

BRAINTEASERS #2 - ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER Q&A

Jim Slaughter, JD, CPP-T, PRP

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

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(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are a member of a board with fewer than a dozen members. According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, name four ways in which the rules governing such a meeting are different than the rules that hold in other assemblies.

Answer: Any of the following from *RONR (12th Ed.)* 49:21:

Members may raise a hand instead of standing when seeking the floor and may remain seated while making motions or speaking

Motions need not be seconded

No limit to the number of times a member can speak (except for an Appeal)

Informal discussion permitted

Votes permitted at times with no motion introduced

Chairman need not rise while putting questions

The chairman can speak and vote

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: A motion is made at a meeting that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Following debate by the maker of the motion, a member raises a Point of Order that the motion was never seconded. How should the presiding officer rule on the point of order?

Answer: The presiding officer should rule that the point of order is not well taken. "The requirement of a second is for the chair's guidance as to whether to state the question on the

motion, thus placing it before the assembly." "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." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12-13.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A voice vote is taken at a meeting that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A member questions the outcome of the vote and wishes to have the vote counted. Can the member demand a counted vote?

Answer: No, a single member cannot demand a counted vote. However, the member can move for a counted vote (which requires a second, is not debatable, and takes a majority vote). While the member can demand a "division," this is simply an uncounted standing vote and may not resolve questions about the outcome of the vote. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 30:3-6.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: An organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* anticipates a particularly difficult meeting and wants to bring in an outside person to chair the meeting. Is such a procedure allowed, and if so, what must be done to permit a nonmember to preside?

Answer: Yes, it is appropriate for an invited nonmember who is skilled in presiding to chair. "If the president and the vice-president(s) do not object, the assembly, by majority vote, can adopt an incidental main motion to effect such an arrangement for all or part of a session. Alternatively, the rules may be suspended to authorize this type of temporary appointment, even over the objection of the president or a vice-president." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 47:13.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: A member of an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* wants to prepare a resolution in favor of naming a new school for John Doe. John Doe has two major arguments in favor of such recognition: (1) he was the first superintendent of the school system many years earlier; and (2) he later went on to serve his state with distinction as Governor. Using these facts, prepare a resolution with two "Whereas" clauses in proper form.

Answer: While "Whereas" clauses are not required, they are sometimes included in a resolution when it is desirable to include a brief statement of background (or when it is the custom of the organization). In this brainteaser, any language will do—it is the form that is important.

Whereas, The first superintendent of the county school system was John Doe; and

Whereas, John Doe went on to serve our state with distinction as Governor;

Resolved, That the new school to be opened in August of 2001 shall be named the John Doe Elementary School.

RONR (12th Ed.) 10:13-22, which also notes appropriate variations on this language.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* states that in organizations with employees, the assembly or board can give instructions to an employee in a form very similar to a resolution, except the word "Resolved" is replaced with what word?

Answer: "Ordered." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 10:24.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: If your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, under what circumstances is the motion to Appeal not debatable?

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

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: If your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, should an officer (such as the treasurer) move the implementation of any recommendations contained in her report during a meeting?

Answer: No. "If an officer, in reporting, makes a recommendation, he should not himself move its implementation, but such a motion can be made by another member as soon as the officer has concluded his report." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 41:14.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. At the end of business at a regular meeting of an ordinary society, the chair asked, "Is there any further business?" When there was no response, the chair adjourned the meeting. Should the chair have asked for or waited for a motion to adjourn?

Answer: No. "When it appears that there is no further business in a meeting of an ordinary local society that normally goes through a complete order of business at each regular meeting, the chair, instead of waiting or calling for a motion to adjourn, can ask, "Is there any further business?" If there is no response, the chair can then say, "Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 21:15.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: According to *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* ("Sturgis"), the motion to reconsider can only be applied to what type of motion? Why?

Answer: Under *The Standard Code*, "The motion to reconsider can be applied only to the main motion. The same result is accomplished for all other motions by more simple and direct means. Other motions that have lost can be proposed again or renewed as soon as, in the judgment of the presiding officer, the vote might result differently. Other motions that have carried can be changed easily by procedural motions." *The Standard Code*, page 39.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law* uses mnemonics to remember the rules to certain motions. According to *Demeter*, the motion to Appeal From A Decision of the Chair can be applied to J,O,D. What do these letters stand for?

Answer: "One way of remembering the general rule that no appeals can be taken from the Chair's rulings which arise out of known Facts, evident Truths, established Rules or operative Laws, but can be taken only from rulings which are based on his personal Judgment, Opinion or Discretion, is by the first letters thereof: F,T,R,L and J,O,D." *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law*, page 131."

