

Rules for the Conduct of Business

Rules for the conduct of Association and Commission business are adopted by each Biennial Meeting. They are designed to enable the assembly to conduct its business openly with sensitivity to all sides of issues, but also with efficiency in the light of time constraints. The ATS Board of Directors and the Board of Commissioners on Accrediting recommend the following set of rules for the conduct of the 2016 Biennial Meeting.

1. Unless otherwise stipulated, the business of the Association and the Commission shall be conducted according to the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.
2. Each member institution of the Association and the Commission shall be entitled to one vote on issues before the respective corporations, with the vote cast by the person authorized by the member institution.
3. The process for nominations from the floor and voting on the slate of the Association and the Commission shall follow the procedures referenced in each of the Nominating Committee reports in this book.
4. The Committee on Reference and Counsel and one or more parliamentarians shall be appointed by the president of the Association and the chair of the Commission at the beginning of the Biennial Meeting.

Robert's Rules of Order Revised Summary Guide for the 2016 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting¹

Developed to guide the work of the English Parliament, Roberts Rules of Order (RRO) "assist an assembly to accomplish in the best possible manner the work for which it was designed." This simple guide summarizes the vocabulary and the rules for use by The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting as they deliberate at the 2016 Biennial Meeting. It is intended to supplement the ATS Rules for the Conduct of Business. Taken in combination, these rules are intended to ensure that the general will of the membership is followed. They preserve the right of the majority to decide and the right of the minority to require a thorough consideration of each action. This guide is intended as a ready reference, not as an exhaustive source. In the case of any questions, the recommendation of the designated parliamentarian, based on the complete *Roberts Rules of Order 11th edition*, will be final.

According to RRO, business is brought before the assembly either by the motion of a member or by the presentation of a communication addressed to the assembly. All remarks must be directed to the presiding officer, either the president of the Association or the chair of the Commission. To **obtain the floor** and be recognized to speak, stand at one of the aisle microphones, address "M/M Chair," and state your name and the school/organization you represent. Debate begins only after the motion has been seconded and the chair has stated the motion and asked, "Are you ready for the question?" (See "Main motion" below.) Once the motion has been stated, it cannot be modified unless it is modified or withdrawn by the mover, and it becomes the privileged topic on the floor until a vote is taken. The chair may ask for motions and amendments to motions but may not make any himself or herself. No member may speak twice on the same issue until all those wishing to speak on it have had an opportunity. A time limit for speakers is normative for meetings of organizations.

1. Derived from the 1915 edition, first published in 1876, slight additions made in 1893, public domain.

- **A call for the orders of the day**—a demand that the assembly adhere to the agenda, unless it has been modified by a two-thirds vote (e.g., *“M/M Chair, I call for the meeting to return to the approved agenda.”*)
- **Point of order**—an immediate objection to a violation of the rules must be made at the time of the violation (e.g., *“M/M Chair, point of order: The amendment needs to be voted on before the main motion.”*) The chair then rules whether or not to accept the point of order.
- **Question of privilege**—a point raised unrelated to the pending question but requiring immediate action of sufficient urgency to interrupt the speaker (e.g., *“M/M Chair, I rise on a question of privilege; the speaker cannot be heard.”*)
- **Point of information**—a question addressed to the speaker to clarify something he/she has said, usually before a vote on a motion is taken, perhaps following an amendment, in order to clarify the main motion.
- **Main motion**—a proposal that the assembly take certain action. Eight rules apply to main motions: (1) Original main motions must be seconded; (2) they are debatable; (3) debate must be confined to the immediately pending question; (4) they can be amended; (5) all subsidiary motions can be applied to them; (6) they can be reconsidered; (7) they require a (simple or super) majority vote for their adoptions; and (8) they are not in order when another has the floor.
- **Immediately pending question**—the most recent issue stated by the chair.
- **Subsidiary motion**—a proposal that may be applied to a main motion to modify it, delay action, or otherwise dispose of it.
- **Divide the question**—an action to split a motion into parts for independent consideration, usually for omnibus motions to make them manageable. (Not to be confused with Division of the Assembly, which questions the count of a vote.)
- **Amendment**—a change to a pending question that requires only a majority vote for its adoption, even though the question to be amended requires a two-thirds vote. When a motion or resolution is under consideration, only one amendment is permitted at a time.
- **Withdraw/modify motion**—an action that the mover may take to remove a proposal from consideration.
- **Refer to committee**—a motion or a ruling by the chair to refer proposed modifications to documents under consideration to the Committee on Reference and Counsel. Such proposals for modifications must be stated orally and submitted in writing to the secretary (e.g., *“M/M Chair, I move that we refer these amendments to the Committee on Reference and Counsel.”*)
- **Limit debate**—a motion to close debate on a pending motion at a prescribed time.
- **Extend debate**—a motion to permit continued discussion of immediately pending question that can include a time limit.
- **Postpone to a certain time**—a motion that discussion will be resumed at a specified time.
- **Lay on the table**—a motion to temporarily suspend further consideration of the pending action, perhaps because of a need for a recess or while awaiting further information.
- **Take from the table**—a motion to resume consideration of the tabled action.
- **Reconsider**—an action only by someone on the prevailing side of a question who has changed position or received further information.
- **Postpone indefinitely**—a motion to suspend consideration of the pending motion for this session.
- **Informal consideration**—an action that allows the chair to ask for an informal “straw poll” in order to gauge the mood of the membership on a particular issue.