



CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF ONEIDA COUNTY

4-H CLUB GUIDE

To Basic Parliamentary Procedure



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4-H CLUB GUIDE To Basic Parliamentary Procedure

Sometimes meetings are very chaotic when making group decisions. Everyone talks at once, trying to sway others to a different point of view. A basic knowledge of parliamentary procedure can make the group decision process more orderly. It is an important skill youth can use throughout life. Parliamentary procedure is used by most groups as they conduct their meetings. A few examples where parliamentary procedure is practiced include Congress, county commissioners, school boards, local fair boards and county 4-H clubs and committees.

What is Parliamentary Procedure

It is an organized method for a group to accomplish their goals in an effective, fair, and efficient manner. It is effective by providing an orderly way to conduct the group's business and make decisions. It is fair because it is a democratic process for making a decision. It is efficient by keeping the group focused. One item of business is disposed of before going on to another. Most parliamentary procedure is based on Robert's Rules of Order which describes procedures on how to conduct items of business.

4-H meetings are often the first exposure young people will have to parliamentary procedure. There are volumes of material written on the fine points of parliamentary procedure, but only the basics are necessary for 90% of the business conducted at a local 4-H club meeting. Start with the basics of parliamentary procedure in this fact sheet, then continue to "learn by doing".





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A Smooth Business Meeting

4-H business meetings should follow a specific procedure.

Here's one that you might use in your club:

- ⇒ Call to order when the meeting opens (president)
- ⇒ 4-H pledge, pledge of allegiance, song, or other opening (vice president).
- ⇒ Roll call (secretary).
- ⇒ Reading of the minutes of the last meeting (secretary).
- ⇒ Treasurer's report (treasurer).
- ⇒ Correspondence (secretary).
- ⇒ Reports of committees.
- ⇒ Old or unfinished business left over from the last meeting (president).
- ⇒ New business (president).
- ⇒ Next meeting date.
- ⇒ Adjournment when the business meeting is over.



Making Motions

A member who wants the club to vote on something makes a motion. That member raises one hand, or stands, and waits to be recognized by the president. After being recognized the member has the floor and may speak.

To make the motion, the member should say, "**I move that ...**" - it is not correct to say, "I make a motion that...". For example your motion might be, "I move that we buy a 4-H flag."

Any 4-H member at a meeting has the power to make a motion.



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Another member says "**I second the motion.**" (They do not need to be recognized.) This means that at least one other member thinks the club should consider it. (If the motion is not seconded, it is dropped.)

“I move that.....”

“I second that motion.”

“Is there any discussion?”

“All those in favor.....”

Once the motion has been moved and seconded, its merits can then be discussed. The president states, "**It has been properly moved and seconded that Is there any discussion?**" A member of the group must first be recognized by the president. The member gives reasons for or against the motion to the group. This continues until the item has been thoroughly discussed, at which point it's time to vote.

The president states the motion so everyone can hear it. The members vote when the president says, "**All in favor say 'Aye,'**" and "**All opposed say 'Nay.'**" The motion is passed if more members vote "Aye" than Nay." If the president is in doubt about the vote, he should ask for a show of hands or a standing vote.

The president then says, "**The motion is carried,**" or "**The motion is lost,**" according to the vote. The president will then tap the gavel to signify the close of this business item.





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ays to Vote

Voice Vote. The president says " All in favor of the motion say ' Aye.'" "All opposed say, 'Nay."

Standing Vote. The members stand so their votes can be counted.

Show of Hands. The members raise their hands so the president can count their votes.

Ballot. The president and one or more helpers hand out blank slips of paper so the members can write down their vote.

Roll Call. Members vote, one at a time, as their names are called.

Honor System. All members close their eyes and vote by raising one hand.

The president should always call for both sides of the vote even if the vote appears to be unanimous. The president announces the result of the vote. "The motion passes/fails." A *majority* is needed to pass a motion. A majority is more than half of the members present and voting.

Does the Chairman (President) Vote?

