

What is Parliamentary Procedure?

There are many different ways of conducting meetings so they are efficient and orderly. Parliamentary Procedure is one of these systems and is based on Robert's Rules of Order. 4-H business meetings are an important part of 4-H club work and every club (with the exception of Cloverbud groups) should have business meetings. These meetings should be run by parliamentary procedure.

Parliamentary procedure allows a group to hold orderly meetings and accomplish their goals in an effective, fair and efficient manner. It ensures that the group's business is conducted while allowing everyone to have a say and express their opinion.

There are many guides and books which can be used as references for using this method of conducting meetings. This short guide will assist you in using Parliamentary Procedure to accomplish these goals:

- Keep meetings orderly
- Accomplish more items in less time and meet your goals
- Help people work better together and come to agreement
- Provide a democratic process at meetings
- Use Parliamentary Procedure effectively

Learning how to conduct and participate in meetings allows 4-H youth to experience and practice life skills that will help them in school and as adults. Planning, evaluating, sharing ideas, listening to others, and making decisions are all important life skills that take place through participation in meetings.



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Running Your 4-H Meeting

Getting Started

First of all, your club needs club officers, usually elected by the group. Each club should have a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. There are guides on the 4-H website that define the role of each officer.

The President, in cooperation with the 4-H club leader, prepares an agenda in advance of the meeting. The president runs the meeting using the agenda constructed prior to the meeting. Agendas are the order of business that will occur at the meeting. Generally an agenda consists of the following items:

1. Call to Order
 - “The meeting will come to order”
2. Reading and Approval of Minutes
 - The Secretary reads the minutes
3. Treasurer’s Report
 - The Treasurer gives the report; it is usually presented in writing
4. Committee Reports
 - Examples of committees are Recreation, Community Service, Refreshment, Recognition, etc. Committees are used to facilitate the business of the group.
5. Unfinished Business
 - Any business held over from the previous meeting
6. New Business
 - Items being brought up for the first time
7. Adjournment

Order of Business

It is important to have rules in place during any meeting. This democratic process allows for all present to have the opportunity to speak and be heard with order and without intimidation.

There are four basic principles of parliamentary procedure to keep in mind:

1. Only one person may speak at a time
2. Each motion is entitled to time for discussion and debate
3. Each member has rights equal to every other member
4. The will of the majority is carried out; the rights of the minority must be preserved

In addition, the person conducting the meeting (generally the president) calls on the participants to speak. Only one person should be speaking at a time. The president is responsible for making sure these rules are followed. The club leader may help when necessary, especially in the case of a new or young president.

Definitions

The following table provides some definitions of commonly used terms.

Agenda	The order of the business meeting. The agenda is constructed in advance by the president, with input from others and may be shared with the group prior to the meeting.
Aye	When a vote is called, members who agree with the motion say "Aye." This means yes.
Floor	Only one person may speak at a time during the meeting. The person who has permission to speak, given by the president, "has the floor" or the right to speak. To obtain the floor, a member raises their hand and the president calls on that member or person.
Majority	One more than half of the voting members present. This is the minimum number of votes needed to pass most motions.
Motion	A suggestion that a member wants the group to adapt or act upon. A motion is stated in the form, "I move that....."
Nay	When a vote is called, the members who disagree with the motion will say, "Nay." This means no.
Parliamentary Procedure	A set of guidelines that describes the proper way to conduct a business meeting.
Presiding Officer	The person in charge of conducting the business meeting; usually the president or chairperson.
Second	Once a motion has been made, the president will ask for a "second." This is similar to asking if there is another person present who agrees the group should consider the suggestion. To second a motion, a member will say, "I second the motion" or "Second."

Motions

A motion is a suggestion that someone attending the meeting wants the whole group to consider and take action on. There are several steps to make and either approve or reject a motion. There are times motions can be changed and amended. The voting for these types of motions becomes more complex. To make a simple motion, these steps are followed:

Steps for A Motion		
Steps	Who Speaks	What is Said
	After being recognized by the presiding officer	In this example the group is considering
1. A member makes a motion	Any member	"I move that our group allows a commercial food vendor to sell food at our fair"
2. Another member seconds the motion	Any other member	"I second the motion." Or "Second."
3. The presiding officer states the motion and it is discussed	Presiding officer	"It has been moved and seconded that our group allow a commercial food vendor to sell food at our fair. Is there any discussion?"

Voting on a Motion

Once a motion has been presented and discussed, it is time to vote. Usually, the president or chair of the group calls for a vote:

Voting on A Motion		
Steps	Who Speaks	What is Said
A vote is taken. Usually this is by hands raised or a voiced "Aye" however a written ballot can also be used	The presiding officer (President or Chair of Committee)	"All in favor say 'Aye'. All opposed say 'Nay'.
The outcome is announced	Presiding officer	"The motion carries. Our club will allow a commercial food vendor to sell food at our fair."

Sample Order of a 4-H Business Meeting

Meeting is called to order by the presiding officer	
President	Taps the gavel and calls the meeting to order
Pledges are said by group	
	Pledge of allegiance followed by the 4-H pledge
Introduction of any new members or guests	Presiding officer or club leader introduces any new members or guests attending
Roll Call	Attendance is taken by secretary
Reading of the Minutes	The secretary reads the minutes of the previous meeting. The president asks if there are any additions or corrections to the minutes. If so, these are voted on. After, a motion is made to accept the minutes A second is made and the group votes to accept the minutes
Treasurer's Report	The president asks the treasurer to provide a report. Once provided, the president asks if there are any questions regarding the treasurer's report. If questions, the treasurer will respond. If not, the president asks for a motion (and a second) to accept the report The group votes to accept the report
Committee Report (examples include Refreshment, Recognition, Community Service, Recreation)	Committees are called upon by the president to provide reports. Usually the chair of the committee or a representative speaks. Each committee report follows a similar procedure as above. The president asks if there are any questions. If yes, the reporter responds. If no, the president asks for a motion (and a second) to accept the committee reports. The group votes to accept the reports.
Old Business	The person compiling the agenda reviews minutes of the previous meeting to see if any business was not completed. These items become the Old Business in the current meeting. Each item is brought to the floor by the President. The same procedures are followed as with treasurer or secretary reports. As each item is discussed, the group is asked if there are questions. A call for a motion and a second is made. The group votes to accept each item
New Business	As the agenda for the current meeting is being created, the president or club leader will identify new issues for the club to discuss. The president brings each item up individually. Anyone who would like to speak on the topic is called upon by the president. After each item is discussed if there is a need for the club to take action someone may make a motion from the floor or the president will ask for a motion (and second) to be made. Once a motion is made, the president will ask if there is any further discussion. If none, a vote is taken on the motion.
Announcements	The president or another designated person will make any announcements or reminders when the New Business is concluded
Adjournment of Meeting	When all business is concluded, the president will say "Is there a motion to adjourn the meeting?" After hearing a motion, and a second, the president will call for a vote. At the conclusion of the vote, the president will say "The meeting is adjourned."