REGISTER NOW FOR EARLY BIRD PRICES

The LaTESOL 2023 Conference is quickly approaching. Registration is now open on our website.

Early Bird Registration - $65
You can register here until October 20th and save $25 on the registration fee. With this registration, you’re also given 1 year’s free membership in LaTESOL.

Late Registration - $90
With this registration, you’re also given 1 year’s free membership in LaTESOL.

Student Registration - $50

ASPIRING PROFESSIONALS NEED TO KNOW A BIT ABOUT ROBERT’S RULES: HINT - GROANING IS NOT ALLOWED

Carolyn Jones - CPA
Past President, Board Member of LaTESOL

"Where there is no law [...] there is the least of liberty." Henry M. Robert

Many of us find ourselves on boards or in other meetings and realize that we have only a vague recollection of the protocol for meetings. The protocol most often followed is that from Roberts Rules of Order, often referred to simply as Roberts Rules. The simplicity of the abbreviated name is probably the only simplicity in this set of protocols.

This article provides a summary of the history and key components of Roberts Rules and provides links to some of the many “Cheat Sheets” that have served to save many board members from the tedium of rules and discussions.

While many organizations operate informally, most still follow some outline from Robert’s Rules. And, as Henry M. Robert said, “Where there is no law [...], there is the least of real liberty.” Robert’s Rules saves time and eliminates many arguments.

THE RULES WERE CREATED FOR ORDINARY ORGANIZATIONS

Henry Martyn Robert (1837 – 1923) authored Robert’s Rules of Order in 1876. Contrary to popular belief, the rules were not written as military rules. The author’s interest in parliamentary procedure began in 1863 when he was

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PRESENTING AT THE LATESOL CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER?
SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE DETAILS!
chosen to preside over a church meeting and, although he accepted the task, he felt that he did not have the necessary knowledge of proper procedure. The procedures in the book were loosely modeled after those used in the United States House of Representatives, with such adaptations as Robert saw fit for use in ordinary societies.


But fear not; there is an edition of Robert’s Rules of Order In Brief. The 2020 edition of this book, authorized by the Roberts Rules Association, contains the requisite information for most organizations in a mere 214 pages. It’s no wonder that many have sought reading relief, and organizations have published “Cheat Sheets” that contain key information in tabular or abbreviated form.

**RULES FOR AGENDA AND MOTIONS ARE THE MOST COMMONLY UTILIZED**

At 714, or even 214, Robert’s Rules is very comprehensive, providing guidelines for soup to nuts: organizational charters and by laws through election of officers to dissolution of an organization.

The most frequently utilized rules, however, relate to meeting order (agenda) and motions.

**THIS AUTHOR’S AXIOM ON ROBERT’S RULES: IF YOU INVITED TO A MEETING WITHOUT AN AGENDA, RUN.**

A meeting without an agenda is a ticket to nowhere, often with chaos along the way. I suspect that there was no agenda for the church meeting that inspired Robert to rush to write his first edition.

The following information comes from the iBabs organization, whose stated mission is to “empower everyone who has ever organized – or attended – a meeting.” The article, “Roberts Rules of Order: The Meeting Agenda Simplified”, is a great form of “Cheat Sheet.” A link to this article can be found at the end of this section.

**THE ORDER AND LANGUAGE OF MANAGING A MEETING THROUGH AN AGENDA**

Robert’s Rules provides a general agenda breakdown as follows. The meeting minutes follow the agenda:

1. **Call to order.** The presiding officer/person chairing a meeting (typically the President or Secretary) will open the session by saying, “The meeting will come to order.” Often the time is noted and recorded in the minutes.

2. **Reading and approval of minutes.**

3. **Reports of officers, boards and standing committees.**

4. **Reports from special committees.**

5. **Special orders.** This isn’t very common. It is typically used when there are upcoming nominations or elections within the group.

6. **Old/Unfinished business.**

7. **New business.** This may be the bulk of the meeting, depending on the organization of the agenda, the traditions of the organization, and the wishes of the presiding officer. This is the time where all members are able to raise add topics or ideas.

8. **Announcements.** The date of the next meeting is typically announced here.

9. **Adjournment.** Unlike the Call to Order, this action requires a Motion, a Second and a majority vote. The time of adjournment is typically noted in the minutes.

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**PRESENT @ LATESOL 2023!**

LaTESOL is seeking proposals that reflect the best and most promising topics, research, and practice to support quality education of multilingual learners of English from diverse populations. We recommend all submissions adhere to the guidelines in this Call for Proposals and support the mission and values of TESOL International Association.

**NOTE: One presenter for each proposal will receive free conference registration.**

You should submit your abstract (maximum of 300 words) at the following link: Submit Proposal.

**Deadlines for Conference Proposal:**

**September 30, 2023** Deadline for proposal submissions

**October 7, 2023** Acceptances and notifications

**APPLY NOW**
The iBabs article summarizing agenda protocol can be found by following this link.

Robert's Rules of Order: The Meeting Agenda Simplified - iBabs

MOVED, SECONDED AND PASSED ... IF ONLY IT WERE SO SIMPLE

It is often problematic for board members to know when a motion is necessary, and how/when it is seconded or voted on. This is not surprising: the following list is only some of the motions included in Robert’s Rules.

- Subsidiary motions
- Privileged motions
- Incidental motions
- Motions that bring a question again before an assembly - take from the table, rescind/amend something previously adopted, discharge a committee, and reconsider

Whew!

INFORMALITY AND THE RISE OF CHEAT SHEETS

Most meetings, including board meetings, do not follow Robert’s Rules in a formal manner. Nevertheless, there are certain guidelines and rules that are commonly observed:

1. Intermittences. Members should not interrupt the speaker, even by raising hands. This rule does not, of course, work in most meetings, especially in organizations with a casual operating environment. Nevertheless, courtesy is always in style.

There are exceptions to the interruptions protocol and the Cheat Sheets explain these situations

2. Moved and Seconded. Typically, stating a motion in clear and concise terms facilitates good minutes taking and upends subsequent disagreements. Motions are frequently rewarded for this purpose.

A motion is introduced as follows: “I move that ....(clearly stated action required).

3. Debatable or Not Debatable? Some items are debatable; others are not debatable under Robert’s Rules. For example, a Point of Order, in which someone can interrupt the speaker, and does not need to be seconded and is not debatable. The issue is decided by the Chair.

4. Decided by Majority or 2/3 Vote. Some motions are decided by the Chair. Others, such as ending debate and vote on a question (moving on a question or calling a question), require a majority vote. Suspending consideration (table a question) requires a 2/3 vote.

Go figure! No wonder there has been a proliferation of Cheat Sheets!

A FEW POPULAR CHEAT SHEETS

The two links below lead to great Cheat Sheets; both contain information that describes a motion, indicates how to put the motion in good form. The Cheat Sheets also include information on interrupting the speaker, necessity of a second, debatable and/or amendable motions, and the decision making criteria.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has published a very useful "Cheat Sheet."

The Board Effect, an organization that has created Board Portal Software and that provides consulting services to boards, also has useful information.

Robert's Rules of Order | Cheat Sheet for Nonprofits | BoardEffect

A bit more information is included in the following iBabs article.

The Complete Robert's Rules Of Order Cheat Sheet (Made Easy) - iBabs

CONCLUSION

Becoming a member of a board of directors is a career enhancing experience. Many of us, especially in the not-for-profit world, look beyond protocol and focus on the mission and goals of the organization. Nevertheless, we lose a great opportunity for professional development by not understanding the board “rules of the road.” In this case, we can thank Mr. Robert for his marvelous set of instructions.