The chairman (president) of a group must generally not show favoritism in a meeting. Therefore, the chairman typically does not vote. **However, the chairman may vote ONLY to make or break a tie.** For example, if a vote is exactly 50-50, the motion fails unless the chairman chooses to vote 'yes' and pass the motion.

If a vote is 50 'yes' to 49 'no,' the motion would pass unless the chairman chooses to vote 'no' and make a tie, thus causing the motion to fail.

Remember, **a chairman is never required to vote unless he/she chooses to do so.**



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mendments

There are times when members of the group will want to change the motion while it is in the discussion phase. This is called an amendment. It is recommended that only one amendment be permitted per motion. An amendment generally strikes out, adds, or substitutes words in the main motion.

A motion has been moved and seconded and is being discussed. To amend the motion:

- ⇒ A group member is recognized by the president to speak, then says, "I move to amend the motion to buy a 4-H flag by adding the words 3 ft. x 5 ft."
- ⇒ A second to this amendment is required.
- ⇒ Discussion follows and is for only the amendment, not the original motion. In the example, members may discuss the merits of a 3 ft. x 5 ft. size of 4-H flag, not if they are to purchase a flag (original motion).
- ⇒ When it is time to vote, the president conducts a vote to determine if the amendment passes. A majority is needed.
- ⇒ If the amendment passed, discussion follows on the motion as amended. In our example, "I move that we buy a 3 ft. x 5 ft. 4-H flag".
- ⇒ After discussion, a vote is taken on the motion as amended. A majority is needed.
- ⇒ If the amendment did not pass, discussion on the original motion continues, which in our example, is "to buy a 4-H flag."
- ⇒ After discussion, a vote is taken on the motion. A majority vote is needed.



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Tip

Tip: For less formal meetings, such as 4-H club meetings, it may be best to introduce complicated ideas by discussion before the motion is made. This eliminates the need for most amendments.



To Lay On Or Take From The Table

There are times when there is a reason to delay the decision on a motion. Perhaps there is not enough information to make a decision. The procedure to do this is called "laying on the table". This delays a decision until another time.

- ⇒ During discussion of a motion, a member is recognized by the president and says, "I move to lay the motion on the table".
- ⇒ Once again, a second is required.
- ⇒ There is no discussion permitted. The group proceeds directly to vote whether to table the motion or not. A majority is needed.
- ⇒ To bring back the motion so it can be discussed and acted upon, is called "taking from the table". While in old business, a member says, "I move to take from the table (motion's name)".
- ⇒ A second is required.
- ⇒ There is no discussion permitted. The group proceeds to vote whether to bring the motion from the table or not. A majority is needed. Once a motion has been brought back from the table, it is the next item of business.

Tip

Tip: Generally, a tabled motion comes back for consideration at the next regular meeting. Don't use the motion to table as a way to "kill" a motion.



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Power of the Gavel

You may notice that the presiding officer of a meeting usually has a gavel. What you may not know is how the gavel is used. The gavel is tapped a certain number of times at certain points in the meeting.



- ◆ One tap follows the announcement of the end of the meeting, the completion of a business item or is a message to the members to be seated.
- ◆ Two taps of the gavel calls the meeting to order.
- ◆ Three taps of the gavel is the signal for all members to stand in unison on the third tap.
- ◆ A series of sharp taps is used to restore order at a meeting.

All officers and members should understand the use and meaning of the gavel. It is the symbol of authority. If it is used correctly, the gavel helps create orderly meetings.





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Vocabulary of Parliamentary Procedure

Adjourn—To end the meeting.

Agenda - This is the order of business for a Club Meeting.

Amendment - This is a change. A motion can be amended or changed after discussion. Amendment can also refer to a change in a Club's by-laws.

Business - The issues or topics that are discussed at a meeting. There are two types of business at 4-H Meetings:

- ◆ *Old/Unfinished Business* - This refers to topics discussed a previous meeting that need to be reviewed or voted upon.
- ◆ *New Business* - This refers to new topics yet to be discussed.

