

Unanimous consent will slash your meeting time



Unanimous consent is one of the most useful tools in Robert's Rules of order. Yet this method of voting is little known. Use it well, and your meetings will be much more efficient. Your members will also be grateful!

Unanimous consent is a kind of "fast track" for voting. The chair proposes a given action, and then says, "Is there any objection?" If a member agrees, they REMAIN SILENT. In this instance, silence means consent. If all members are silent, they have agreed to the action proposed.

If a member disagrees, they simply say, "OBJECTION" or "I OBJECT." The chair then knows that everyone is not in agreement, and proceeds to take a vote in the usual way. Note that there is no need to explain WHY you object. All you have to do is alert the chair that you don't agree.

The chair invites unanimous consent by saying, "Is there any objection?" or "Without objection." It is critical to PAUSE after these words. Don't appear to be railroading the group! If you think that everyone is OK with the action, but then someone says, "I object," you must process the motion in the usual way.

This method should be used only for minor or routine matters where there is little controversy.

Examples:

- If a member calls for a recess.
- If a member "calls the question" (moves the Previous Question) and it seems to the chair that others are also ready to stop discussion.
- If a member proposes a simple amendment that clearly improves the motion under consideration.
- When there are no corrections to the minutes of a nonprofit board.
(See our blog post, [Nonprofit boards should not vote to approve minutes.](#))



If you have a significant main motion or a proposal where much hinges on the outcome, TAKE A FORMAL VOTE. Don't use unanimous consent, even if it seems that everyone is likely in agreement.

HERE IS A SAMPLE SCRIPT WHEN EVERYONE AGREES:

Member A: *I think we should insert the word “acoustic” before the word “guitar,” so everyone knows what kind of instrument we’re talking about.*

Chair: *Is there any objection to amending the motion by inserting the word “acoustic” before the word “guitar?” If amended, the motion would read, “That we purchase 20 acoustic guitars for teenage dinosaurs to take lessons in the Community Club.”*

[Chair pauses, members remain silent.]

Chair: *Hearing no objection, the motion is amended. It now reads, “That we purchase 20 acoustic guitars for teenage dinosaurs to take lessons in the Community Club.”*

HERE IS A SAMPLE SCRIPT WHEN SOMEONE OBJECTS:

Member A: *I think we should insert the word “acoustic” before the word “guitar,” so everyone knows what kind of instrument we’re talking about.*

Chair: *Is there any objection to amending the motion by inserting the word “acoustic” before the word “guitar?” If amended, the motion would read, “That we purchase 20 acoustic guitars for teenage dinosaurs to take lessons in the Community Club.”*

Member B: *I object!*

Chair: *Very well, we will process the proposed amendment in the usual way. Is there a second to the amendment? [Discussion etc...]*

If more people knew about this useful way of voting, Robert's Rules of Order would have a better reputation! And it's all in the book: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, pp. 54-56.

Does your group use this technique? [Let us know!](#)

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