

BRAINTEASERS #1 - ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER Q&A

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OLDER BRAINTEASERS HAVE BEEN UPDATED TO THE CURRENT *ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER NEWLY REVISED (12TH EDITION)*

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(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: A committee member arrives at a regular committee meeting (operating under *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*) at which all members will be present. Before the meeting begins, the member overhears that a motion will be made to reconsider an item adopted at the previous meeting. At the previous meeting, the committee member voted for adoption of the underlying motion (and does not want to discuss the matter again). What action can the committee member take to dramatically increase the chance that the motion to Reconsider will fail?

Answer: The committee member can choose not to attend the meeting (thereby changing the vote required to pass the motion to reconsider from a majority to two-thirds). The motion to reconsider has different characteristics when made in a standing or special committee. For one, the motion to reconsider can be made and taken up regardless of the time that has elapsed since the vote was taken. In addition, "Unless all the members of the committee who voted with the prevailing side are present or have been notified that the reconsideration will be moved, it requires a *two-thirds vote* to adopt the motion to *Reconsider*." *RONR (12th Ed.) 37:35(3)*.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: A motion has been debated and amended several times at the monthly meeting of a voluntary association. A member then rises and states: "I make a friendly amendment that the motion be amended to add 'and Assistant Treasurer' after the word 'Treasurer.' This should clear up the confusion about the motion, and I am certain there will be no opposition from the

maker of the original motion." The maker of the motion immediately stands and states, "I accept the friendly amendment."

The parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Is the proposed amendment adopted?

Answer: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* only describes the term "friendly amendment" in one short paragraph. (*RONR 12th Ed.* 12:91). As used in some societies, a friendly amendment is a proposed change which becomes part of a motion simply by its acceptance by the maker of the original motion. Widespread use of friendly amendments violates fairness principles of parliamentary procedure in that it takes rights away from the majority and places control in the hands of two members--the proposer of the amendment and the maker of the original motion.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition) provides as follows: "Before a motion has been stated by the chair, it is the property of its mover, who can withdraw it or modify it without asking the consent of anyone. . . . After a motion has been stated by the chair, it belongs to the meeting as a whole, and the maker must request the assembly's permission to withdraw or modify his own motion. . . ." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 33:12-13.

As to the brainteaser, it is not appropriate to simply adopt the amendment with only the involvement of the two members. The proper procedure would be for the presiding officer to ask if there is any objection by anyone to the amendment. If not, the proposed amendment can be adopted by unanimous consent. If any member objects to the proposed amendment, the chair should ask for a second and process the motion as any other formal amendment.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* ("Sturgis") omits "some of the unfamiliar terms and archaic motions encountered" in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. What is the suggested method in *The Standard Code* for dealing with the following "out of date" motions?

Postpone Indefinitely

Previous Question

Quasi-Committee of the Whole

Answer: *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)*, p. 231-237.

Postpone Indefinitely - Handle as the motion to table

Previous Question - "I move to close debate and vote immediately."

Quasi-Committee of the Whole - Treat as motion to consider informally.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: The Chairman of a board is having difficulty arranging a time that all members can discuss a matter. As a result, the chair obtains the personal approval of the proposed action by telephone from every member of the board. According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, is the action proper? If not, what should be done to make the proposal an official act of the board?

Answer: "The personal approval of a proposed action obtained separately by telephone, by individual interviews, or in writing, even from every member of the board, is not the approval of the board." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 49:16. Any such action could later be ratified. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 10:54.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: The President-Elect of an organization has upset numerous members with recent statements about what he will do as President. According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, can the assembly now elect someone other than the President-Elect to the office of President?

Answer: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* provides that "Once a person has been elected president-elect, the assembly cannot alter its decision regarding the succession of that person to the presidency, unless he vacates office during his term as president-elect or unless ground arises for removing him from that office." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 47:21.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, under what circumstances can a non-member of a society be removed from a meeting?

Answer: "Nonmembers . . . can be excluded at any time from part or all of a meeting Such exclusion can be effected by a ruling of the chair in cases of disorder, or by the adoption of a rule on the subject, or by an appropriate motion as the need arises—a motion of the latter nature being a question of privilege." (A motion to exclude all nonmembers (except absolutely necessary staff, if any) is often referred to as a motion to "go into executive session.") *RONR (12th Ed.)* 61:7.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what are the three situations in which a main motion requires greater than a majority vote?

