

## Brief Resume of Parliamentary Rules from Sturgis

This summary of commonly used parliamentary rules from Sturgis is a modified and updated version of a document compiled by former Physics Professor Fred Cranston for the HSU Academic Senate. It is based on The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, by Alice Sturgis.

### I. Precedence of Motions

#### *Privileged Motions*

1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Questions of privilege

#### *Subsidiary Motions*

4. Postpone temporarily (or table)
5. Close debate
6. Limit or extend debate
7. Postpone to a certain time
8. Refer to committee
9. Amend

#### *Main Motions*

10. The main motion and restorative main motions

#### Basic Rules of Precedence:

1. When a motion is being considered, any motion of higher precedence may be proposed, but no motion of lower precedence may be proposed. Higher precedence is accorded to lower numbers.
2. Motions are considered and voted on in reverse order to their proposal. The motion last proposed is considered and disposed of first.

#### *Incidental Motions*

Incidental motions (Appeal, Suspend Rules, etc.) have no order of precedence.

### II. Motions to Postpone

Motion to **postpone temporarily** (to lay on the Table, or to Table). Defers the main motion temporarily but specifies no time for its consideration and is not debatable. Its effect terminates with the current meeting. The postponed motion can be taken up again for consideration at any time during the current meeting by a motion to resume its consideration. Usually used when more urgent business arises, for example, a TIME CERTAIN agenda item.

Motion to **postpone to a certain time**. A motion to postpone to a certain time defers consideration of the pending main motion, but also fixes a definite date or time for its consideration. Debate on this motion is permitted, but is restricted to brief discussion of the time or reason for postponement.

### III. Motion to Vote Immediately

Motion to **close debate and vote immediately**. Prevents or stops discussion on the pending question or questions and prevents the proposal of other subsidiary motions except to postpone temporarily, and to bring the pending question or questions to an immediate vote. Is not debatable and requires a two-thirds vote.

### IV. Other Motions

**Question of privilege** enables a member to secure immediate decision and action by the presiding officer on a request that concerns the comfort, convenience, rights, or privileges of the assembly or of the member, or permission to present a motion of an urgent nature, even though other business is pending.

**Motion to appeal** enables a member who believes that the presiding officer is mistaken or unfair in a ruling to have the assembly decide by vote whether the presiding officer's decision should be upheld or overruled.

**Request for point of order** calls attention of the assembly and of the presiding officer to a violation of the rules, an omission, a mistake, or an error in procedure, and to secure a ruling from the presiding officer on the question raised.

**Parliamentary inquiry** enables a member (a) to ask the presiding officer a question relating to proper procedure in connection with the pending motion or with a motion the member may wish to bring before the assembly immediately, or for information on the meaning or effect of the pending questions; or (b) to ask the speaker or the proposer of the motion a question about the pending motion. A parliamentary inquiry may interrupt a speaker only if it requires an immediate answer.

**Request to withdraw a motion** enables a member who has proposed a motion to remove it from consideration by the assembly. Motion is not debatable, the consent of the seconder is not necessary, and requires a majority vote.

**Division of a question** is used to divide a motion that is composed of two or more independent parts into individual motions that may be considered and voted on separately. Any member has the right to request a division into separate motions. If the chair agrees, the chair must divide it. If there is objection to the division, a vote must be taken.

**Call for division of assembly** is used to verify an indecisive voice or hand vote by requiring the voters to rise and, if necessary, to be counted. May be made immediately after a vote has been taken and without waiting for recognition.

**Motion to limit or extend debate** limits or extends the time that will be devoted to discussion of a pending motion or modifies or removes limitations already imposed on its discussion.

**Motion to refer to committee** transfers a motion that is pending before the assembly to a committee.

**Motion to suspend rules** permits an assembly to take some action that otherwise would be prevented by a procedural rule or by a program already adopted. Senate standing rules or rules in Sturgis may be suspended, but the rules of procedure in the Senate Bylaws may not be suspended.

*All motions require seconds, excepting those that are presented as a request or demand: point or order, parliamentary inquiry, withdraw a motion, division of a question, divisions of the assembly, and question of privilege. However, if presented as a motion, all require seconds.*

*Most motions require a majority vote. Three motions require a two-thirds vote: Close debate and vote immediately; Limit debate; and Suspend the rules.*

## V. Amendments

Amendments must be germane to the motion. They may be hostile; that is, opposed to the actual intent of the original motion. They may be made to the original (main) motion or to a pending amendment. Only one amendment to the main motion may be on the floor at a time. Several amendments and amendments to amendments may be offered in succession. (The practice of the Academic Senate has been to allow only one amendment to an amendment, otherwise it gets too confusing).

When an amendment to a motion is proposed, discussion is limited to that amendment until it is disposed of.

When the wording or effect of a motion as proposed is not satisfactory, it is sometimes better, instead of proposing several amendments, to reword the motion and propose it as an amendment by substitution. It is treated as a regular amendment, e.g., moved and seconded, debated, and voted upon.

The proposer of a motion or an amendment has the right to modify or withdraw the motion or amendment at any time before the presiding officer has stated it to the assembly for consideration. A member may propose a “friendly amendment”, indicating that the member proposing the amendment feels it will be acceptable to the maker of the main motion. If the maker of the original motion does not accept the motion as friendly, a second is required and the amendment is debated and voted on. If the maker of the original motion accepts the amendment as friendly, the body may choose to either adopt the amendment by general consent, or if there are objections, to debate it and vote on it.

Amendments are voted on in the reverse order of their proposal. An amendment to an amendment is voted on first, and requires only a majority vote.