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### What rules must you follow?

- Provisions of local, state, and federal law
- Rules from a parent organization
- Constitution and/or Bylaws
- Special rules of order adopted by the group
- Parliamentary authority  
(e.g., *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*)
- Standing rules adopted by the group
- Organizational customs  
(*"We've always done it this way..."*)

Circle in  
the appropriate  
box for answer.




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### The Small Board Rules

- *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* provides some flexibility for small boards of less than a dozen people.
- Occasionally, a small board may be better served by taking on some of the characteristics of a committee rather than a deliberative assembly.
- The "Small Board Rules" offer this flexibility. See RONR, pp. 487-89.

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### Small Board Rule 1 -- Recognition

#### Regular Rule

- Members obtain recognition by standing, addressing the chair, and waiting to be recognized.
- Members remain standing to speak in debate or make motions.

#### Small Board Rule

- Members may be recognized by simply raising their hands or otherwise signaling to the chair a desire to be recognized.
- Members may speak from their seats.

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### Small Board Rule 2 – Seconding Motions

**Regular Rule**

- Typically, no proposal can be brought before the meeting unless it is moved by one member and seconded by another.
- This guarantees that at least two members want the proposal to be considered.

**Small Board Rule**

- Motions do not require a second.
- Members may make motions, and the chair may take a vote on motions, without the need for a second.

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### Small Board Rule 3 – Limits on Debate

**Regular Rule**

- For most debatable motions, a member may speak only two times on each motion.

**Small Board Rule**

- There is no limit to the number of times each member may speak in debate.

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### Small Board Rule 4 – Informal Discussion

**Regular Rule**

- No discussion is allowed in the absence of a motion.
- Debate is allowed only on the merits of the motion immediately pending.

**Small Board Rule**

- The board may engage in informal discussion about a subject in the absence of a motion.
- Such a process is often necessary in order for a motion to develop.

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### Small Board Rule 5 – Voting without a Motion

**Regular Rule**

- The chair puts the question to a vote in the precise way it was offered in a member's motion.
- A motion may be changed only by the amendment process.

**Small Board Rule**

- Where a proposal is perfectly clear to all members, the chair may take a vote on a proposal without a motion having been made.
- However, the required vote thresholds still apply.

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### Small Board Rule 6 – The Chair May Sit

**Regular Rule**

- The chair presides over the meeting while standing.
- Any time the chair addresses a member, takes a vote, or makes a ruling, she or he does so while standing.

**Small Board Rule**

- The informality allowed by the Small Board Rules permit a chair to remain seated while putting a question to a vote or presiding over debate.

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### Small Board Rule 7 – Participation by the Chair

**Regular Rule**

- The chair is a neutral presiding officer and does not actively participate in the meeting.
- If the chair wishes to speak in debate or make motions, she or he must vacate the chair.

**Small Board Rule**

- If the chair is a member of the board, she or he may speak in debate, make motions, and vote without leaving the chair.
- West Virginia law is also clear that all members of a school board are members for every purpose, including the chair.

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**How do we plan for a productive meeting?**

1. What needs to be accomplished?
2. Who is prepared to handle each item?
3. What did we do at our last meeting?
4. Do we have deadlines that we must meet?
5. Are we working with any other groups?
6. Do we have budget concerns about any items?
7. Will there be guests present, or any kind of special program?
8. Should we have a Good of the Order (optional)

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**What kind of meeting is it?**

- **Regularly Scheduled Board Business Meeting**
  - The most frequently encountered type of meeting for most people and most board members.
- **Open Forum Sessions**
  - Meetings called not for transacting business, but for providing opportunity for "public comment."
- **Committee Meeting**
  - Often held for the dual purpose of transacting business and conducting actual work.

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**Is it a meeting at all?**

- What happens if our board members meet independently and make a decision?
- What happens if two of our members meet to decide how they will be voting?
- What happens if all of the members meet in separate small groups to decide how to vote?

