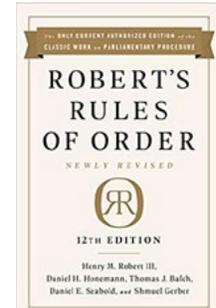


Small board rules are different



The different rules for small boards are one of the best-kept secrets of Robert's Rules of Order. If you serve on a small board (up to about 12 people) you may benefit from the flexibility that the rules for small boards offer.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition ([the only current valid version of Robert's Rules](#)) says in section 49:21, "some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly would hinder business" in small boards.

The book goes on to list seven significant bullet points about the ways that the rules for small boards are different.

Jurassic Parliament agrees with some of these rules, but not all of them. Read our thoughts on this below.

If your bylaws say that "meetings shall be run according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, latest edition," and your board has 12 or fewer members, you are fully entitled to use Robert's rules for small boards.

If you have a slightly larger board, up to about 20 people, you may also find the small board rules useful. In that case, you must adopt the rules you wish to use, which is easy to do. To learn how, see our post on "[What are special rules of order?](#)"

| ROBERT'S RULES FOR SMALL BOARDS <i>Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised</i> , 12th edition, section 49:21. | JURASSIC PARLIAMENT COMMENTS <i>"Yes" means we like the rule.</i> <i>"No" means we disagree with Robert.</i> |
|---|--|
| Members are required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated. | Yes. It is always useful to require members to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking. This allows the chair to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak once before anyone speaks a second time. Yes to remaining seated, of course. |
| Motions need not be seconded. | No. We prefer that a second be required for any motion. Before a proposal takes up the group's time, there should be at least two people who want to talk about it. |



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| There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally should not be entertained. | Yes, provided that the rule that everyone has a chance to speak once before anyone may speak twice is strictly enforced. |
| Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending. | Yes, though it's useful to ask for a motion just as soon as the chair senses that the group is ready to formulate one. |
| Sometimes, when a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed to by unanimous consent, however, all proposed actions of a board must be approved by vote under the same rules as in other assemblies, except that a vote can be taken initially by a show of hands, which is often a better method in such meetings. | Yes, provided that someone, eventually, states in clear terms what is about to be voted on. What is "perfectly clear" to some members may be rather murky to others. This also relieves the secretary from having to guess just what the motion was when composing the minutes. |
| The chairman need not rise while putting questions to the vote. | Yes. |
| The chairman can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair; and, subject to rule or custom within the particular board (which should be uniformly followed regardless of how many members are present), he usually can make motions and usually votes on all questions. | <p>Yes as far as discussion goes. We believe that in most small boards, members want to hear what the chair thinks, and the chair should participate in debate.</p> <p>We suggest that boards adopt a rule that the chair debates and votes last, after others have spoken. This allows them to summarize discussion and to remain more impartial. Their voice and vote are heard, but are not given too much weight.</p> <p>No for making motions. We believe it is always better for the chair not to propose motions, because of the human tendency to show undue deference to the leader of a group. Motions should come from the members.</p> <p>As for voting, we leave it to the rule and custom of the particular board. In many small boards it makes sense for the chair to vote.</p> |

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