

Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of democracy



In our view, the motions Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of our democracy. They provide the mechanism to stop a dictatorial chair who is acting like a “boss.” They are essential for every local government body, nonprofit board, and any group that functions on democratic principles. Learn how to use them to ensure that the group is the final authority.

In this discussion, whenever we say “member,” we mean a voting member of the governing body.

► What is a Point of Order?

Point of Order is a motion that requires the chair to abide by the organization’s rules or parliamentary rules, or to require another member to abide by the rules. If an error isn’t obvious, the member may have to briefly explain how the rules are being broken.

This motion is made by just one member and in most circumstances the motion must be made at the time of the rule violation. When this motion is made it immediately and temporarily stops business until the Point of Order is ruled on by the chair, who will either agree with the member and enforce the rules, or may disagree with the member. Once the chair rules that the Point of Order was “well taken” (correct) or “not well taken” (incorrect), the business that was interrupted then continues (unless the chair’s ruling is immediately appealed).

► How does a member raise a Point of Order?

The member who sees a rule violation and wants the rule enforced should call out, “Point of Order!” or stand up and say, “I rise to a Point of Order.” If necessary, you may interrupt a speaker, but don’t do this lightly!



▶ **What happens next with a Point of Order?**

The chair should say, “State your point.” The member then explains the problem. Finally, the chair gives a ruling.

- If the chair agrees with the Point of Order, the chair says, “The point is well taken” and enforces the rule.
- If the chair disagrees, the chair says, “The point is not well taken,” and moves on with the business at hand.

▶ **Can a member raise a Point of Order about the chair’s actions?**

Yes. Everyone in the meeting must follow the rules. If this happens, the chair issues a ruling on their own action.

▶ **Can a member of the public or the audience who is not a member of the body raise a Point of Order?**

No. Only a member of the body itself can raise a Point of Order.

▶ **Sample script for “Point of Order”**

Member: *Chair, I rise to a Point of Order.*

Chair: *State your point.*

Member: *My esteemed colleague has used the term “cream-faced loon” in referring to the mayor of Dinoville. Under Robert’s Rules of Order, insults are inappropriate.*

Chair: *The point is well taken, and members will refrain from using this term.*

▶ **What should members do when they disagree with a ruling by the chair?**

A member can appeal the chair’s ruling (which must be seconded). This tells the chair that two members are in disagreement with the chair’s interpretation and want the body to decide it for themselves. The motion must be made immediately. If other business intervenes, then it is too late to appeal the chair’s decision or ruling.

When the Appeal is made, it immediately and temporarily stops the pending business until a decision is reached on the Appeal. After a vote is taken on the Appeal by the members, the business that was interrupted then continues.

▶ **How is an Appeal conducted?**

A member stands and without waiting to be recognized, says: “I disagree with the ruling by the chair.” The chair must recognize an Appeal, even if worded simply as, “I don’t think that’s right - I disagree with you.” The formal wording is, “I appeal from the decision of the chair.” The chair then processes the motion, which may or may not be debatable.

Read more about how to process a Motion to Appeal, including a sample script, in this [this blog post](#), “Keep the chair in line using Appeal.”

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