Answer: (1) If the bylaws or special rules of order require more than a majority vote; (2) if the motion would have the effect of suspending a rule of order or a parliamentary right of members; or (3) if the motion would have the effect of changing something already adopted. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 10:8(7).

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: What is the distinction between a "President-Elect" and a "President Elect," according to *Demeter's Manual*?

Answer: "A president-elect (with hyphen) is the organization's newly elected president who has not yet been formally installed in office. A president elect (no hyphen) is an officer chosen at the previous election, and is the organization's pre-elected next president." *Demeter*, p. 255.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what is the difference between "stating the question" and "putting the question"?

Answer: By "stating the question," the chair formally places a motion before the assembly by stating "the exact motion and indicat[ing] that it is open to debate (and certain other parliamentary processes . . .) in the manner . . . appropriate to the case." By "putting the question," the chair puts the motion to a vote. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 4:15.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A close voice vote has been taken, and a member then calls for a division. Another member is then recognized by the presiding officer and moves to adjourn. Is the motion in order according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: No. The motion to adjourn "[t]akes precedence over all motions except the privileged motion to *Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn*; but it is not in order while the assembly is engaged in voting or verifying a vote, or before the result of a vote has been announced by the chair, except that, in case of a vote taken by ballot, a motion to *Adjourn* is in order after the ballots have been collected by the tellers and before the result has been announced." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 21:6.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: The Chairman of an organization operating under *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* relinquishes the chair in order to speak on a controversial motion. After further debate, the motion is postponed until next month's meeting. When the motion comes back on for discussion the following month, should the Chairman preside?

Answer: No. Whether at the same meeting or another one, a presiding officer who has spoken to a motion should not return to the chair until the matter is resolved. "The presiding officer who relinquished the chair then may not return to it until the pending main question has been disposed of, since he has shown himself to be a partisan as far as that particular matter is concerned." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 43:29.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: If there is no specific rule on the subject, can the chairman of a meeting exclude nonmembers from the meeting if the nonmembers are causing no disruption, according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: No. "Nonmembers . . . can be excluded at any time from part or all of a meeting of a society, or from all of its meetings. Such exclusion can be effected by a ruling of the chair in cases of disorder, or by the adoption of a rule on the subject, or by an appropriate motion as the need arises--a motion of the latter nature being a question of privilege. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 61:7.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A nominating committee wishes to nominate one of its own members for president of the organization. Is this appropriate according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: Yes. "Members of the nominating committee are not barred from becoming nominees for office themselves. To make such a requirement would mean, first, that service on the nominating committee carried a penalty by depriving its members of one of their privileges; and second, that appointment or election to the nominating committee could be used to prevent a member from becoming a nominee." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 46:12.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: Debate on a particularly controversial motion has been limited by means of the motion to limit debate to one hour. After thirty minutes of debate, it is apparent that more information is needed before a final decision can be made. A member attempts to Postpone the motion until the next week's meeting but is ruled out of order by the President. Based solely on these facts (and according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*), why?

Answer: The motion to Postpone to a Certain Time "cannot be moved after the adoption of a motion to close debate on the main question at a definite hour or of a motion to limit the total time allowed for debate; but it remains in order if only a limitation on the length of speeches is in force." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 14:4(2).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: The parliamentary authority of your organization is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. According to the Bylaws of the organization, the Treasurer is an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee. Can the Treasurer speak and/or vote at Finance Committee meetings?

Answer: Yes. The term ex-officio simply describes how membership on the body came about (by virtue of an office or title held in the society or outside group) and does not define rights of membership. Unless the Bylaws restrict participation, an ex-officio member has all rights of membership, including the right to speak and to vote. "In the executive board of a society, if the ex-officio member of the board is under the authority of the society (that is, if he is a member, an employee, or an elected or appointed officer of the society), there is no distinction between him and the other board members." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 49:8.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are a member of an organization with a parliamentary authority of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Your elected board of directors recently held an important meeting, and you wish to see a copy of minutes. Are you entitled to demand a copy of the minutes?