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what types of meetings should be closed to members of the organization?

Answer: "In any society, certain matters relating to discipline, such as trials, must be handled only in executive session." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 9:24.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization's bylaws provide that the executive director is an "ex-officio member of the board of directors," but give no other guidance. Is the executive director allowed to vote and to make motions during meetings of the board of directors? The parliamentary authority of the organization is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*.

Answer: Unless expressly stated differently in the bylaws, an ex-officio member has all rights of membership—including the right to participate in debate 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: A main motion is pending at a meeting following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* as follows: "That the organization support the candidacies of Able, Brown, Charles, and David." A motion is made to amend the motion by striking the word "Charles." Can this amendment now be amended?

Answer: No. The motion to amend by striking out certain words can be amended only by striking out words from the primary amendment. "As a consequence of the rule stated at the beginning of this paragraph, a primary amendment to strike out a single word cannot be amended." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:49.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: Your organization follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A member has repeatedly questioned the motives of other members. The chair has called the member to order, but the member refuses to be quiet. Does the chair have the authority to order the offending member removed from the hall?

Answer: No. "Although the chair has no authority to impose a penalty or to order the offending member removed from the hall, the assembly has that power." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 61:13.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: A motion to recess is made at a meeting while no other question is pending. What type of motion is this and what are its characteristics? The parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*.

Answer: A motion to recess made while no question is pending is an incidental main motion. It is debatable, amendable, and requires a majority vote. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 20:3.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A particular convention standing rule was adopted by a two-thirds vote (following *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*). What vote is required to suspend the rule for a particular specified purpose?

Answer: "Any standing rule of a convention (except one prescribing the parliamentary authority) can be suspended for a particular specified purpose by a majority vote, even if the rule required a two-thirds vote for its adoption. Under such a suspension, however, the applicable rules in the parliamentary authority prescribed by the bylaws (or by a rule of the convention) come into force—as if the standing rule had not been adopted. To suspend a convention standing rule and also the general parliamentary rule normally applying to the same situation requires a two-thirds vote." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 59:37.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: A convention is considering the report of the resolutions committee (which has been presented as one motion on a series of different subjects). The parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. What vote is required if a member wishes for one of the resolutions to receive separate consideration and a vote?

Answer: None. "[O]ne or more of the several resolutions must receive separate consideration and vote at the request of a single member, and the motion for Division of a Question is not used." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 27:10.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: An update in the 11th Edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* changed the longstanding preferred name for the motion "Point of Information." What is the current preferred name for a Point of Information?

Answer: "Request for Information." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 33:6.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: The members at a meeting review the minutes of the prior meeting. An error in the minutes is noted and corrected. Where does *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* suggest that corrections to the minutes be noted?

Answer: "Any correction approved by the assembly is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes

were approved "as corrected," without specifying what the correction was." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 48:4(5).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* describes a situation in which the chair, without objection, simply permits a brief pause, without a declaration of a recess. What is the term describing such action?

Answer: To "stand at ease." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 8:2(4).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A large board with a parliamentary authority of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* is considering a proposal to "construct a new facility at a cost not to exceed \$100,000." During debate, it becomes apparent that different members have different thoughts on the amount of money to spend on the facility. A member moves "to create a blank by striking out of the pending motion the sum '\$100,000'" so that an unlimited number of proposal can be considered at the same time. Is the motion to create the blank debatable? Are suggestions to fill the blank debatable?

Answer: While the motion to create a blank is undebatable (and requires a majority vote), proposals to fill a blank in a debatable motion are debatable. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:98.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A nonmember begins to disrupt the monthly meeting of an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. The chair orders the offending nonmember to leave the hall. If the nonmember does not feel that the order is fair, what can she do about it procedurally?

Answer: Nothing. "Nonmembers, on the other hand—or a particular nonmember or group of 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 . . . Members, however, can appeal from the decision of the chair. . . ." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 61:7.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your board of directors meets three times each year and follows Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition). A member wishes to delay the consideration of a matter until more information can be obtained. Can the motion to Postpone to a Certain Time be used to delay the matter until the next board meeting?

Answer: No. "In a case where more than a quarterly time interval (see 9:7) will elapse between meetings (for example, in an annual convention of delegates or in a local society that holds only an annual meeting), a question cannot be postponed beyond the end of the present session." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 14:6.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, there are three variations of the motion to Commit whose object is not to turn the main question over to a smaller group, but to permit the assembly's full meeting body to consider it with the greater freedom of debate that is allowed in committees—that is, with no limit on the number of times a member can speak. What are these three forms?

