

The Main Motion

Most Parliamentarians see the Main Motion as the bottom rung of the Parliamentary ladder, after all it can be pushed aside while amendments to it are discussed, has no rank in the face of subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions, and can end up looking battered and beaten at the end of the day.

Like the knights of old when entering battle, the Main Motion requires a second in order to be considered. Once in the fray, it can be debated, amended and requires a majority to be approved (thumbs up or thumbs down).

But how does it get to the field of battle?

1. A member of the assembly requests the floor.
2. The Chair assigns the floor to the member.
3. The motion is made --- "I move that ----".
4. The motion is seconded.
 - Robert's states *the a motion must be considered if two people are in favour of its coming before the meeting.*
 - Motions from a committee do not require a second.
 - If the motion fails to get a second the Chair states – "*Since there is no second, the motion is not before this meeting.*"
5. The Chair states the motion.
 - It is important to restate the motion so that the proposal is clear in the mind of the assembly.
 - The motion is said to be **pending** once it has been stated by the Chair. It must be disposed of in some manner before other business can be conducted.
6. Debate is held.
 - Debate should continue as long as members wish to discuss the question, unless motions have been adopted to either limit or extend debate.
7. The Chair puts the question to a vote.
8. The Chair announces the vote.

Other Points:

- The Chair (the referee) can require long motions to be submitted in writing.
- The maker of the motion has the first right to speak to it.
- A member can vote against his own motion but cannot speak against it.
- A member can modify his own motion before it is stated by the Chair. Once it is stated by the Chair, it becomes the property of the assembly. The member can also make an amendment after the Chair has stated the motion.
- A member can withdraw his motion up to the time it is stated by the Chair, after that he must have the permission of the meeting.

The Chair (Referee) should rule out of order motions that:

- Conflict with the law or by-laws;

- Repeat the same question on the same day;
- Conflict with an already adopted motion;
- Operate outside the scope and/or object of the organization;
- Conflict or repeat motions held in committee;
- Appear dilatory, incorrect, **frivolous**, or rude.

After all of that the Main Motion emerges, either beat, battered and defeated, or bruised but shiny and new to move the organization forward. I would argue that rather than the lowest rung of the parliamentary ladder; the Main Motion is the foot soldier and foundation of our parliamentary process.

(Rick Joseph, DTM is a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians.)