Answer: No, unless the bylaws of your organization or state law permit or require such right of access. "Only members of the board have the right to examine the minute book kept by the secretary, unless the board orders otherwise (see next paragraph)." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 49:17-19.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization is planning to rewrite its bylaws for purposes of clarity as well as to

make substantial changes. The bylaws committee plans to submit a revision. What vote is required to adopt the revision if your parliamentary authority is *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* ("Sturgis")?

Answer: Majority. "A revised set of bylaws requires only a majority vote for adoption." *The Standard Code*, p. 209.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: One of the basic headings in the order of business is often erroneously referred to as "Old Business." What is the proper title for this portion of the program, and how does an item get placed in this heading according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: "The heading of *Unfinished Business and General Orders* includes items of business in the four categories that are listed below:"

- a) Question pending when the previous meeting adjourned;
- b) Any questions that were unfinished business at the previous meeting and not reached;
- c) Any questions set as general orders for the previous meeting and not reached; and
- d) Matters postponed to the present meeting.

RONR (12th Ed.) 41:23.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: You are the member of a committee in an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. You disagree with the committee's recommendations and wish to speak against the committee report when it comes to the floor and to bring forward issues that you feel the committee did not give enough weight to during discussion. Can you speak against the committee report, and can you discuss the issues the committee overlooked?

Answer: Yes, you can speak against the committee report. However, you cannot make reference to what occurred during the committee's discussion of the issue. "But in debate on any written or oral report in the assembly, any member of the reporting committee who does not concur has the same right as any other member of the assembly to speak individually in opposition. No one can make allusion in the assembly to what has occurred during the

deliberations of the committee, however, unless it is by report of the committee or by unanimous consent. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 51:65.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Prepare a teller's report under *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* for the following election:

There are 1,000 members of the association. 500 delegates are present at the convention. Only 400 delegates are present at the meeting during the election. A quorum is present.

There were 3 official candidates for Secretary: Jim Jones, who received 30 votes, Tim Turner, who received 125 votes; and Bob Blue, who received 165 votes. A number of delegates do not like any of the candidates. As a result, 10 ballots that were returned are completely blank.

Mickey Mouse (the cartoon character) received 20 votes.

Was any candidate elected on this ballot?

Answer:

Tellers' Report for Election

Number of Votes cast340

Necessary for Election171

Bob Blue received 165

Tim Turner received125

Jim Jones received 30

Illegal votes

Mickey Mouse (ineligible) 20

No, a candidate was not elected on this ballot.

See *RONR (12th Ed.)* 45:37.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: Two organizations (the ABC Club and the XYZ Club) have identical members, issues, and discussions. The only difference between the two organizations is their parliamentary

authority--one uses the latest Robert's and one follows The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Ed.)("Sturgis").

The following identical election took place in both meetings: For the office of President, Sue Smith received 50 votes, Bob Brown received 44 votes, Vicki Vail received 2 votes, and Mickey Mouse (yes, the cartoon character) received 4 votes. The ABC Club declared no one elected and had a second balloting, which Bob Brown won. The XYZ Club declared Sue Smith the new President.

Based upon this information, which organization likely uses which major parliamentary authority and why does it make a difference?

Answer: The ABC Club uses Robert's as its parliamentary authority, in which illegal votes cast by legal voters (i.e., for Mickey Mouse) are taken into account in determining the number of votes cast for computing a majority. Under Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition), Sue Smith did not receive a majority (51 votes) of the 100 ballots cast and reballoting was necessary.

The XYZ Club uses as its parliamentary authority The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, in which only legal votes are taken into account in determining the number of votes cast for computing a majority. Under The Standard Code, Sue Smith received a majority of the 96 legal ballots cast.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization uses *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* as its parliamentary authority. A main motion is under consideration. The previous question is moved, seconded, and adopted. Are you permitted to obtain the floor at this point and move that the vote on the main motion be taken by ballot?

Answer: Yes. Motions relating to methods of voting and the polls are incidental motions and "can be moved while an order for the Previous Question is in effect on the votes to which they apply." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 30:3(1).

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: What should be in the first paragraph of your organization's minutes if *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* is the parliamentary authority?