Answer: "These forms of the motion are: (a) to 'go into a committee of the whole'; (b) to 'go into quasi committee of the whole' (or, to 'consider as if in committee of the whole'; and (c) to 'consider informally.'" *RONR (12th Ed.)* 13:2.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, which of the following parliamentary steps could be in order while the privileged motion to Adjourn is pending?

To inform the assembly of business requiring attention before adjournment?

To make important announcements?

To move to table the motion to adjourn?

To move to recess for 5 minutes?

To move to reconsider a previous vote?

To move to limit debate on the motion to adjourn?

To move to set the time for an adjourned meeting?

Answer: *RONR (12th Ed.)* 21:10:

To inform the assembly of business requiring attention before adjournment – Yes

To make important announcements - Yes

To move to table the motion to adjourn - No

To move to recess for 5 minutes - No

To move to reconsider a previous vote - Yes

To move to limit debate on the motion to adjourn - No

To move to set the time for an adjourned meeting - Yes

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A motion is being debated at the monthly meeting of an organization that follows Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition). After some discussion, the maker and seconder of the motion realize that a small wording change should be made to the motion. Do they have this right?

Answer: No more than other members of the assembly. "To modify a motion after it has been stated by the chair, the maker asks permission to do so, as in the case of withdrawal of a motion. If there is no objection, the chair states the question on the modified motion. If anyone objects, the chair must then determine whether an amendment equivalent to the requested modification would be in order. . . . A pending motion can be amended only by vote or unanimous consent of the assembly, even if the maker of the motion states that he 'accepts' the amendment." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 33:19.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: A committee has voted 8 to 3 in favor of presenting a motion to the assembly for adoption? May a committee member who does not agree with the report speak against the motion before the assembly, according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: "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: You are in a meeting that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. You make a motion to reconsider an item that was discussed and adopted several meetings before the present one. The chairman notes that because no notice of the motion to reconsider was given and because of some members not being present at the meeting, a two-thirds vote will be required to adopt the motion to reconsider. What type of meeting are you attending?

Answer: A meeting of a standing or special committee. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 37:35.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: You are a delegate to an annual convention that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. You wish to delay consideration of the pending resolution until next year's annual convention. What motion should you use?

Answer: The subsidiary motion to Commit or Refer. "If two business sessions are separated by more than a quarterly time interval . . . then business can go over from the earlier session to the later one only by means of referral to a committee." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 9:8.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, this is a committee that is appointed, as the need arises, to carry out a specified task, at the completion of which the committee automatically ceases to exist. What is this type of committee called?

Answer: A "special committee" (or "select committee" or "ad hoc committee"). *RONR (12th Ed.)* 50:10.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A motion is laid on the table by an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Later in the same meeting, a motion to Take from the Table is made, seconded, and defeated. Another matter of business is then taken up. How long must a member wait before again moving to take from the table (or should the motion to Take from the Table be reconsidered)?

Answer: The motion to Take from the Table cannot be reconsidered. "A motion to Take from the Table that has failed can be renewed after disposal of the business that was taken up following rejection of the motion." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 38:7(2).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A new edition of the most popular parliamentary authority was released in 2020. What is the full title of the book?

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

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are the member of an organization and have been asked to serve as parliamentarian. Are there any rights as a member that you must forego to accept this position, according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: "A member of an assembly who acts as its parliamentarian has the same duty as the presiding officer to maintain a position of impartiality, and therefore does not make motions, participate in debate, or vote on any question except in the case of a ballot vote." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 47:55.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. Is it permitted for a member to speak against her own motion? Can she vote against it?

Answer: May vote against the motion; may not speak against it. "In debate, the maker of a motion, while he can vote against it, is not allowed to speak against his own motion." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 43:25.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: Your parliamentary authority is *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (4th Edition)* ("Sturgis"). What motions can be reconsidered?

Answer: Main motions may be reconsidered. Other motions cannot. *The Standard Code*, p. 236.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: You are a member of an organization that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. At last week's meeting, a motion was adopted that you now wish to repeal. However, you were not present at that meeting. Can you make the motion to Rescind?

Answer: Yes. There are no restrictions on who may move the motion to Rescind (unlike the motion to Reconsider). *RONR (12th Ed.)* 35:3.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: A member realizes just after the result of a vote is announced that she accidentally voted on the wrong side of the question. If the organization's parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what must the member do to change her vote?

