

Washington State Institutional Review Board

RULES OF ORDER¹

1. Basic Rules

- a. All members are equal and their rights are equal. Those rights are:
 - To attend meetings
 - To make motions
 - To speak in debate
 - To vote
- b. A quorum must be present to do business:
 - A quorum is a simple majority of IRB members; at least one member whose primary concerns are in non-scientific areas must be present
 - Members who do not vote (abstain) are counted toward the quorum
- c. The majority rules:
 - A majority means the majority of members present
 - The minority has the right to be heard
 - Once a decision has been made by the majority, the minority must then respect and abide by the decision
- d. Silence is consent:
 - Members who do not vote (abstain) agree to go along with the decision of the majority by their silence
- e. A two-thirds vote is required whenever:
 - The rights of members are limited or taken away
 - Something that has already been decided is being changed
- f. One question at a time and one speaker at a time:
 - No motion is in order which does not directly relate to the question under consideration
 - Once a member has been recognized by the chair, he/she has the floor and may not be interrupted
- g. Debatable motions must receive full debate:
 - Debatable motions may not be voted on as long as members wish to debate it
 - Exception: debate can be suspended by a two-thirds vote of members present

2. Duties of Chair

- a. Be on time and start on time.
- b. Follow the agenda and keep on schedule.
- c. Be in control of the floor:
 - “Assign” the floor by recognizing members who wish to speak
 - Remind those who interrupt that the floor has been assigned to another
 - Discourage private conversations during the meeting
 - Be impartial in calling on members to speak
- d. Direct deliberations to focus on essential review concerns.
- e. Facilitate consensus on critical issues by eliciting individual votes.²
- f. Restate the main motion before taking a vote.

¹ Adapted from “Robert’s Rules in Plain English,” by Doris P. Zimmerman, Harper Collins, 1997

² See “Division of a Question,” Item 6.d.

- g. Lead the Board to develop clear instructions to IRB staff for correspondence to investigators.
- h. Use general consent when possible (e.g., “If there is no objection, ...”).
- i. Allow the withdrawal of motions by general consent.

3. Types of Motions

- a. Main motions:
 - Cannot interrupt a member who has been assigned the floor
 - Require a second, unless the motion is from a committee
 - Can be debated
 - Can be amended
 - Require a majority vote
- b. Secondary motions:
 - Can be made while the main motion is on the floor and before it has been decided
 - Three classes: subsidiary motions; privileged motions; incidental motions
- c. Process:
 - The floor is assigned to the primary or secondary reviewer
 - The primary or secondary reviewer presents the proposal and the issues
 - A motion for disposition of the proposal is made (the motion is “on the floor”)
 - The motion is seconded
 - The chair states the motion (the motion is “pending”)
 - Debate is held “one speaker at a time”
 - The chair may open the floor to general discussion³
 - The chair puts the question to a vote
 - Votes are taken by a show of hands
 - The chair announces the vote
- d. Other points:
 - The maker of a motion has first right to speak to it
 - A member can vote against his/her own motion, but cannot speak against it
 - A member can modify his/her own motion before it is stated by the chair
 - A member can amend his/her own motion after it has been stated by the chair
 - A member can withdraw his/her own motion up to the time it is stated by the chair, and after that with the group’s permission (e.g., general consent)
 - Motions that repeat the same question on the same day, or that conflict with an already adopted motion, are out of order

4. Subsidiary Motions

- a. Subsidiary motions relate directly to the main motion on the floor.
- b. They have rank among each other: a motion of higher rank can be made at the time when a motion of lower rank is on the floor or pending; the motion of higher rank takes precedence:
 - Previous Question (call for the vote) – Highest Rank
 - Limit or Extend
 - Main Motion – Limits of Debate
 - Amend Lowest Rank

³ This modifies Robert’s Rules to allow free discussion without the Chair needing to assign the floor to individual members before they could speak.

- c. Amend: Changes the wording of a motion to make it more clear, complete or more acceptable *before* the motion is voted upon.
- An amendment must be germane to the motion on the floor
 - A member must obtain the floor to offer an amendment
 - An amendment must be seconded
 - An amendment is debatable if it is made to a debatable motion
 - A primary amendment can be amended; the secondary amendment cannot
 - An amendment requires a majority vote even when applied to a motion that requires a two-thirds vote
 - Adopting an amendment does not adopt the motion
 - Amendments that are the same as a negative vote on the motion are out of order
- d. Limit Debate: Exercises special control over the debate by reducing the number and length of speeches allowed or by requiring that debate be limited to a period of time after which the vote must be taken.
- Can be used with any motion
 - Must be seconded
 - Is not debatable
 - Can be amended but only regarding the number and/or length of speeches or when the vote will be taken
 - Requires a two-thirds vote
- e. Previous Question: Used to cut off debate and bring the group to an immediate vote on a pending motion.
- Can be applied to any pending question
 - It is out of order when a member has the floor
 - It cannot be debated
 - Requires a two-thirds vote

5. Privileged Motions

- a. Privileged motions are not related to the business on the floor but to the rights of members and the organization.
- b. Recess: Proposes a short intermission in the meeting.
- It must be seconded
 - It cannot be debated
 - It can be amended only as to length or time or recess
 - It requires a majority vote
- c. Adjourn: Closes the meeting.
- It must be seconded
 - It cannot be debated
 - It cannot be amended
 - It requires a majority vote
- d. The Chair can move for recess or adjournment by general consent.

6. Incidental Motions

- a. Have no rank among themselves and may be applied to any main motion; usually decided as they arise, they are usually not debatable and can only rarely be amended.
- b. Point of Order: To raise the possibility that rules of order are not being followed.

- c. Point of Information: To obtain additional information on the subject being considered.
- d. Division of a Question: Used when a motion contains several parts, and the group wishes to vote on each part separately:
 - It requires a second
 - It requires a majority vote

7. Restorative Motions

- a. Allows the group to change its mind on previously adopted motions.
- b. Rescind: Used to quash or nullify a previously adopted motion:
 - It requires a second
 - It requires a two-thirds vote
 - It is not in order if action has already been taken as a result of adoption of the motion
- c. Reconsider: Used to reconsider the vote on a previously adopted motion:
 - Can only be made by someone who voted on the prevailing side
 - Must be made on the same day that the vote to be reconsidered was taken
 - It requires a second
 - It may be debated, and it opens up to debate the motion to which it is applied
 - It requires only a majority vote

8. Voting

- a. All votes on motions for disposition are taken by show of hands; the number in favor, opposed, and abstaining are recorded.
- b. To be adopted, a majority of members present at the meeting must vote in favor.
- c. The Chair votes only to break a tie vote.
- d. Disposition Options:
 - **Approval**: This should be moved when the proposal can be approved as submitted or amended prior to the meeting.
 - **Conditional Approval**: This should be moved when (1) the simple concurrence of the investigator to a specified set of conditions is all that is required for approval of the proposal, or (2) based upon the assumption that conditions are satisfied, the Board is able to make all the determinations required for approval. Final approval is delegated to a subcommittee; generally there is no need for review at another meeting.
 - **Defer Consideration**: This should be moved when the number of issues, concerns and/or questions are too great to be resolved by the simple concurrence of the investigator. The proposal must go back to another meeting.
 - **Disapproval**: This should be moved only after the investigator has been invited to a meeting to resolve serious issues OR further attempts to negotiate required revisions would be fruitless. While this disposition puts an end to review of the research application, the investigator is free to submit a new application for consideration at a later meeting.