Answer: (1) The kind of meeting (regular, special, etc.); (2) the name of the society; (3) the date and time of meeting (and place if varies); (4) the fact that the chairman and secretary were present or their substitutes; and (5) whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 48:4.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: The bylaws of your organization (which uses *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* as a parliamentary authority) provides that the officers shall "be elected by ballot." The same person has held the office of Treasurer for 12 years and is unopposed for re-election. The organization is 100% behind her election. Can the ballot be taken by a voice vote if there is unanimous consent? Can a motion be made to suspend the bylaws to allow such an election?

Answer: No, a ballot vote must be taken. "The assembly cannot make valid a viva-voce election if the bylaws require the election to be by ballot." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 46:41. In addition, bylaws rarely can be suspended and cannot be in such an instance.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are planning the annual convention for your organization (which uses *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*). What should be the first item of business following any preliminary ceremonies (welcome, pledge, introductions, etc.) on the first day of the convention?

Answer: "The official organization of the convention is brought about by the separate consideration and adoption of the reports of three committees mentioned above--the Credentials Committee, the Committee on Standing Rules, and the Program Committee, in that order." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 59:11.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, list the basic bylaws of an organization.

Answer: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* 56:

- I. Name
- II. Object
- III. Members
- IV. Officers
- V. Meetings
- VI. Executive Board (or Board of Directors)
- VII. Committees
- VIII. Parliamentary Authority
- IX. Amendment of Bylaws

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are attending the monthly meeting of an organization that uses *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* as its parliamentary authority. A main motion is made and seconded. Another member is recognized in debate who says, "This is the dumbest idea I can imagine. I think we should kill it and move to lay the main motion on the table." Is the motion to lay on the table in order? Why or why not?

Answer: "In ordinary assemblies, the motion to Lay on the Table is out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a measure." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 17:2.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: The motion on the floor at a meeting following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* is that the "national headquarters building be sold for \$100,000." An amendment is proposed to strike "\$100,000" and to insert "\$125,000." A motion to create a blank as to the dollar amount is proposed and passes. Other dollar figures made to fill the blank

are \$90,000 and \$110,000. What order should these figures be voted on in order to fill the blank?

Answer: "[W]henver a logical order is apparent, to arrange the proposed entries so that *the one least likely to be acceptable will be voted on first*, and so on. New supporters may then be gained with each succeeding vote until a majority in favor of one entry is reached. . . . In the case of such a motion--to *accept* a sum of money in *settlement*--the amounts being considered should be arranged and voted on in order from the smallest to the largest." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:108-110. As a result, the figures should be voted on in the following order: \$90,000; \$100,000; \$110,000; \$125,000.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: The motion on the floor at a meeting following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* is that "delegates to the state convention be instructed to vote for the dues increase." Is a motion to amend by inserting the word "not" between the words "convention" and "be" in order? Is a motion to amend by inserting the word "not" between the words "instructed" and "to" in order?

Answer: Not in order as to "not be instructed." In order as to "instructed not to vote." "Thus, in the motion that 'our delegates be instructed to vote in favor of the increase in Federation dues,' an amendment to insert 'not' before 'be' is out of order because an affirmative vote on not giving a certain instruction is identical with a negative vote on giving the same instruction. But it would be in order to move to insert 'not' before 'to' ('instructed not to vote in favor'), since this would change the main motion into one to give different instructions." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:22(2).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: What is a "proviso"?

Answer: A bylaws amendment takes effect immediately unless another time is specified for its becoming effective. "While the amendment is pending, a motion can be made to amend the enacting words of the motion to amend by adding a clause such as this: '. . . with the proviso

that [or, ' . . . provided, however, that'] this amendment shall not go into effect until after the close of this annual meeting.'" *RONR (12th Ed.)* 57:15.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: A motion is pending that will require a two-thirds vote for adoption. An amendment is then proposed from the floor. According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what vote is required to adopt the amendment?

Answer: Majority. "Requires a majority vote, regardless of the vote required to adopt the question to be amended." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:7(7).

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: Your organization follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. The pending motion is a secondary amendment to strike out words from a primary amendment to strike. What will be the difference in effect depending on whether the primary amendment is a motion to strike out words or a motion to strike out a paragraph?

