

Robert's Rules for Beginners

What You Should Know About Getting Parent Group Business Done and Why We Do It That Way

What you can expect at a parent group meeting

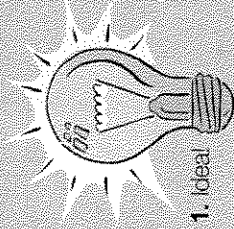
You will get a printed **agenda** that will be used to guide the meeting. The agenda helps keep the meeting moving, keeps the group on task, and ensures that all business is covered.

During the meeting, discussion is limited to each agenda item as it comes up. People raise their hands and wait to be called on by the chair, as a way to keep discussion orderly and to avoid confusion.

When the meeting is over, it is **adjourned**.

The business of the meeting is documented in written **minutes**. They will be presented for approval at the next meeting.

When you want to make a formal decision, it starts with an idea



1. Idea!

2. Any member makes a **motion**, which is just a concise way of proposing an idea.

3. Any other member **seconds** the motion, which means the motion will be discussed further.



4. The group **discusses** the motion (and only the motion) until you are ready to...

Vote on the motion (if there are enough members in attendance— that's called a **quorum**) **or** **Table** the motion until the next meeting, to allow time to consider the idea further.

Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order

The foundation of every well-run parent group is a strong set of **bylaws** that define the PTO's mission, its structure, its rules, its officers and how they get elected, and even how the bylaws themselves can be revised.

Robert's Rules of Order are time-tested guidelines used by groups large and small that help an organization conduct business smoothly and fairly.

Top 10 things a PTO should know about Robert's Rules of Order

A grossly oversimplified interpretation of Robert's Rules that will work just fine for a PTO

1. **Bylaws:** A written document that defines the purpose of your group, its organizational structure, and the rules that govern the group. Bylaws should be customized for your group, published, and reviewed annually for revisions.
2. **Amendments:** Formal changes to your bylaws.
3. **Agenda:** A written list of items that will be covered during a meeting.
4. **Minutes:** The written record of the business transacted at a meeting. Minutes should be kept for both Executive Board meetings and general PTO meetings.
5. **Motion:** A formal proposal that the group take some specific action. Motions are voted upon by the group. An idea at a meeting will often result in the presentation of a motion. A motion is the way to resolve a dispute, debate, disagreement, or open issue. Any member in good standing can present a motion to the group. A motion can be tabled if the group needs more time before voting upon the motion. Tabling a motion suspends consideration until the group's next formal meeting.
6. **Seconding:** When a member presents a motion, her idea must be supported by another member. The supporting member "seconds" the motion to indicate her support. After a motion is seconded, it should be discussed by the group. A motion cannot be voted upon unless it is seconded.
7. **Adjournment:** A formal way to end a meeting. At the appropriate time, a member moves to adjourn, another member seconds, and the rest of the members voice their agreement. The secretary records the adjournment time in the minutes.
8. **Quorum:** The minimum number of members required to conduct business at a PTO meeting. Quorum is specified in the PTO's bylaws.
9. **Officers and Elections:** The bylaws should specify the elected officers of the PTO, their main duties, their term of office, and the procedures by which they are nominated and elected.
10. **Robert's Rules of Order:** Originally written by Major Henry M. Robert in 1876, it is the most common form of parliamentary procedure in the United States. It was designed to keep business moving, protect the rights of members, and ensure polite behavior in organizations. A PTO's bylaws should specify that Robert's Rules of Order is the group's parliamentary authority. The complete version of RRO is hundreds of pages and covers every conceivable situation for the most complex organization. Many simplified versions the Rules have been published. Every PTO president should own at least one simplified version of Robert's Rules.