

Union General Membership Meetings & Robert's Rules of Order

A quick guide to speaking, making motions, and being heard.

Why Robert's Rules?

Robert's Rules of Order is a standard set of meeting rules that helps keep discussions organized, fair, and democratic. Using these rules ensures:

- Everyone gets a chance to speak
- Decisions are made by majority vote
- Meetings stay on track and on time

How to Speak in a Meeting

1. Wait to be recognized – Raise your hand and wait for the Chair (President) to acknowledge you.
2. Stand (if possible) and state your name – Example: “John Smith, YYC member.”
3. Address the Chair, not individuals – Example: “Through you, Chair...”
4. Keep comments relevant – Speak only on the current motion or agenda item.
5. One person at a time – Avoid side conversations.

Making a Motion

1. A motion is a formal proposal for the group to take action.
2. Get the floor – Wait until recognized by the Chair.
3. Say clearly: “I move that...” followed by your proposal.
4. Get a second – Another member says, “I second the motion.”
5. Chair restates the motion – Everyone knows exactly what's being considered.
6. Debate – Members take turns speaking for or against.
7. Vote – Majority rules unless bylaws say otherwise.
8. Proposed changes to the local union's bylaws must be provided to the Executive Board prior to the general membership meeting in a Notice of Motion.

Tips for Productive Meetings

- Be respectful – Disagree with ideas, not people.
- Stay concise – Give others a chance to speak.
- Ask questions if unsure – The Chair can explain procedures.
- Use “Point of Order” if rules aren't being followed.

Common Phrases to Know

Basic Phrases	Meaning
I move that...	Propose an action or make a motion
I second that motion.	Shows support so the motion can be discussed.
I move to amend the motion.	Proposes a change to the wording or details of the motion.
I move to table this motion.	Pauses discussion on the motion until a later time.
I move to refer this to...	Sends the motion to a smaller committee to further study.
Ending or Controlling a Debate	Meaning
I move the previous question.	Ends the debate and calls for a vote (requires a seconder).
Point of order.	Calls attention to a possible rule violation or procedural error.
I appeal the decision of the Chair.	Challenges a ruling by the Chair.
I move to limit the debate to...	Restricts the number of speakers or time for discussion.
Through you, Chair...	Speak respectfully via the Chair.
Call the Question.	End the debate and go to a vote.
Clarification or Procedure	Meaning
Point of information.	Requests clarification or more details before voting.
Point of privilege.	Address an urgent matter affecting comfort, safety or conditions.
Voting and Results	Meaning
All in favour, raise your hand.	Standard prompt by the Chair.
Those opposed, raise your hand.	Standard prompt by the Chair.
Division of the house.	Requests a counted vote instead of a voice vote.

Remember: Robert's Rules aren't about being formal for formality's sake—they're about making sure every voice is heard, and decisions are fair.

For more information please visit:

robertsrules.com