Answer: "If the primary amendment is to strike out certain *words*, then words struck out of the primary amendment will remain *in* the resolution regardless of the final vote on the primary amendment (as explained under *Strike Out Words*, above). But if the primary amendment is to strike out a *paragraph*, then words struck out of that paragraph in the process of secondary amendment are *out* of the resolution regardless of the final vote on the primary amendment." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:51.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: Which motion is not debatable, but is amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote for adoption?

Answer: Limit or Extend Limits of Debate. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* tinted page t47.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: In an organization following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, at what times should the presiding officer stand?

Answer: (1) Calling the meeting to order; (2) declaring it adjourned; (3) putting a question to a vote; (4) explaining the ruling on a point of order; (5) speaking in debate on an appeal or a point of order submitted to the assembly. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 47:9.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: In *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what is the name of the (rarely used) proceedings in which the full assembly gives detailed consideration to a matter under consideration, members can speak to the main question or any amendment as often as they can get the floor, the presiding officer remains in the chair, and any motion except an amendment that is adopted puts an end to the proceedings?

Answer: Quasi Committee of the Whole (Consideration as If in Committee of the Whole). *RONR (12th Ed.)* 52.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* recognizes a process (not used in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*), by which a motion that has been adopted can be repealed automatically from the adoption of a later motion that conflicts in whole or in part. This process is known as repeal by _____.

Answer: Repeal by implication. *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)*, p. 30.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* generally permits an individual to speak to any debatable motion two times on the same day. Name a motion which if debatable permits members to only speak once, but the presiding officer may speak to the motion twice.

Answer: (1) Appeal or (2) point of order submitted to a vote. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 23, 24.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* states that the minimum essential officers for the conduct of business in a deliberative assembly are a _____ and a _____.

Answer: The "*presiding officer*, who conducts the meeting and sees that the rules are observed, and a *secretary*, or *clerk*, who makes a written record of what is done--usually called 'the minutes.'" *RONR (12th Ed.)* 3:6.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: You are attending the regular monthly meeting of an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A motion is being debated when a member moves to adjourn. The chair takes the vote on the motion to adjourn and announces that the "ayes have it." Before actually declaring the meeting adjourned, a member obtains the floor and moves that "when the meeting adjourns, it adjourn to meet here next Thursday at 7:00 p.m." Is the motion in order?

Answer: Yes. The privileged motion to Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn "can be moved even after the assembly has voted to adjourn, provided that the chair has not yet declared the assembly adjourned." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 22:6(1).

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: Your convention follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. In what order should the following committee reports be adopted at the beginning of the convention: Program, Standing Rules, Credentials?

Answer: "[T]he Credentials Committee, the Committee on Standing Rules, and the Program Committee, in that order." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 59:11.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: You are at a convention that earlier in the same day passed an important main motion. A member moves during the afternoon to Rescind the motion passed that morning. Another member raises a Point of Order and states that the motion to Rescind is out of order in that the motion can be dealt with by the motion to Reconsider. Is the point of order well taken if your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: No, the Point of Order is not well taken. The motion to Rescind is not in order if "it has previously been moved to reconsider the vote on the main motion, and the question can be reached by calling up the motion to *Reconsider*." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 35:6(a). In the present case, no motion to reconsider was previously moved, and either the motion to reconsider or the motion to rescind would be in order.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, one type of deliberative assembly is a meeting of an unorganized group which is announced "as open to everyone (or everyone within a specified sector of the population) interested in a particular problem or purpose," and which is called with a view to appropriate action to be decided on and taken by the meeting body. What is this type of assembly?

Answer: A mass meeting. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 1:10.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: Your organization follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A motion is made at a monthly meeting and heated discussion follows. A member then rises and points out that the motion was never seconded and is therefore out of order. Is the Point of Order well taken?

Answer: No. "After debate has begun or, if there is no debate, after any member has voted, the lack of a second has become immaterial and it is too late to make a point of order that the motion has not been seconded. If a motion is considered and adopted without having been seconded—even in a case where there was no reason for the chair to overlook this

requirement—the absence of a second does not affect the validity of the motion's adoption. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 4:13.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: Using *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what motion allows an assembly to avoid a particular main motion altogether without discussion?

