

Parliamentary Law has evolved over the centuries; it originated in the British Parliament and was applied in early deliberative assemblies such as the House of Burgesses in the United States. Many attempts were made to catalog Parliamentary Law for use in larger assemblies, but none were applicable in smaller assemblies or committees. In 1876, General Henry Martyn Robert wrote Robert's Rules of Order, a work that has become the premiere source for Parliamentary Procedure.

This work is a version of Robert's Rules of Order modified for use in a Model United Nations environment. It has been structured to facilitate debate without compromising its depth.

Introductory Remarks

1. Scope of the Rules

Unless otherwise stated by the Secretary-General, these rules, in their entirety, apply to all University of Pennsylvania Model United Nations Conference (hereafter UPMUNC) Committees.

2. Language

English will be the working language of all UPMUNC committees. If a delegate wishes to address a committee in a language other than English, he must provide a translation. If there is a time limit on speeches, the translation as well as the original speech will count against the speaker's time.

3. Attire

All delegates are expected to wear professional business attire during committee sessions.

4. Conduct

Delegates are expected to maintain decorum during UPMUNC committee sessions. This includes respecting staff decisions at all times, being recognized before addressing the committee, standing when addressing the committee, and refraining from the use of undiplomatic language.

5. Topics for Debate

A committee's topics for debate will be established by the Secretariat and communicated to the Member States prior to the opening of the conference. These are recommended topics and delegates are encouraged to debate them first. However, in crisis situations, other topics may be added if the committee so desires.

Chair

6. Functions of the Chair

The Chair shall open and close each committee session, enforce these rules, recognize speakers, put questions to a vote, and announce decisions. The Chair has the right to act at his own discretion to ensure the smooth operation of the committee. To this end, he has ultimate authority over the committee's proceedings and the maintenance of order therein. The Chair has the power to entertain, deny, or question the propriety of any motion.

7. Appeal of the Chair's Decision

A delegate may motion to appeal the Chair's ruling on a discretionary matter. The appealing member speaks first in favor of overturning the Chair's decision. The Chair then speaks in defense of his ruling. Two-thirds of the committee must vote in favor of this motion to overrule the Chair's decision.

Committee as a Whole

8. Roll Call

The first order of business at any committee session is a roll call. The Chair shall call the name of each delegation. If that delegation is present, it shall answer, "Present." If a delegation is not present when the Chair calls that delegation, but arrives later during that session, a note must be sent to the Chair stating that the delegation is present.

9. Quorum

One-third of the expected members of a committee must be present for committee session to be opened and for debate to proceed. A majority of the expected members (one half of them plus one) must be present for any substantive votes to be taken. The number of expected members shall be communicated to the committee Chair by the Secretariat prior to the conference.

10. Voting Rights

Each member-state of an UPMUNC committee will have one vote in all matters. Only when voting upon a resolution or amendment may a member-state abstain; that is, they may not abstain on a procedural motion. Member-States that abstain from voting are considered as not voting and shall not be counted in determining majority or the effective number of voting member-states.

Observer States will have one vote in procedural matters only. These nations are not allowed to vote on amendments or resolutions.

11. Simple Majority

A simple majority vote is herein defined as one in which there are more member-states voting in favor of a motion than voting against.

12. Two-Thirds Vote

A two-thirds vote is herein defined as one in which there are more than twice as many member-states voting in favor of a motion as voting against.

13. Substance and Procedure

A substantive matter is herein defined as a resolution or amendment. A substantive vote is a vote on a substantive matter. A procedural matter is all that which is not substantive. A procedural vote is one which decides a procedural matter.

Debate

14. Opening Debate by Setting a Topic

The Chair will open a temporary speakers list for the purpose of debating which topic will be discussed. At any time during that debate, a motion to set the topic will be in order, pending the Chair's discretion. In the event of such a motion, the Chair will entertain one speaker in favor of and one speaker against setting that topic. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. If the motion carries, debate will be opened on that topic and no other (i.e. there shall be only one topic discussed at a time). If the motion fails, then the committee will proceed with the temporary speakers list until another such motion is made. If all topics fail such a motion, the Chair shall have the discretion to select a topic or to continue debate.

15. Question of Competence

A motion to Question the Competence of a committee to discuss a resolution, working paper, or amendment is in order if a member feels that a topic is outside the scope of the committee's jurisdiction or expertise. This motion is not intended to cut off debate but merely to prevent misguided discourse. The Chair shall have the power to rule on this motion at his discretion. Such motions are not applicable to the issued debate topics. One member may speak for and one

may speak against the motion. This procedural motion requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If the motion passes, the committee will immediately cease all consideration of the target of this motion.

16. Notification Under Article Twelve of the United Nations Charter

Article Twelve of the United Nations Charter states that a General Assembly committee and the Security Council may not consider the same topic at the same time:

“While the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it in the present Charter, the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests.”

