

## Assembly Proceedings/Robert's Rules FAQ

*To whom should I address my remarks when I am discussing/debating a motion?*

Always address the **presiding officer** (usually the Provost). While you may refer to colleagues' statements, it is improper to address them directly.

*What if I don't understand why a motion/resolution is being brought to the floor?*

Go to the microphone and ask. More often than not, those bringing motions/resolutions forward will explain the background behind them. The cover sheets supplied by the Secretary of the Academic Staff Office also assist in this regard. If you are still unclear on a particular aspect of the motion/resolution, or if you need more background to understand what is being voted on, it is incumbent on you to get the information you need to vote in a way you feel is consistent with the wishes of your district. Chances are several of your fellow representatives may have the same question.

*What if I want to move to amend a motion/resolution but I don't know exactly how I want to word the amendment?*

One strategy might be to move for a brief **recess** (e.g. 5 minutes) in order to consult with colleagues or figure out the exact wording you want. When the recess ends, go to the microphone and make your motion to amend.

*Can I make a friendly amendment?*

There is no such thing as a friendly amendment. If you think an amendment will be non-controversial (i.e. something simple like a slight word change), you can ask the presiding officer if your amendment can be handled by **unanimous consent** of the Assembly. The presiding officer will ask if anyone has any objections to your amendment. If there are no objections, then your amendment is adopted.

*How can I postpone an item of business?*

There are two different motions to postpone. The motion to **postpone definitely** means that you want to delay further debate on the motion until a specific time. You must give the time in your motion (e.g. "I move to postpone this resolution until the next Assembly meeting."). The motion to **postpone indefinitely** is a way to gently kill a motion without voting the motion down.

*Can an item of business be sent to a committee?*

Yes, a representative could make a motion to **refer** the resolution/motion under consideration to committee. For example, it could be referred to ASEC or one of the 7 standing committees.

*Can a motion be withdrawn?*

Yes, the maker of the original motion can ask for it to be withdrawn from the floor. The presiding officer would first ask if there was any objection by the Assembly to the withdrawal. If not, then the motion would be withdrawn. If there was an objection, then a vote could be taken on whether to withdraw it.

*What if I want to end discussion on a motion and call for a vote?*

You can move the **previous question**. This is often referred to as **“calling the question.”** A positive vote on this motion only applies to the current motion on the table unless otherwise specified. It needs a second and a 2/3 vote of those present and voting. Please note that discussion also often wraps up naturally and that calling the question when there is no obvious sign of others wanting to talk can lead to unnecessary delay in the meeting.

*What if I disagree with the presiding officer’s ruling on how a voice vote went (e.g. the presiding officer says that the “ayes” have it, but I think more people voted “nay”)?*

If Assembly representatives disagree with the ruling on a vote, they can call for a vote by hand count. The Secretary and the Deputy Secretary will take a count of the hands and convey that information to the presiding officer to make a follow-up ruling. If the hand count is unsatisfactory, a roll call vote can be requested.

*Can I change the agenda during the meeting?*

You cannot add new items to the agenda, as that would violate **open meetings laws**. If you want to change the order of business (e.g. you think a resolution is important enough to be debated before others), you can make a motion to **suspend the orders of the day** and take up the item of business at a certain time. This motion would require a 2/3 vote of those present and voting.