

# Rosenberg's Rules of Order – CAC Orientation

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# Rosenberg's Rules of Order

- <https://www.cacities.org/UploadedFiles/LeagueInternet/77/77d4ee2b-c0bc-4ec2-881b-42ccdbbe73c9.pdf>



## **Rosenberg's Rules of Order**

REVISED 2011

*Simple Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for the 21st Century*

*By Judge Dave Rosenberg*

# Brown Act vs. Rosenberg's Rules

## **Brown Act = Public Meeting Law**

- Governs transparency, public access, agendas, and open meetings
- Focuses on what the committee legally must do

## **Rosenberg's Rules = Meeting Procedure**

- Governs motions, debate, voting, and orderly discussion
- Focuses on how the committee conducts business

## **Both Work Together**

- The Brown Act ensures meetings are open and lawful
- Rosenberg's Rules helps meetings function fairly and efficiently

# What Are Rosenberg's Rules?

- Simplified parliamentary procedure
- Designed for California local agencies
- More practical than full Robert's Rules
- Used by boards, commissions, and advisory committees
- Focus on simplicity, courtesy, and efficiency

# Why Rosenberg's Rules of Order?

- Rules should establish order
- Rules should be clear
- Rules should be user friendly
- Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority

# The Role of the Chair

- Applies conduct rules for the meeting and makes final rulings
- All decisions by the chair are final unless overruled by the body itself (“Appeal the ruling of the chair” = majority vote to pass)
- Usually plays less active role in debate (although the chair retains full rights to participate in debate).
- Is usually last to speak at the discussion and debate stage.

# The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

The agenda is the roadmap for the meeting.

1. Chair introduces the item
2. Staff presentation
3. Committee questions (Discussion – technical questions of clarification)
4. Public comment
5. Motion and second
6. Debate – discussion of the motion (if needed)
7. Vote
8. Chair announces result

# Motions, Seconds and Discussion

- **A motion** is a formal proposal for committee action
- Examples:
  - Approve the recommendation
  - Continue the item
  - Amend the motion
- Motions require a motion, second, discussion, and vote
- **A second** means the idea is worth discussing
- A second does not necessarily mean support
- **Discussion** should stay focused on the motion
- Members should speak respectfully and through the Chair

# Amendments

- An amendment changes the wording of a motion
- One main motion
- One primary amendment
- One secondary amendment
- Maximum of three motions pending at once

# Friendly Amendment vs. Substitute Motions

## **Friendly Amendment (simplified version of motion to amend):**

- Minor changes accepted by the motion-maker and second
- No formal vote needed to add friendly amendments to main motion

## **Substitute Motion:**

- Replaces the original motion
- Substitute motions are voted on before the original motion

# Managing Discussion & Debate

- The Chair has broad practical authority to keep discussion/debate on topic, prevent repetition, maintain order, recognize speakers and move the meeting along.
- If the body wishes to limit debate the following motions are not debatable:
  - Motion to adjourn – majority vote
  - Motion to recess – majority vote
  - Motion to fix the time to adjourn – majority vote
  - Motion to table – majority vote
  - Motion to limit debate – 2/3 vote if for current meeting

# Voting

- Most actions require a majority vote
- Roll call vote: (yes, no, abstain, recuse, not present)
- Votes are counted on the basis of members *seated* and *present*
- Abstain = “could have voted but chose not to” – can participate in discussion/debate. Reduces total number of votes cast.
- Recuse = “Legally or Ethically Stepping Away” ie conflict of interest. Can not participate in discussion/debate. Reduces total number of votes cast.
- **Votes on multiple motions (up to three) occur in reverse order**

# Supermajority Votes

- Supermajority (2/3 vote) is required when the body is taking an action which effectively cuts off the ability of a minority of the body to take an action or discuss an item. Examples of motions that require a supermajority:
  - Motion to limit debate
  - Motion to close nominations
  - Motion to object to the consideration of a question
  - Motion to suspend the rules

# Motion to Reconsider

- It allows the committee to correct errors or revisit decisions when appropriate.
- Must be made by a member who voted *with the majority*
- Must be made in the meeting in which the original decision was made.
- Used when new information or concerns arise
- Prevents the committee from being locked into mistakes

# Points of Order, Privilege, and Information

Members may interrupt the speaker to raise a point of order, privilege or information:

A **Point of Order** addresses procedural concerns.

- Example: 'Point of order — the motion has not been seconded.'

A **Point of Privilege** addresses comfort or functioning of the meeting.

- Example: difficulty hearing, room temperature, technical issues

A **Point of Information** requests factual clarification relevant to the discussion.

- Example: asking staff to clarify a figure or timeline

# Key Principles

- Be respectful
- Be efficient
- Be fair
- Be clear
- Procedure exists to help meetings function effectively

# Special Notes about Public Input

- Rule One: Tell the public what the body will be doing.
- Rule Two: Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.
- Rule Three: When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.

## ROSENBERG'S RULES OF ORDER CHEAT SHEET

To:	You say:	Interrupt Speaker	Second Needed	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Needed
Adjourn	"I move that we adjourn" (Only needed prior to the end of the agenda)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	"I move that we recess until..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Complain about noise, room temp., etc.	"Point of privilege"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair Decides
Suspend further consideration of	"I move that we table it"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question" or "Call the question"	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Postpone consideration of	"I move we postpone this matter until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce a motion	"I move that..." or "I move to..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..." (You can also ask for a friendly amendment, which is less formal; if mover and second concur, no vote needed)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to a Committee	"I move that the question be referred to a committee for more study"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

The above listed motions and points are listed in established order of precedence. When any one of them is pending, you may not introduce another that is listed below, but you may introduce another that is listed above it.

To:	You say:	Interrupt Speaker	Second Needed	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Needed
Object to procedure or personal affront	"Point of order"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair decides
Request information	"Point of information"	Yes	No	No	No	None
Object to considering some undiplomatic or improper matter	"I object to consideration of this question" (This would generally just be used if something is not on the agenda)	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Reconsider something already disposed of	"I move we now (or later) reconsider our action relative to..." (Only a member of the prevailing side can make a motion to reconsider)	Yes	Yes	Only if original motion	No	Majority
Vote on a ruling by the Chair	"I appeal the Chair's decision"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority

The motions, points and proposals listed above have no established order of preference; any of them may be introduced at any time except when meeting is considering one of the top three matters listed from the first chart (Motion to Adjourn, Recess or Point of Privilege).