Answer: Objection to the Consideration of a Question (which is not debatable, not amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote against consideration to pass). *RONR (12th Ed.)* 26:1.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law* uses the mnemonic "S-H-I-P" as a reminder of the subjects to which a member can raise a question of privilege. What does each letter stand for in the catchword "S-H-I-P"?

Answer: S-H-I-P = S-safety; H-health; I-integrity, and protection of P-property. *Demeter*, p. 106.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* recognizes that one use of the motion to suspend the rules is to "cancel out everything that has been done" on a motion when "the parliamentary situation in a meeting becomes so confused that neither the chair nor the members can figure out how to proceed." What is the name given to this use of the motion to suspend the rules?

Answer: The "Gordian Knot" Motion, p. 86.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A particular organization meets monthly and must be concerned about the following laws/rules. Arrange them in order from most important to least important according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*.

Bylaws

Custom

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)

Standing Rules

Special Rules of Order

Constitution

Articles of Incorporation

Answer: *RONR (12th Ed.)* 2:

Articles of Incorporation

Constitution

Bylaws

Special Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)

Standing Rules

Custom

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: You are at a special meeting of a church congregation called for the purpose of considering whether or not to sell a piece of church property. During discussion of the only business to be considered at the meeting, a member obtains the floor and moves to table the motion for which the meeting was called. Is the motion to Table in order if your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: No, the motion to table is not in order. "At a special meeting, it is dilatory and not in order to move to lay on the table the matter for which the meeting has been called." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 17:14.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are at a monthly meeting of your organization and a member moves to "dispense with the reading of the minutes." If adopted, what is the effect of this motion according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: Contrary to popular usage, the motion to "dispense with the reading of the minutes" does not do away with the reading of the minutes, but simply means that the minutes will not be read and approved at the regular time. The minutes should still be approved at the meeting. If not, "they are read and approved at the following meeting, before the later minutes are taken up." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 48:11.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are the parliamentarian for a monthly meeting following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Votes are traditionally taken by a show of hands. After a relatively close vote, a member calls for a Division of the assembly. The member makes clear that he only expects a rising vote, not a counted vote. The chair feels that a Division is not necessary because the previous vote was by hands and was the same as a Division. Is the member entitled to a rising vote?

Answer: Yes, because a hand vote is not the same as a division. "Whenever a member doubts the result of a voice (viva-voce) vote or a vote by show of hands . . . he can call for a Division of the Assembly, thereby requiring the vote to be taken again by rising." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 29:1.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: A convention has been called for the purpose of forming a state society. The chairman of the Convention Arrangements Committee has called the meeting to order and has asked for a motion to authorize the appointment of the Credentials, Rules, and Program Committees. A Point of Order is raised that no motion of any kind is in order because the Credentials Committee has not reported and no one knows who the properly appointed delegates are. Is the Point of Order well taken if the parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: The Point of Order is not well taken, and the motion is appropriate. "Until the report of the Credentials Committee is adopted, no business other than its adoption or the other preliminary actions described in this paragraph may be considered, except that any motion related to the consideration of such business or to the conduct of the meeting before the

report is adopted, as well as those that are in order in the absence of a quorum, are in order." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 60:3.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are at the monthly meeting of an organization following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A main motion, amendment, and motion to refer are pending. A motion is made and adopted to close debate on all pending motions. The motion to Refer is voted on and defeated. The motion to Amend is voted on and adopted. The chair begins to state, "The question is on the adoption of the main motion as amended . . .," when she notices a member seeking recognition. The member is recognized and moves to Table the main motion on the grounds that something else of immediate urgency has arisen. Is the motion to Table in order given that the Previous Question has already been adopted and several votes taken?

Answer: Yes, the motion to Table is in order. "If debate has been closed by ordering the Previous Question or by the expiration of the time to which debate was limited, then up until the moment of taking the last vote under the order, the questions still before the assembly can be laid on the table." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 17:12.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Under what circumstances is an appeal not debatable?

Answer: When the appeal "(a) relates to indecorum or a transgression of the rules of speaking; (b) relates to the priority of business; or (c) is made while the immediately pending question is undebatable or involved in the appeal." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 24:3(5).

