

# Motion Basics

## STEPS OF THE MOTION

1. *Commissioner* rises and addresses the Moderator.
2. *Moderator* recognizes commissioner and grants the floor.
3. *Commissioner* makes motion. (Commissioner may not debate before the motion is seconded.)
4. *Another commissioner* seconds the motion without recognition from the moderator.
5. *Moderator* states the motion.
6. *Moderator* calls for debate. (Maker of the motion has the privilege of first debate.) All speakers must address the moderator and be recognized by the moderator.
7. *Moderator* states the motion.
8. *Moderator* takes the vote and announces the vote and the results of the vote.
9. *Moderator* states the next order of business.

## SEVEN USEFUL MOTIONS

1. **Amend.** There are *only* three forms of simple amendment.
  - a. to delete or strike out
  - b. to add or insert
  - c. to strike out and insert

The words proposed for deletion or addition *must be consecutive words*. When the amendment does not involve consecutive words or is longer than a paragraph, the motions "to substitute" (a form of amendment) is used. This is a difficult motion and should *never* be used when the simple form of amendment can be used.

2. **Commit or Refer.** To commit or refer back to committee for further study and amendment allows the consultative process to be used in greater depth. When this motion is made, it needs to state clearly what committee; appointment of the committee, if necessary; the task of the committee; and report time.
3. **Postpone to a Particular Time.** This motion takes precedence over the preceding two and has the power to grant additional time to a particular member or committee or do further study or consultation. It should always be used in preference to "table" because it permits debate on the propriety of postponement.
4. **Limits on Debate.** The assembly always has the power, and the moderator the right of suggestion, to limit debate to a particular hour, or extend or shorten speeches according to the necessity of the moment. Limits on the length of speeches are advisable in instances where the issue before the assembly is highly divisive and many members wish to speak.
5. **Previous Question.** The maker of the motion "to move the previous question" (close debate and immediately take the vote) must be recognized by the moderator and the motion must receive a second. *It is never in order when called from the floor.* This motion should never be considered when it is used to prevent legitimate debate.
6. **Lay on the Table.** This motion is seldom necessary. The motion "to postpone" is always preferable because of its lower rank and its debatability. Misuse of this subsidiary motion can be a strategy that seriously abridges the rights of the assembly because of its high rank and its adoption by a majority vote without debate. The moderator is obliged to explain carefully to the assembly the implications of this motion should it be made.
7. **Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim.** Consideration by paragraph or seriatim is an incidental motion that may be suggested by the moderator or any two members of the assembly, allowing for orderly consideration of a complex proposal with several different parts, clarifying for the assembly the controversial aspects of the proposal. Each paragraph of the proposal can be amended without finally adopting the new wording until the final action on the main motion as amended.

(Adapted from *Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* by Marianne L. Wolfe, P.R.P.)

### CHART #1

RANKING MOTIONS—  
and their five salient  
parliamentary points. The  
order in which the thirteen  
motions are listed.

#### FIVE PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

	Must be Seconded	May be Debated	May be Amended	Vote	May be Reconsidered
	1	2	3	4	5
13. To Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	Yes
12. To Adjourn	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
11. To Take a Recess	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
10. Question of Privilege	No	No	No	—	No
9. Call for Orders of the Day	No	No	No	—	No
<b>SEVEN SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS</b>					
8. Lay on Table	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
7. Previous Questions	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes
6. Modify Debate	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Yes
5. To Postpone Definitely	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
4. To Commit or Recommit	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Maj	Yes
3. To Amend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
2. Postpone Indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Maj	Yes Affirmative Only
1. MAIN MOTION	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes

Examples of

Incidental Main Motions: Rescind  
Ratify  
Amend B-Laws

\*only re. desirability of referral or details of referral. The merits of the question *cannot* be debated.

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### CHART #2

NON-RANKING  
MOTIONS—and their  
five salient parliamentary  
points. These motions  
(incidental motions) have  
no rank among them-  
selves. Their being in  
order depends upon their  
necessity at the time.

	Must be Seconded	May be Debated	May be Amended	Vote	May be Reconsidered
	1	2	3	4	5
Appeal	Yes	** Yes	No	Maj	Yes
Suspend Rules	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
Point of Order, Call to Order	No	No	No	Mod	No
Objection to Consideration of a Question	No	No	No	2/3	Yes No Vote
Requests	No	No	No	Maj	No
Division of Assembly	No	No	No	—	No
To Read a Paper	Yes	No	No	Maj	Yes
To Withdraw a Motion (to be used only before debate)	No	No	No	Maj	Yes No Vote
To Divide the Question	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
To Close Nominations or Polls	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	No
To Consider Seriatim	Yes	No	Yes	Maj	No
<b>TO UNCLASSIFIED MOTIONS</b>					
Reconsider	Yes	** Yes	No	# Maj	No
To Take From the Table <sup>o</sup>	Yes	No	No	Maj	No
Rescind	Yes	Yes	Yes	* Maj	Neg

# same Presbytery meeting

\* with previous notice

<sup>o</sup> before the end of the next regular Presbytery meeting

\*\* if main motion is debatable

— Neither the chart nor references are inclusive but are to be used as an abridgement of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.