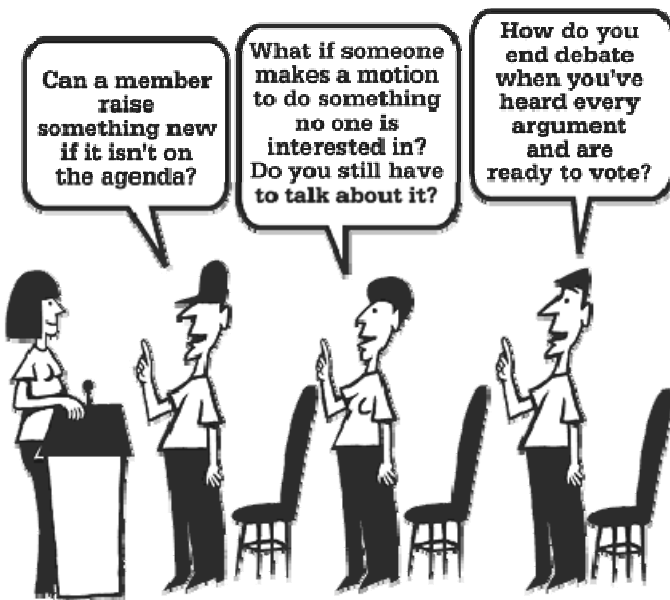


# Surviving Robert's Rules of Order

## at SDEA Representative Council



### Your Voice, Your Vote

SDEA Representative Councils are conducted using Robert's Rules of Order. While books are written on the intricacies of Robert's Rules of Order, here you'll find the basics you need to know.

In Representative Council meetings all members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. One of the meeting chairperson's main responsibilities is to ensure that all members in the meeting are treated equally – for example, not to permit a vocal few to dominate the debates. Although the ultimate decision rests with a majority, all Representative Council members have the right to be heard and the right to dissent. The rights of all members – majority and minority – should be the concern of *every* member, for a person may be in a majority on one question but in minority the on the next.

The right of every Representative Council member to speak on any issue is as important as each member's right to vote. Every member has the right to understand the meaning of any question presented to a meeting, and to know what effect a decision will have. A member always has the right to request information on any motion he or she does not thoroughly understand before the vote takes place.

### What is a motion?

A motion is a proposal that SDEA or the SDEA Representative Council take action or a stand on an issue. Individual Representative Council members can make motions, second motions, debate motions, and vote on motions. There are four basic types of motions:

- **Main motions:** These are the most common types of motions brought forward in SDEA meetings. The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and they yield to subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions.
- **Subsidiary motions:** The purpose of a subsidiary motion is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
- **Privileged motions:** The purpose of a privileged motion is to bring up items that are urgent or important matters unrelated to pending business.
- **Incidental motions:** The purpose of an incidental motion is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

## How Motions are Presented

### 1. Making a motion

Make a motion by raising your hand to get recognized by the chairperson. After being recognized, stand and say, "I move that we..." A motion asks the group to take action, e.g. to send a letter, spend money, endorse a political candidate. Make your motion affirmatively by saying, "I move we..." rather than "I move that we do not..."

### 2. Wait for someone to second your motion

A person different from the maker of a motion must second the motion. No discussion can take place without a motion being seconded. If there is no second, the motion "dies for lack of a second" and the chairperson moves on to the next order of business. If there is a second to a motion, then the chairperson opens the floor for discussion.

### 3. Speaking to a motion

The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time the motion is presented. The mover is always allowed to speak first. One person at a time speaks after being recognized by the chairperson. Once a motion is on the floor the only discussion allowed is on the motion or the amendment. The chairperson can set time limits on how long people may speak or may call for a motion to end debate if the same people keep repeating themselves. Be sure to stick to the issue that is being discussed – if not, the chairperson can rule comments "out of order."

### 4. Amending a motion

Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairperson, it becomes "assembly property" and cannot be changed by you without an amendment and vote of the members of Representative Council. An amendment to a motion is made in the same way as a motion. Amendments must be friendly to the original motion. That means they basically agree with the motion but want to add some clarification to the original motion. An amendment to a motion must also be seconded. When it comes time to vote, the amendment to a motion is voted on first, and then a vote is taken on the main motion.

### 5. Ending debate

A motion to end debate means that people want to vote on the issue. Once someone makes a motion to end debate and it is seconded, then a vote is immediately taken on ending debate, without any debate. A motion to end debate must pass by two-thirds of the people voting.

### 6. Moving to table a motion

This means postponing the discussion until a later date, usually the next meeting. This motion is also not debatable and only needs a majority vote to pass.

### 7. Voting on a motion

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation. There are five voting methods that can be used:

- **By voice:** This is the most commonly used voting method in SDEA meetings. The chairperson asks those in favor to say "aye," and those opposed to say "no." Any member of the Representative Council may move for an exact count.
- **By general consent:** When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the chairperson says, "If there is no objection..." The membership shows agreement by their silence; however, if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
- **By roll call:** Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
- **By division:** This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairperson so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
- **By ballot:** Members write their vote on a slip of paper; this method is used when secrecy is desired.