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: You are at the regular monthly meeting of your civic club during New Business. A very important budget matter was tabled at the last meeting. You are presently discussing a motion on the entertainment for the annual meeting, when a member states in debate that in the event the main motion on entertainment is voted down, she will offer a different motion

covering the question. The entertainment motion is put to a vote and voted down. Can you now move to Take from the Table the important matter from the previous meeting if the parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*? Why or why not?

Answer: "Even if no question is pending, a motion to Take from the Table cannot interrupt a series of motions connected with bringing up a single item of business, but must wait until the complete series is disposed of. For example, . . . when a main motion has just been voted down after a member stated in debate that in that event he would offer a different motion covering the case." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 34:5.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are arranging a national convention. The bylaws provide that your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. What three reports must be adopted (and in what order) to make the convention official?

Answer: "The official organization of the convention is brought about by the separate consideration and adoption of the reports of three committees mentioned above—the Credentials Committee, the Committee on Standing Rules, and the Program Committee, in that order." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 59:11.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A presiding officer is convinced that a member is using parliamentary motions for obstructive purposes. What procedural course of action can the presiding officer take to resolve the situation, according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: "Whenever the chair becomes convinced that one or more members are repeatedly using parliamentary forms for dilatory purposes, he should either not recognize these members or he should rule that such motions are not in order—but he should never adopt such a course merely to *speed up* business, and he should never permit his personal feelings to affect his judgment in such cases. If the chair only *suspects* that a motion is not made in good faith, he should give the maker of the motion the benefit of the doubt. The chair should always be

courteous and fair, but at the same time he should be firm in protecting the assembly from imposition." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 39:4.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: A motion is made and seconded to suspend a convention standing rule to permit the introduction of a main motion that would otherwise be out of order. The delegate who plans to introduce the main motion asks for permission to speak first on the motion to suspend the rules. The delegate who moved to suspend the rules also asks to speak. Who should the presiding officer recognize first to speak to the motion to suspend the rules, if your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: Neither, because this is a trick question! The motion to suspend the rules is not debatable or amendable. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 25:2(5).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A motion is made and seconded that, "The club sponsor a pool party this summer at a cost not to exceed \$500." Following some discussion, a motion is made to amend the motion by changing "pool party" to "picnic." The motion to amend receives a second and is now under discussion. A member is recognized and moves to make an "amendment to the amendment" by striking the word "summer" and inserting in its place "fall" (so that the event will be in the fall, rather than the summer). Is this motion to amend in order if your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: While it is proper to propose an "amendment to an amendment" (often referred to as a "secondary amendment"), the amendment must propose a change to the primary amendment. In the example above, the proposed secondary amendment has nothing to do with the primary amendment of changing "pool party" to "picnic," but pertains to another part of the main motion. As a result, such an amendment is out of order at the present time. Once consideration of the primary amendment is completed, such a motion to amend "summer" to "fall" would be in order. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:11-12.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization's bylaws require the nomination and election of officers to be considered at the May meeting. You are responsible for preparing the agenda for the May meeting. Where should the nomination and election of officers be placed in the order of business, if your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: "Matters that the bylaws require to be considered at a particular meeting, such as the nomination and election of officers, may be regarded as special orders for the meeting and be considered under the heading of Special Orders in the order of business." (In other words, after Reports of Special Committees, but before Unfinished Business and General Orders.) *RONR (12th Ed.)* 41:20.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: This Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives presided over the most celebrated and sensational of all quorum controversies. On January 29, 1890, he ruled that the presiding officer could ascertain a quorum with his eyes, and not simply rely on the ears of the Clerk in calling the roll (which resulted in some members remaining silent in their chairs and not being counted towards the quorum). When members realized they might actually be counted towards quorum, some dodged under desks, others rushed for the doors, and one member kicked open a locked door and fled. This Speaker's book, *Parliamentary Rules*, is still used as a parliamentary authority. Who was the Speaker and where was he from?

Answer: Thomas B. Reed from Maine. His book is often referred to as *Reed's Rules*.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are attending the monthly meeting of a civic organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A member introduces a motion to hold a spring picnic the following month at a nearby park. A member raises a point of order that the motion is out of order in that the motion is identical to a motion presented, discussed, and defeated at the last monthly meeting. Is the point of order well taken?