In this vein, the General Assembly will be notified of relevant Security Council actions.

17. Speeches

No member may address a committee without having first obtained the permission of the Chair. The Chair may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the subject matter under discussion.

18. Speakers List

Once a topic has been chosen, the Chair shall open a speakers list to be followed for all debate on that topic area. Speakers may comment generally on the topic area being considered, any resolution on the floor, or any proposed amendment to any resolution on the floor. Separate speakers lists may be opened by the Chair for motions that require discussion different from direct debate on the topic. After a speakers list has been created, a member-state may add its name to the list if it is not already on the list and if the list has not been closed. Such a request may be submitted in writing or, if the Chair specifically allows, by a show of placard. When the speakers list is exhausted and no other nations wish to speak, debate will be considered closed and the committee will move directly into voting procedure.

19. Closure and Re-Opening of the Speakers List

A member may at any time make a motion to close or re-open the speakers list. When a speakers list is closed, debate continues, but no further speakers may be added to the list. There shall be two speakers in favor and two speakers against the motion. This motion requires a simple majority vote.

20. Time Limit on Speeches

The committee shall allocate a limited amount of time for each speech and comment. A motion must be made for this to occur. The member making the motion must specify the amount of time that he proposes set. One member may speak in favor of and one against the motion. The motion requires a simple majority vote. The Chair shall set a time limit for speeches regarding procedural motions.

21. Yields

A member who has been granted the right to speak on a substantive issue may yield his time in one of the following manners:

- To the Chair.
- To Points of Information.
- To another Member. The member to whom time is yielded may not yield his time during that speech.

Comments shall be allowed at the discretion of the Chair.

22. Comments on Speeches

Comments regarding only the previous speech will be allowed. A time limit will be established for such comments, in accordance with Rule 20 (Time Limit on Speeches). Comments will be allowed according to the guidelines set forth in Rule 21 (Yields).

23. Right of Reply

A member's right of reply to a scathing or snide speech or comment which personally defames a delegate or the nation he/she represents will be granted at the Chair's discretion. Right of reply requests must be submitted in writing to the Chair. The Chair's decision on this matter may not be appealed. There will be no rights of reply to a right of reply.

Points and Motions

24. Point of Order

A point of order is used when a member wishes to draw attention to a possible procedural error made by a member or the Chair. This point must be raised at the time of the incident. The Chair must rule immediately on the matter.

25. Point of Parliamentary Procedure

A point of parliamentary procedure is an inquiry to the chair regarding these rules.

26. Point of Information

A point of information is a question to a speaker. When the speaker yields to points of information, the Chair shall recognize in turn those members of the committee who have questions, as time allows. Once recognized by the Chair, the member shall rise and ask one concise question directed to the speaker. The member then returns to his seat and the speaker answers the question. Only the speaker's response will be counted against his time limit. If the speaker needs the question clarified, he shall ask the Chair, and the Chair shall have the member clarify his question. At no time shall the member asking the question and the speaker enter into dialogue.

27. Point of Personal Privilege

At any time a member experiences personal discomfort which impairs his ability to participate in the proceedings, he may rise to a point of personal privilege. The Chair will attempt to relieve the cause for discomfort.

28. Motion to Appeal the Chair's Decision

See Rule 7 (Appeal of the Chair's Decision).

29. Motion to Set the Topic

See Rule 14 (Opening Debate by Setting a Topic).

30. Motion to Postpone Debate on the Topic

When it becomes necessary for a committee to postpone debate on the topic for a period of time (e.g. when faced with a crisis), a motion to postpone debate on the topic may be made. This is done with the intention to resume that debate at a later time. To re-open debate on a postponed topic the procedure set out in Rule 14 (Opening Debate by Setting a Topic) must be followed. If debate resumes on a postponed topic during the same session, the previously established speakers list will continue.

There may be one speaker in favor of and one against this motion, and it requires a simple majority to pass.

31. Motion to Close Debate

If at any time a member wishes to end debate and move directly into voting procedure on that topic, he may make a motion to close debate. There will be two speakers against this motion and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If this motion passes, all debate on the topic ends and all resolutions and amendments on that topic are brought to a vote.

32. Motion for Moderated Caucus

The committee may choose to depart from the speakers list and have the Chair call on countries at his discretion. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. The Chair should set a time limit for such speeches and may allot a total time for the moderated caucus. He may ask the delegate making the motion to recommend such time limits.

33. Motion to Caucus

During debate a member may motion to caucus. The delegate making the motion must specify the length of the caucus. The time limit is subject to the Chair's approval and will not exceed thirty minutes. The motion will be put to an immediate vote. This requires a simple majority to pass.

34. Motion to Recess

A member may motion to recess the session subject

to the Chair's approval. The Chair's ruling is not subject to an appeal. This motion is not debatable and requires a simple majority to pass.

