Motion

A motion is a formal way to propose something on which the group should vote. The proposer says, ñI move that...ò and clearly states what is being considered. Someone else ñsecondsò the motion. Guided by the president, the group discusses the motion until they are ready to vote. Finally, the president asks for an indication of ñall those in favorò followed by ñthose opposed.ò There is no need to ask for ñabstentionsò (those who choose not to vote at all), because abstentions are not counted toward the outcome of the motion.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of members required to conduct business at a meeting. Usually this number is stated in the groupôs bylaws. If a quorum is not indicated in the bylaws, Robertôs Rules of Order sets it at a majority of members.

Minutes

The minutes are the permanent record of the business conducted during a meeting, typically prepared by the secretary. They include details such as the date, time, and location of the meeting, whether a quorum was present, and the presiding officer. Specific motions and their outcomes (but not exact vote counts) are also included in the minutes. Discussion is not documented in the minutes. The minutes for each meeting are presented for the assemblyôs approval at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Adjournment is simply a formal way to close a meeting so everyone knows the session has come to an end. The time of adjournment is recorded in the meeting minutes.

Tabling a Motion

If it is clear that a motion cannot or should not be voted upon at the current time, it is typical to postpone (ñtabledò) it until the next meeting. Technically there should be a new motion to table the current motion, but most groups can agree to delay discussion without layers of parliamentary procedure. Often, it helps to appoint a committee or a member to study the issue and report back to other members at the next meeting. This tactic can save time on circular debate, especially when all of the facts arenôt available.

Resources

There are many guides to Robertôs Rules. If youôd like a reference, go with an abridged version such as Websterôs New World Robertôs Rules of Order, Simplified and Applied. Sticking to a few simple rules can make meetings more pleasant for everyone, from the president to first-timers.