Answer: No, the point of order is not well taken. A motion cannot be renewed during the same session in which it has already been before the assembly, except where its renewal is permitted by a specific rule. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 38:1. However, the typical rule is that "each regular meeting [of an organization] normally completes a separate session." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 9:6. As a result, a defeated motion can be brought up again at a subsequent meeting.

(Difficulty level = 1)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* gives the maker of a motion preference over other members in speaking to his motion. Does the maker of the motion also have a right to speak last?

Answer: No. While the maker is always entitled to be recognized in preference to other members (so long as he has not already spoken on the question), there is no general "maker gets to speak last" rule. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 3:33.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: What terms are used in *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* ("Sturgis") in place of the motions to "Lay on the Table" and the "Previous Question" (the terms used in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*)?

Answer: Lay on the Table = Motion to Postpone Temporarily
Previous Question = Motion to Close Debate and Vote Immediately
The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, p. 65 and 68.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: A quorum for the regular monthly meeting of an organization following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* is 100 members. Only five members show up at the time and place of the meeting (the weather is REALLY bad). Can the meeting be called to order?

Answer: Yes, the meeting can be called to order. However, the only actions that can be taken are to fix the time to which to adjourn, adjourn, recess, or take measures to obtain a quorum. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 40:7.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law* uses the mnemonic NO-MOM-PA to remember the fundamental subjects which make up an acceptable set of bylaws. What does each letter stand for? What additional basic bylaws articles does *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* include that are not listed in *Demeter* as a fundamental subject?

Answer:

Name

Object

Membership

Officers

Meetings

Parliamentary authority

Amendments to bylaws

Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law, p. 179-180.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition) includes "Executive Board (or Board of Directors)," and "Committees." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 56:17-57.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, can the motion to Reconsider be moved while a privileged motion to adjourn is pending?

Answer: Due to the strict time limitations on its introduction, the motion to Reconsider can be made (but not taken up) while the privileged motion to Adjourn is pending or even after the assembly has voted to adjourn. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 21:10.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: What is the difference between "bullet voting" and "cumulative voting"?

Answer: "Bullet voting" is casting a vote for only one candidate or option when you have the option of casting several votes. (For example, four candidates are running for two open seats.

You cast a vote for only one candidate, essentially "depriving" the other candidates of your additional vote.)

"Cumulative voting" permits voters to allocate votes among various candidates and is often used in the election of corporate directors. (For example, you have 100 shares of stock and are permitted to vote for two candidates. Under cumulative voting, you might be able to cast your 200 votes for one candidate, increasing the probability that the candidate will be elected.) Cumulative voting permits a minority of shareholders to have an influence on the outcome of an election.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* distinguishes between ordinary standing rules and convention standing rules. What is the vote required to adopt such rules and to suspend such rules?

Answer: Ordinary standing rule--majority to adopt, suspended temporarily by majority vote. Convention standing rule--majority or two-thirds to adopt (depending on whether adopted as a "package" or individually and on the nature of the rule), suspended temporarily by majority vote. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 2, 58.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are attending a monthly meeting that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A main motion and an amendment to the main motion are pending. A member gains the floor and moves "a substitute motion that the matter be referred to committee." According to the organization's parliamentary authority, is this terminology correct? Why or why not?

Answer: No, the terminology is not correct. A "substitute" is one of the forms of the motion to amend and can be used to strike out an entire paragraph, section, or article and to insert something different in its place. A rule of amendments is that it is out of order to propose an amendment that "has the effect of converting one parliamentary motion into another." This amendment would convert the pending motion into the motion to refer and is therefore out of

order. However, a member could obtain the floor and simply make the motion to refer to committee (as long as the motion is in order procedurally at the given moment). *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:22(5).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, which of the following items should be included in minutes?

Notices of motions

Names of members present

Date and time of meeting

All main motions and the wording in which each motion was adopted

Debate by members

Names of movers of motions

Names of seconders of motions

The time of adjournment

Answer: *RONR (12th Ed.)* 48:2-6:

Notices of motions -- YES

Names of members present -- NO

Date and time of meeting -- YES

All main motions and the wording in which each motion was adopted -- YES

Debate by members -- NO

Names of movers of motions -- YES

Names of seconders of motions -- NO

The time of adjournment -- YES

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