Answer: "Except when the vote has been taken by ballot (or some other methods that provides secrecy), a member has a right to change his vote up to the time the result is announced but afterward can make the change only by the unanimous consent of the assembly requested and granted without debate, immediately following the chair's announcement of the result of the vote." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 45:8.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: A member appeals from a decision of the chair at a regular monthly meeting of an

organization. After debate on the appeal, the chair states the question as follows: "The question is: 'Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?'" The vote is 89 affirmative and 90 negative. If the organization's parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, can the chair (who is a member of the assembly) vote on the appeal and will the chair's vote have any effect on the outcome of this appeal?

Answer: "A majority or a tie vote sustains the decision of the chair on the principle that the chair's decision stands until reversed by a majority. If the presiding officer is a member of the assembly, he can vote to create a tie and thus sustain his decision." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 24:3(7).

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: If your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, can a member "explain" his vote during voting?

Answer: "A member has no right to 'explain his vote' during voting, which would be the same as debate at such a time." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 45:7.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: You are a delegate to a national convention that follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. According to the adopted program, the time for adjournment of a particular session is at 4:00 pm. A motion is made at 3:15 to adjourn the session. You wish to speak against the motion to Adjourn. Is the motion to Adjourn debatable?

Answer: Yes (if the motion to Adjourn is in order at all, given the parliamentary situation).

"Under any of conditions (1) through (3) above [(2) reads as follows: "When a time for adjourning is already established, either because the assembly has adopted a motion or a program setting such a time, or because the order of business, the bylaws, or other governing rules prescribe it."], a motion to adjourn is not privileged and is treated just as any other incidental main motion." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 21:3.

(Difficulty level = 5)

Question: The parliamentary authority for your organization is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly*

Revised (12th Edition). A main motion is under discussion. The Previous Question is moved, seconded, and ordered by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting. A member then obtains the floor and asks that the main motion be divided into two questions. Is the motion to divide in order procedurally?

Answer: "Although it is preferable to divide a question when it is first introduced, a motion to divide can be made at any time that the main motion, an amendment which it is proposed to divide, or the motion to Postpone Indefinitely is immediately pending—even after the Previous Question has been ordered." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 27:3(1).

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: What is the "Gordian Knot motion" and which authority discusses this parliamentary maneuver?

Answer: The "Gordian Knot motion" is a use of the motion to Suspend Rules in order to get a fresh start. *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure 4th Edition* ("Sturgis") discusses the process at page 86.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: Your organization is considering a main motion. If your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, is it in order to move to strike out one word at the beginning of the motion and one word at the end of the motion in the same motion to amend?

Answer: No. "When a motion to strike out certain words is made, it can be applied only to consecutive words To strike out separated words, the best method is to make a motion to strike out the entire clause or sentence containing the separated words and insert a new clause or sentence as desired. Separated words can also be struck out by separate motions. . . ." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 12:47.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: Your organization follows *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*. A

proposed amendment to the bylaws is pending that will require a two-thirds vote for adoption. If an amendment from the floor is proposed to the bylaws amendment, what vote is required for adoption according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*?

Answer: Majority vote. "While amendments to a proposed bylaw amendment can be made in both the first and the second degrees (as applicable) and can be adopted by a majority vote without notice, they are subject to restrictions on the extent of the changes they propose." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 57:10.

(Difficulty level = 4)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, the motion to create a blank by striking out is what type of motion?

Answer: Incidental motion. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)* Table of Rules Relating to Motions, p. t10.

(Difficulty level = 2)

Question: If your parliamentary authority is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what vote is required on the motion to Suspend the Rules when the rule is a convention standing rule?

Answer: "Any standing rule of a convention (except one prescribing the parliamentary authority) can be suspended for a particular specified purpose by a majority vote, even if the rule required a two-thirds vote for its adoption. Under such a suspension, however, the applicable rules in the parliamentary authority prescribed by the bylaws (or by a rule of the convention) come into force—as if the standing rule had not been adopted. To suspend a convention standing rule and also the general parliamentary rule normally applying to the same situation requires a two-thirds vote, just as to suspend the general rule when no standing rule is involved." *RONR (12th Ed.)* 59:37.

(Difficulty level = 3)

Question: According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*, what should be stated in the last paragraph of minutes?

Answer: The hour of adjournment. *RONR (12th Ed.)* 48:4(12).

Jim Slaughter is an attorney, Certified Professional Parliamentarian, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, and past President of CAI's College of Community Association Lawyers (CCAL) and the American College of Parliamentary Lawyers (ACPL). He is author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Parliamentary Procedure Fast-Track* and lead author of *Notes and Comments on Robert's Rules, Fourth Edition*. Jim is a partner in Law Firm Carolinas. For more information, visit www.jimslaughter.com.