

To keep your union strong:

- Attend your union meetings
- Speak up in union meetings
- Take part in union activities

You are the union!



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Points for Meetings

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This handy reference guide covers almost all of the situations that will arise at a local union meeting. Using these guidelines, anyone can participate effectively in union meetings.

How do you end debate when you've heard every argument and are ready to vote?

What if someone makes a motion to do something no one is interested in? Do you still have to talk about it?

Can a member raise something new if it isn't on the agenda?

This guide and rules of order are intended to assist Unifor Local Unions in the conduct of meetings to establish an orderly, respectful and inclusive meeting process that encourages debate and discussion and ensures that all members have voice and can effectively participate in making collective decisions.

Requirements for well-run, orderly meetings include:

- A quorum (minimum attendance for the meeting to take place)
- Regularly scheduled meetings with proper notice
- An agenda, or order of business
- Accepted rules of order

A quorum is required so that a tiny minority cannot make decisions against the interests of the whole membership. To ensure the membership can participate effectively, there have to be regular meetings that are well-advertised. And to ensure that the meetings run smoothly, and that all members can take part, there must be an agenda that is followed, and rules of order so that everyone knows how the meeting will be run.

The quorum requirement, schedule of meetings, and order of business will all be found in the Local Union By-laws.

The National Union has published the **Guide for Local Union By-Laws** to assist Local Unions in ensuring their by-laws are in compliance with the Unifor Constitution. This is available from the National Office.

Unifor has adopted a Rules of Order and Procedure Guide for meetings of Regional Councils, the Canadian Council and the NEB to promote democratic procedure and participation, without undue procedural wrangling. The Unifor rules of order are also recommended for Local Unions. This guidebook will give you the basics of these rules of order.

Here is how you can easily find any point in this guide:

1. Cut out the dotted area on the cover.
2. Check the number of the point you want on the cover.
3. Flip it — instant information.



It is customary in union meetings, when recognized by the chair, to state your name, and preface your remarks to the chair with "Brother" or "Sister" . . . followed by the reason you requested the floor.

1 THE MOTION



You make a motion by raising your hand to get the chair's attention. It is customary in some locals to go to the microphone to be recognized. After the chair has recognized you, you state your name and say, "I move that we . . .," and state your motion.

You may make a MOTION when you want the group to take some action:

- to send a letter;
 - to approve proposals for negotiations;
 - to accept a report;
 - to spend money for a specific purpose;
- . . . and so on.

When you make a motion you should provide a written copy to the Recording Secretary.

Motions are proper only after they have been offered to and accepted by the chair, and have been supported (seconded) by another member. Members should speak only once to each motion, unless permission is granted by the meeting to speak again.



2 THE AMENDMENT

Amendments are offered in the same way as motions, and are introduced to assist in changing, modifying, or completing a motion to make it more acceptable to the assembly. An amendment must be seconded (supported) to be in order.

You may offer an amendment when . . . you agree substantially with the motion that has been made but want to make some change before it is adopted.

For example, a motion has been made to hold a special local union meeting, but no date has been specified. You want to be sure the meeting will be held at a time when all members can attend, so you amend the motion to include a suitable date.

The amendment cannot change the original intent of the main motion.

OR

You may offer an amendment when . . . you disagree with the motion, but think it may pass, so you may want to amend the motion to make it somewhat acceptable.

For example, a motion has been made to purchase union jackets. You are opposed, but there seems to be majority support. You may want to amend the motion to limit the amount of the total expenditure. In such an instance, you would vote for the amendment and vote against the motion as amended.

After being recognized by the chair you may **amend the motion** by saying: "I move that the motion be amended to read..."

motion

AMENDMENT

State your name, then say, "*Sister or Brother Chair, I move that the motion be amended to read . . .*"

Voting takes place in reverse order. The amendment is voted on first. If carried, the motion as amended is voted on. If an amendment is defeated, it is like it never existed.

3 NOTICE OF MOTION

If a motion is of particular importance, or if it deals with policies, by-laws, or the Constitution of a body, it is often best dealt with through a Notice of Motion.

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A Notice of Motion will state the substance of the motion, and will specify a future meeting at which the motion will be discussed. A written copy of the Notice of Motion should be given to the Recording Secretary, and it should be listed in the notice of the meeting at which it will be discussed.

The by-laws of your Local Union or Council may specify which matters require a Notice of Motion. The **Guide for Local Union By-Laws** stipulates that amending Local Union by-laws requires a notice of motion, which is then referred to the Constitution and By-Laws Committee of the Local. The Committee then reports back to the next Local meeting, the notice for which must contain a notice of the by-law amendment that will be considered. A two-thirds vote of the membership is required to adopt the proposed amendment to the by-laws. The amendment is not effective until approved by the National Executive Board.

4 VOTING



Voting on motions is normally by a show of hands. The chair will ask those in favour of the motion to raise their hands. Then the chair will ask those who are opposed to raise their hands. The chair rules on the result of the vote. A simple majority is required to pass most motions.

One exception is a motion to change a previous decision. Such a motion usually requires a notice of motion to a subsequent meeting, and then requires a two-thirds vote. (Reversing a motion that was passed is termed a 'motion to rescind', voting again on a motion that was defeated is termed a 'motion to reconsider'.)

If a member feels that a vote has been close, they may call for a vote to be held other than by a show of hands. Alternatives include a standing vote or a counted vote. Local by-laws may require a minimum number to request a counted vote.

Unifor Regional Council rules state that “voting on resolutions shall be by a show of hands, unless 20% of the delegates request a per capita vote.” (A per capita vote occurs where delegates are voting on behalf of the members they represent—so the delegates from a local will collectively vote the number of members in the local.) Some local unions have meetings composed of delegates from units — they may also use some sort of per capita voting.



