

# Robert's Rules of Order: A Cheat Sheet for Australian Non-Profits

Robert's Rules of Order is the gold standard manual of codes used in board meetings across sectors and industries. The rules are designed to help you plan and run your board meetings ethically and in an orderly way. They offer structure and an ethical framework for handling cases of dissent. In the non-profit sector, procedures and discussions can be less formal. Robert's Rules ensures order and productivity, saving you time and money.

## How can they help?

The rules are meant to complement your existing bylaws and boardroom policies and provide structure to meetings and guidance for handling debates, votes, motions, or raising points of order. They can be used during the call to order, reading and approval of meeting minutes, sharing of reports, discussions about old and new business items, and the adjournment.

## How to Use Robert's Rules

Here is a simple cheat sheet for how to use Robert's Rules of Order as a Board of Directors or committee working in the not-for-profit sector:

ACTION	LANGUAGE TO USE	PROCESSES				
		<i>Interrupt</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Debate</i>	<i>Amend</i>	<i>Votes needed</i>
<b><i>Handling Motions</i></b>						
Introduce	<i>"I move to..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend	<i>"I move to amend the motion by... (striking or add)"</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Table	<i>"I move to table the motion..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take up a previous matter tabled	<i>"I move to take from the table... (matter)"</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Move to committee	<i>"I move that we refer the matter to committee..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Postpone	<i>"I move to postpone the matter until..."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
End debate	<i>"I move the previous question."</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Extend allotted time	<i>"I move to extend the time by... minutes."</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	2 out of 3
<b><i>Running the Meeting</i></b>						
Recess	<i>"I move that we recess until..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Adjourn	<i>"I move that we adjourn the meeting."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close	<i>"I move to go into executive session." "I move to close the meeting."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority

Consider something out of its order.	<i>"I move to suspend the rules and consider..."</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2 out of 3
Verify voice vote with count	<i>"I call for a division..."</i>	No	No	No	No	No vote
Reconsider something already disposed of.	<i>"I move to reconsider our action to..."</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b><i>Raising a Point of Order</i></b>						
Object to procedure	<i>"Point of order..."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	None (Chair Decides)
Request information	<i>"Point of information..."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	None
Overrule the chair's ruling	<i>"I move to overrule the chair's ruling..."</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Enforce a rule or point	<i>"Point of order..."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	None
Personal preference (noise, temperature, distractions)	<i>"Point of privilege..."</i>	Yes	No	No	No	None

## Motions and Points of Order

The [Parliament of Australia](#) defines a motion as "any proposal made to elicit a decision". There are four **types of motions**:

- 1) A main motion introduces a new item,
- 2) A subsidiary motion changes the original motion or how it is handled,
- 3) A privileged motion brings up an urgent matter unrelated to pending business, and
- 4) An incidental motion raises questions about the procedures used for other motions.

The **steps for handling a motion** are as follows:

- 1) A member signals the meeting chair and makes the motion.
- 2) Another member seconds the motion.
- 3) The chair restates the motion and invites members to debate.
- 4) Members vote on the proposal, and the chair counts affirmative and negative responses.
- 5) The chair then announces the results of the vote.

In addition to motions, group members can draw attention to something by **raising a point of order**:

- 1) A point of order brings attention to a breach of rules or normal practices.
- 2) A point of information helps gather information about an agenda item or motion.
- 3) A point of inquiry helps clarify a report and make more informed decisions.
- 4) A point of personal privilege addresses the physical comfort of the room or the accuracy of a report.
- 5) A call for the question forces the board to decide whether to continue debating or to vote.

Robert's Rules of Order are intended to allow all members to speak and for information to flow easily during the meeting. They can make decision-making more efficient and fair.