against, summarize it for their side.

6. Vote

- a. Councillors can vote **in favour, against, or abstain.**
- b. Abstentions mean that you have a conflict of interest, or you can't make up your mind. They are counted for the purposes of quorum, but not the outcome of the vote (eg 15 for, 15 against, 1 abstention is still a tie)

When To Use Points

Point of Order	Ask a question about procedure: “Point of Order, did we vote?” You can interrupt proceedings (don’t need to be on the Speaker’s List) and the Speaker needs to address it right away.
Point of Information/Request for Information	Ask a factual question: “POI, how much did we spend on Council dinners last year?”. Don’t need to be on the Speaker’s list, but you do need to wait until someone finishes speaking.
Point of Personal Privilege	State a personal issue: “PPP, I can’t hear the member”; “PPP, I was insulted by that member’s speech”. Don’t need to be on the Speaker’s list, should wait until someone finishes speaking.
Call the Question (<i>2nd required</i>)	This is a motion to stop debate. The Speaker will ask the members if there is a wish to stop debate. If $\frac{2}{3}$ agree, then the meeting immediately moves to a vote on the motion at hand. If less than $\frac{2}{3}$ agree, then debate on the motion continues.

When To Use Points

<p>Motion to Amend <i>(2nd required)</i></p>	<p>Moving a motion to amend a the wording of a motion: “I move to amend the motion to read \$100”instead of \$200”.</p> <p>You need to be on the Speaker’s List to make this motion. The meeting now moves into debate on the amendment. Members who spoke already on the main motion can speak to the amendment. However, all comments must be about the amendment, not the motion as a whole. One the steps for debate are exhausted, the Speaker will call for a vote. After the vote, the meeting goes back to debate on the motion as a whole (possibly as amended).</p>
<p>Motion to Divide the Question <i>(2nd required)</i></p>	<p>Moving to split the motion: “I move that we vote on BIRT clause 4 separately from the rest of the motion”. You need to be on the Speaker’s List to make this motion. The Speaker will immediately go to a vote on whether a particular clause should be taken out and voted on separately. Requires majority support.</p>

Questions?
Queries?
Concerns?

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