



A Quick Reference Guide to Sturgis Rules Governing Motions

- **The Main Motion**

The purpose of the main motion is to bring a proposal before an assembly for discussion and decision. The main motion is the means by which a member may present a substantive proposal to the assembly for consideration and action. It is the basic motion for the transaction of business. Since only one subject can be considered at one time, the main motion can be proposed only when no other motion is before the assembly.

- **Motion to Amend a Previous Action**

The purpose is to amend a main motion that was approved previously. A main motion approved at a previous meeting can be amended by majority vote, unless it was a motion requiring prior notice or a two-thirds vote, in which case the same restriction applies to the amendment. Since a motion amending a prior action is a main motion, it is subject to amendments and secondary amendments, as is any other main motion.

- **Motion to Ratify**

The purpose is to confirm and thereby validate an action that was taken in an emergency, or where a quorum was not present.

- **Motion to Reconsider**

The purpose is to enable an assembly to set aside a vote on a main motion taken at the same meeting or convention and to consider the motion again as though no vote had been taken on it. It is a restorative main motion and can be offered at any time during a meeting. It is unusual in that, unlike an ordinary main motion, it may be proposed even if other business is under consideration, and, if necessary, it may interrupt a speaker.

- **Motion to Rescind**

To repeal (cancel, nullify, void) a main motion approved at a previous meeting. Any main motion that was passed, no matter how long before, may be rescinded unless as a result of the vote something has been done that the assembly cannot undo. The motion to rescind, if passed, affects the present and future only, since it is not retroactive.

- **Motion to Resume Consideration**

The purpose is to enable an assembly to take up a motion that was postponed temporarily (tabled) during the same meeting or convention. It applies only to a main motion that has been postponed. Beyond the current meeting or convention, the temporarily postponed motion lapses and can be brought up only as a new main motion.

- **Motion to Amend**

The purpose of the motion to *amend* is to change a motion that is being considered by the House so that it will express more satisfactorily the will of the members. The most frequently used methods of amending are by addition, by deletion, by striking and inserting, and by substitution. The subsidiary motions to postpone temporarily (table) and to vote immediately are not amendable. An amendment cannot change the intent of the motion and still be appropriate; however, an amendment cannot simply change an affirmative statement into a negative statement.

- **Motion to Refer to a Committee**

The purpose is to transfer a motion that is pending before the assembly to a committee:

1. To investigate or study the proposal, make recommendations on it, and return it to the assembly, or
2. To conserve the time of the assembly by delegating the duty of deciding the proposal, and sometimes of carrying out the decision, to a smaller group, or



3. To ensure privacy in considering a delicate matter, or
4. To provide a hearing on the proposal, or
5. To defer a decision on the proposal until a more favorable time.

- **Motion to Postpone to a Certain Time and To Postpone Temporarily**

These are the two most frequently used subsidiary motions. The purpose of the motion to *Postpone to a Certain Time* is to delay further consideration of a pending main motion until a stated time. And the purpose of the motion to *Postpone Temporarily* is to set aside a pending main motion, which can be taken up for further consideration at any time during the same meeting or convention.

- **Postponing to a Certain Time vs. Postponing Temporarily**

The motion to *postpone to a certain time* defers consideration, or further consideration, of the pending main motion, and fixes a definite date or time for its consideration, and may make it either a general or special order for the designated time. Debate is permitted, but is restricted to brief discussion of the time or reason for postponement.

The motion to *postpone temporarily* (table) defers the pending main motion temporarily but specifies no time for its consideration and is not debatable. Its effect terminates at the end of the current meeting or convention, at which time the main motion dies if the assembly has not voted to resume consideration of it (or to “take it from the table”).

- **Motion to Limit or Extend Debate**

The purpose is to limit or extend the time that will be devoted to discussion of a pending motion or to modify or remove limitations already imposed on its discussion. The motion to limit debate on a pending question or to modify limitations already set up usually relates to the number of speakers who may participate, the length of time allotted each speaker, the total time allotted for discussion of the motion, or some variation or combination of these limitations. The most common example of a motion extending limitations on debate is one that extends the time allowed a particular speaker.

- **Motion to Close Debate and Vote Immediately**

The purpose is to prevent or to stop discussion on the pending question or questions, to prevent the proposal of other subsidiary motions except to postpone temporarily, and to bring the pending question or questions to an immediate vote. A powerful tool for expediting business, it may be proposed at any time after the motion to which it applies has been stated to the assembly. If the motion to close debate is proposed as soon as a main motion has been stated to the assembly, its adoption prevents any discussion of the question.

- **Request to Withdraw a Motion**

The purpose is to enable a member who has proposed a motion to remove it from consideration by the assembly. If the motion has been stated to the assembly by the presiding officer, it becomes the property of that body, and the proposer may withdraw it only if no objection is raised.