5 HOW TO END DEBATE

If you think there has been enough discussion of any issue being considered by your local union meeting, you may try to close the discussion.

You End Debate by getting recognition from the chair after which you say, "Brother or Sister Chair, I call the question."

A motion to end debate is often termed a motion to 'put the question', or a motion to 'call the question'.

If a motion to end debate is seconded, the chair must put this to a vote of the body. Discussion is allowed, but the motion may not be amended. A majority of the members present and voting can vote to end debate.

Unifor Regional Council rules state that "a motion to put the question shall not be in order unless at least one speaker in the affirmative and one speaker in the negative have had the opportunity to debate".

If enough votes are cast for the previous question, debate on the issue ends and the chair must call for an immediate vote. If the proposal to put the question fails, debate on the motion continues.



6 HOW TO TABLE

State your name, and say, *“Brother or Sister Chair, I move that we table the motion.”*

If you feel that the motion before the meeting should be delayed so that more information can be made available, you may move a motion to table.

If seconded and the **MOTION TO TABLE** passes, the main motion is put aside. No action is taken, and the meeting goes on to other business. If the motion to table is defeated, discussion on the main motion continues.

A motion to table **IS NOT DEBATABLE** or amendable; and should be put to an immediate vote by the chair.

A motion that has been tabled previously can be brought back for discussion by moving that it be lifted from the table.



7 POINT OF INFORMATION



“Sister or Brother Chair, I rise for information.”

If at any time during the meeting you are **confused about the business being discussed**, or if you want the motion that is being considered **more clearly explained**, you may rise to ask the chair for a **POINT OF INFORMATION**. However, you may not interrupt a speaker who has the floor.

After you are recognized, ask for the explanation you desire.

With only a few limitations, a point of information is in order at almost any time during a meeting. However, remember that a point of information is to **receive** information, not to give information.

8 POINT OF ORDER

If you **disagree** with any of the chair's rulings or if you believe that the person who is speaking is **not talking about the business being considered**, you may raise a **POINT OF ORDER** and state your objection to the chair.

The chair then is required to rule one way or another on your point of order.

*“Brother or Sister Chair,
I rise on a point of order.”*

9 POINT OF PRIVILEGE

You rise on a point of privilege when there is a need to immediately address a situation that affects the comfort, convenience, integrity, reputation or rights of a meeting or an individual member, such as turning the heat up or down, asking the speaker to talk more loudly, etc. This action does not require a seconder or a vote—the chair will rule.

10 APPEAL FROM THE CHAIR

If you disagree with a ruling of the chair on a point of order, you may **APPEAL FROM THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR**. This is sometimes called ‘challenging the chair’.

After you make such an appeal, it must be supported by at least one other member.

You will then be given an opportunity to **state your reasons for believing the chair should be overruled**, after which the chair who made the ruling will also have an opportunity to give his/her reasons for the ruling.

No one else may participate in this discussion.

The chair will then place your appeal before the group for a vote.

The meeting will then, by majority vote, overrule your appeal and uphold the chair, or support your opinion by overruling the chair.



Since appeals from the decision of the chair tend to delay meetings, they are used only when the rulings of the chair are of such great importance that the member cannot in good conscience allow them to stand.

11 MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn is always in order. It must be seconded and requires a majority vote to carry. It is not debatable. While a motion to adjourn is in order at any time, it is most commonly put when the business of the meeting is concluded. Some by-laws may have a fixed time for adjournment, but allow for motions to extend that time.



TEST YOURSELF ON PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

CIRCLE the right answer **TRUE** or **FALSE**

1. An amendment to a motion does not have to relate to the motion. **T F**
2. If you want to speak on a motion, you must be recognized by the chair. **T F**
3. The chair decides when debate should end. **T F**
4. A point of order can be raised even when someone else is talking. **T F**
5. The chair is never required to relinquish the chair under any circumstances. **T F**
6. A point of information is used to give information. **T F**
7. If the chair doesn't see your hand when you raise it to get his or her attention, there's nothing you can do to get the floor. **T F**
8. Several people call for the previous question and debate continues. That's what the previous question is for — to continue debate. **T F**
9. Amending Local Union bylaws requires a notice of motion. **T F**
10. Your by-laws usually spell out how many people constitute a "quorum". **T F**

Answers: 1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-F, 7-F, 8-F, 9-T, 10-T



HANDY CHART OF RULES OF ORDER

| To do this ... | You say ... | May I interrupt the speaker? |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Motion | "I move that ..." | No |
| Amendment | "I move that the motion be amended to read ..." | No |
| Notice of Motion | "I give notice to have the following motion discussed ..." | No |
| End debate on a motion | "I call the question" | No |
| Postpone discussion on a motion | "I move that the motion be tabled ..." | No |
| Ask for clarification | "Point of information" | Yes - if urgent |
| Ask about procedure, object to incorrect procedure | "Point of order" | Yes |
| Object to issues that affect the meeting or you | "Point of privilege" | Yes - if urgent |
| Overturn the ruling of the chair | "I challenge the chair on ..." | No |
| End the meeting | "I move we adjourn" | No |

| Do I need a seconder? | Is discussion allowed? | Are amendments allowed? | Majority to pass |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Yes | Yes | Yes | 50% +1 |
| Yes | Yes | Yes | 50% +1 |
| No | No | No | None |
| Yes | Yes | No | 50% +1 |
| Yes | No | No | 50% +1 |
| No | No | No | Chair rules |
| No | Yes, only on the point | No | Chair rules |
| No | No | No | Chair rules |
| Yes | No | No | 50% +1 |
| Yes | No | No | 50% +1 |