Resolutions and Amendments

35. Resolutions

All actions of an UPMUNC committee take the form of resolutions. A resolution is introduced to a committee by one or more member states who choose to sponsor the resolution. These sponsors are interested in passing the resolution and usually author it. A sponsor of a resolution may withdraw his sponsorship of that resolution at any time before voting procedure begins. If at any time a resolution is without sponsors, sponsorship of that resolution will be offered to any members of the committee that wish to accept it. If no member of the committee wishes to accept sponsorship of that resolution, it will be removed from consideration. For the committee to consider a resolution, signatures from one-fifth of the member states present must be obtained. Therefore, the sponsors must obtain signatures from other member states to make up the remainder of the one-fifth. Signatory member states do not necessarily support the resolution; they merely wish to see it debated. Member states may sign more than one resolution per topic.

A resolution is termed a "working paper" until it has the necessary signatures, has been submitted to and approved by the chair, and has been read aloud to the committee.

At the discretion of the Chair, sponsors may request an amount of time to discuss their resolution and to take questions. This is done in the format of a moderated caucus (See Rule 32).

36. Amendments

An amendment changes a resolution by adding, striking out, or substituting a word or phrase in a resolution. There are two types of amendments: friendly and unfriendly. All amendments must be submitted to the Chair in writing.

A friendly amendment is an amendment agreed upon by all sponsors of the resolution. The amendment must be submitted to the Chair with the signatures of the sponsors of the resolution. Then the amendment is read aloud by the Chair and it becomes part of the resolution.

An unfriendly amendment is an amendment that is not supported by all of the sponsors. Therefore, as with a resolution, an unfriendly amendment requires signatures from one-fifth of the body to be considered. Unfriendly amendments are voted upon at the closure of debate, before their respective resolutions, and in the order submitted. An unfriendly amendment

requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If an unfriendly amendment passes, the changes it dictates shall be incorporated into the resolution.

Amendments may not be amended.

37. Withdrawal of a Resolution

See Rule 35 (Resolutions)

Voting

38. Conduct During Voting

Upon entering voting procedure, the chamber shall be sealed and silent; no persons may not enter or leave with the exception of Secretariat members. All points and motions are out of order unless directly related to the execution of voting.

39. Voting on Procedural Matters

All member states present and voting must vote upon all procedural matters (i.e. one may only abstain when voting on a resolution or amendment).

40. Roll Call Votes

A member may request a roll call vote on a resolution. If the request is granted, the Chair shall read through the committee roster and each member, when called, shall vote only: Yes, Yes with Explanation, No, No with Explanation, Abstain, or Pass. When the Chair finishes reading through the roster, those members who previously passed shall be asked to vote in turn. Members who pass may only vote Yes or No and may not pass again on that matter. Explanations should be to the point and regard only those instances in which a delegation, by its vote, is straying from national policy.

41. Important Question

A resolution may be deemed an important question, thereby requiring a two-thirds vote to pass. This request is made of the Chair immediately prior to voting on the resolution. Included in the request must be an explanation of how the resolution fits into one of the following categories required of an important question:

- recommendations with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security;
- the admission of a new member to the United Nations;
- the suspension of the rights and privileges of membership;
- the expulsion of a member; and/or
- budgetary questions.

If the Chair determines that the resolution does fall within one or more of the categories, the body shall vote to label the resolution an important question. This vote requires a simple majority.

42. Division of Resolution

Immediately after debate is closed on a topic and after any unfriendly amendments are voted upon (see rule 43), a member may motion to divide the resolution. This motion indicates that the member wishes to consider two or more parts of the resolution separately. Before specifying the nature of the division, the Chair will recognize two speakers in favor and two speakers against the motion. The committee will then vote on whether or not to allow divisions of the resolution.

Should the motion be approved, the Chair will accept all propositions to divide the resolution. No motions to divide a resolution will be accepted after this time. At the Chair's discretion, the committee will entertain the motions to divide in order of severity, moving from most to least severe. If and when the committee passes a motion to divide, the remaining motions

will become dilatory. Each separate motion will require one speaker for and one speaker against and a simple majority in order to pass.

If the division passes, then each portion shall be voted upon as though it were a separate resolution.

43. Voting on Unfriendly Amendments

See Rule 35 (Amendments)

44. Reordering Resolutions

If there are multiple resolutions on a topic, the committee will normally vote on the resolutions in the order in which they were submitted. However, a member may motion to change the voting order before any voting begins. When this motion is made, the member must specify the new voting order he proposes. There shall be one speaker in favor of and one against this motion. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. This motion must be made before the consideration of unfriendly amendments and divisions.

45. Voting on Resolutions

Resolutions require a simple majority vote to pass unless deemed an important question (see Rule 40).