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**Is it a meeting at all?**

- In West Virginia, boards must be careful about engaging in significant discussion of issues outside a meeting, even there is less than a quorum present.
- *McComas v. Fayette Co. Bd. of Ed.*, 197 W. Va. 188 (1996).
  - The primary case in West Virginia.

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**Is it a meeting at all?**

- *McComas v. Fayette Co. Bd. of Ed.*
- Syllabus Point 4
  - "In drawing the line between those conversations outside the requirements of the Open Governmental Proceedings Act, W. Va. Code, 6-9A-1, et seq., and those meetings that are within it, a common sense approach is required; one that focuses on the question of whether allowing a governing body to exclude the public from a particular meeting would undermine the Act's fundamental purposes."

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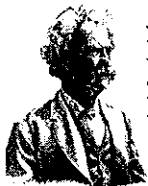
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**Urban Legends of Parliamentary Procedure**



quotespedia.info

It ain't what you don't know  
that gets you into trouble.  
It's what you know for sure  
that just ain't so.

Mark Twain

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**#1 – “Parliamentary Procedure” and “Robert’s Rules of Order” are the Same.**

- While this old line is familiar to many, it isn’t quite accurate.
- “Parliamentary procedure” refers to the general rules for conducting a business meeting.
- “Robert’s Rules of Order” refers to a specific book of rules.

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**#2 – Adopting *Robert’s Rules of Order* puts too much restriction on our group.**

- Understand what *Robert’s Rules of Order* (“RONR”) actually is and what it is not.
- RONR is a set of default rules that guide a group when the group has no rule of its own.
- RONR does not, and is not meant to, restrict how the group does its business.

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**#3 – We can say we follow *Robert’s Rules of Order*, but we can still do what we want in our own meetings.**

- This is a half-truth, which makes it one of the most dangerous Urban Legends.
- RONR provides a mechanism to suspend certain rules when necessary, but adopting a parliamentary authority creates a contract between the group and its members.

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**#4 – The President sets the agenda.**

- Generally speaking, this is false.
- Unless there are rules that provide differently, it is up to the board to determine for itself what it will and will not consider at its meetings.
- The chair/president has only the authority that the group gives him or her.

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**#5 – We have to allow the public to attend our meetings.**

- This is true if required by some body of law.
- For school boards, the state *Open Governmental Proceedings Act* will apply.
- For all others, it is perfectly fine to go into executive session for the entire meeting. **Not so for a school board.** There are specific rules for executive sessions.
- Non-members have no right to participate.

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**#6 – I can just say “I call the question” and the group has to take a vote.**

- This is always false.
- An assembly can order the previous question, which stops debate, but a single person can't make it happen, not even the chair.
- It takes a 2/3 vote to stop debate, or to limit it in any way.

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**#7 – We need to have all our rules in our bylaws.**

- The bylaws are the place for structural rules and those that are so important that they should never be suspended.
- Other procedural rules can go in a separate body of rules, the *Special Rules of Order*.
- Separation makes the Special Rules suspendable.
- Consider school board policies – what are they?

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**#8 – The president can only vote to break a tie.**

- The president is a member for all purposes, and she or he can vote at any time on every vote.
- School boards are prohibited from taking ballot votes.

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**#9 – We can't talk about something that wasn't on our agenda.**

- This is somewhat true.
- For entities subject to the *Open Governmental Proceedings Act* (like school boards), prior notice to the public is required prior to making a decision or deliberating towards the making of a decision.
- For regular nonprofit entities, this is false.

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**#10 – We have to present the motion three separate times before we vote.**

- This rule comes from legislative bodies that follow their own parliamentary procedures.
- It does not apply to school boards (unless they impose such a rule on themselves).
- No rule of parliamentary procedure prohibits a group from making decisions in a single day.
- In fact, parliamentary procedures encourage it.

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**We're here to help. Contact us if we can ever guide you through a problem.**

Roger Hanshaw  
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(304) 347-2115

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