Committee—A smaller group of members that work together for a specific task or to do a specific job. There are generally two types of committees:

- ◆ *Special or ad-hoc committee*—A temporary committee appointed to do one job or complete a specific task. For example, a committee to plan the club's annual Thanksgiving basket project.
- ◆ *Standing committee*—A committee that functions throughout the year. For example, the club's recreation committee.

Discussion - After a motion is made (it is *on the floor*), all members of the club can comment about pros and cons of the action, and share their opinions.

Floor - This refers to the discussion of the Club. For example, one motion is presented to the *floor* at a time or Isabella asks for the *floor* so that she can contribute to the discussion of the club or make a motion.



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Lay on the Table—To put aside a motion for further discussion at another meeting.

Majority - Strictly speaking, a majority means more than half of members present vote "yes." There are many types of majorities used in parliamentary procedure. For 4-H purposes, a simple majority (one more than half) is used.

Minutes - This is the name given to the formal notes that are taken by the secretary during the meeting and written up to be reported at the next meeting. In the minutes, the secretary describes the business meeting including what motions and seconds were made and by whom, the outcomes of vote, and what topics were discussed. It is also very important for the secretary to note in the minutes when a motion is tabled.

Motion - The name of the suggestion made by a member to be voted on. Only one motion is presented at a time.

Parliamentary Procedure—Guidelines that help us run a meeting smoothly and fairly.

Roll Call - This is the process where the secretary reads off the name of each club member and notes who is at the meeting and who is absent. Often at 4-H Club Meetings, members respond in certain unique ways each month. For example, in June (National Dairy Month) members might respond with their favorite flavor of ice cream.

Second - After a motion is made, another member must second the motion, in other words that person pledges their support of the suggestion.

Table - Tabling a motion means to put off voting until a future meeting, often because more information is needed.

Vote—A democratic method of allowing every member to have input into the final decision



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Let's Make Meeting Trail Mix

Here's a fun activity to help your club members better understand parliamentary procedure.

Needed: Large bowl, spoon, ingredients for trail mix (Honey Nut Cheerios®, raisins, peanuts, M&M's®, others as desired), plates, napkins.

Steps:

1. Display the ingredients and talk about the importance of parliamentary procedure to the smooth operation of a meeting.
2. Tell your audience that you are going to make trail mix and that they will learn how to correctly make a motion in a meeting.
3. Explain that all of the ingredients will be added to the bowl as motions are made. The 4-H'ers must say "I move that we add..." Ask for a second, discuss and vote on each ingredient. If the 4-H'er says "I make a motion" or "I motion," ask them to restate it correctly!
4. As soon as all of the ingredients are added, the members can eat the trail mix as a snack.

Tip

Be sure to have at least one ingredient that the members would NOT want in the trail mix, such as pickles. If someone moves to add this ingredient, the members can practice defeating a motion.

Tip

You can even practice making amendments to motions with this activity. For example, if a motion is made to add M&M's to the mix, it can be amended to only add certain color M&M's to the mix. Just follow the procedure for amending motions.

Practice! Practice! Practice!

The best way to keep enhancing your parliamentary procedure and leadership skills is to practice! Here are some ideas.

- ◆ Mentor younger 4-H members in your county who are interested in leadership and parliamentary procedure. Visit a 4-H meeting of younger 4-H members and conduct a demonstration about parliamentary procedure. Perhaps do the "Meeting Trail Mix" exercise with them.
- ◆ Help your 4-H leader plan a 4-H officer training workshop.
- ◆ Attend a non-4-H meeting where parliamentary procedure will be used. Examples include church business meetings, school board meetings and county commission meetings. Share what you observed.



**CORNELL COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION OF ONEIDA
COUNTY**

121 Second St.
Oriskany, NY 13424

Phone: 315-736-3394

Fax: 315-736-2580

Email: hes7@cornell.edu

www.cce.cornell.edu/oneida