Table 1 Principle Rules Governing Motions

Order of Procedures ¹	Interrupt Speaker	Second Needed	Debate Allowed	Amended	Motions to Which It Applies	Motion Than Can be Applied To It? ⁴	Vote Required for Passage
Precedented Motions <i>Privileged Motions</i>							
1. Adjourn	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	None	Amend	Majority
2. Recess	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	None	Amend ³	Majority
3. Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None	None	None
Subsidiary Motions							
4. Postpone Temporarily (Table))	No	Yes	No	No	Main	None	Majority ²
5. Close Debate	No	Yes	No	No	Debatable	None	2/3
6. Limit Debate	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	Debatable	Amend ³	2/3
7. Postpone to a certain time	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	Main	Amend, ³ close/limit debate	Majority
8. Refer to Committee	No	Yes	Yes ³	Yes ³	Main	Amend, ³ close/limit debate	Majority
9. Amend	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rewordable	Amend, ³ close/limit debate Close/limit debate, amend	Majority
Main Motions							
a. The Main Motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	Restorative, Subsidiary	Majority
b. Restorative main motions							
Ratify	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Main	Subsidiary, restorative	Majority
Reconsider	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Previous	Subsidiary	Majority
Rescind	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Main	Subsidiary	Majority
Resume consideration	No	Yes	Yes	No	Main	Close/limit debate	Majority
	No	Yes	No	No	Main	Close/limit debate	Majority
						None	Majority

Table 2 Incidental Motions

No order of precedence	Interrupt Speaker	Second Needed	Debate Allowed	Amended	Motions to Which It Applies	Motion Than Can be Applied To It	Vote Required for Passage
Motions							
Appeal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Decision of Chair	Close/limit debate	Majority
Suspend Rules	No	Yes	No	No	Chair	None	2/3
Consider Informally	No	Yes	No	No	None	None	Majority
					Main		
Requests							
Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	Any error	None	None



Parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	All motions	None	None
Withdraw a motion	Yes	No	No	No	All motions	None	None
Division of question	No	No	No	No	Main motion	None	None
Division of assembly	Yes	No	No	No	Indecisive vote	None	None

1. Motions are in order only if no motion higher on the list is pending. Thus, if a motion to close debate is pending, a motion to amend would be out of order; but a motion to recess would be in order, since it outranks the pending motion.
2. Requires two-thirds vote when it would suppress a motion without debate
3. Restricted
4. Withdraw may be applied to all motions



Table 3 The Chief Purposes of Motions

Purpose	Motion
Present an idea for consideration and action	Main Motion Resolution Consider informally
Improve a pending motion	Amend Division of a question
Regulate or cut off debate	Limit or extend debate Close debate
Delay a decision	Refer to a committee Postpone to a certain time Postpone temporarily Recess Adjourn
Suppress a proposal	Table Withdraw a motion
Meet an emergency	Question of privilege Suspend rules
Gain information on a pending motion	Parliamentary inquiry Request for information Request to ask member a question Question of privilege
Question the decision of the presiding officer	Point of order Appeal from decision of chair
Enforce rights and privileges	Division of assembly Division of question Parliamentary inquiry Point of order Appeal from decision of chair
Consider a question again	Resume consideration Reconsider Rescind Renew a motion Amend a previous action Ratify
Change an action already taken	Reconsider Rescind Amend a previous action
Terminate a meeting	Adjourn Recess



Table 4 Changing Main Motions Already Voted On

	May Be Used	Applies to
Motion to reconsider	Only at same meeting or convention	Any main motion carried or lost
Motion to rescind	At any meeting or convention	Any main motion carried at an earlier meeting or convention
Amend a previous action	At any meeting or convention	Any main motion carried
Renew by new main motion	At any meeting or convention	Any main motion lost
Repeal or amend by implication	At any meeting or convention	Any main motion previously carried which conflicts with later main motion

Table 5 Parliamentary Strategy

To Support A Motion	To Oppose A Motion
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Second it promptly and enthusiastically 2. Speak in favor of it as soon as possible. 3. Do your homework; know your facts; have handouts, charts, overhead projector slides, etc., if appropriate. 4. Move to amend motion, if necessary, to make it more acceptable to opponents. 5. Vote against motion to table or to postpone, unless delay will strengthen your position. 6. Move to recess or postpone, if you need time to marshal facts or work behind the scenes 7. If defeat seems likely, move to refer to committee, if that would improve chances. 8. If defeat seems likely, move to divide question, if appropriate, to gain at least a partial victory. 9. Have available a copy of the organization's standing rules, its bylaws, and <i>The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure</i>, in case of a procedural dispute. 10. If motion is defeated, move to reconsider, if circumstances warrant it. 11. If motion is defeated, consider reintroducing it at a subsequent meeting. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speak against it as soon as possible. Raise questions; try to put proponents on the defensive. 2. Move to amend the motion so as to eliminate objectionable aspects. 3. Move to amend the motion to adversely encumber it. 4. Draft a more acceptable version and offer as amendment by substitution. 5. Move to postpone to a subsequent meeting. 6. Move to refer to committee. 7. Move to table. 8. Move to recess, if you need time to round up votes or obtain more facts. 9. Question the presence of a quorum, if appropriate. 10. Move to adjourn. 11. On a voice vote, vote emphatically. 12. If the motion is adopted, move to reconsider, if you might win a subsequent vote. 13. If the motion is adopted, consider trying to rescind it as a subsequent meeting. 14. Have available a copy of the organization's standing rules, its bylaws, and <i>The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure</i>, in case of a procedural dispute.

