



## Parliamentary Procedure Cheat Sheet

Each officer should be familiar with the fundamental rules of parliamentary procedure. The business of any meeting is conducted more efficiently and quickly with parliamentary procedure and gives members a sense of security in knowing what course of action may be taken.

As stated in “Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised,” the rules of parliamentary law are built on a careful balance of the rights of persons and subgroups within an organization. The rules are based on regard for the rights of:

- The majority – defined as more than half
- The minority
- Individual members
- Absentees
- All these together

### Order of Business

#### Call to order

The president must first determine if a quorum is present. A quorum is defined as the number of voting delegates who must be present in order for business to be legally transacted. The bylaws should stipulate the number for quorum. If your bylaws do not stipulate a number for quorum, then it is a majority (more than half) of your voting delegates. No business may be conducted if the College Panhellenic meeting lacks a quorum. The president stands, waits or signals for quiet, and says, “The meeting will come to order.” *Note: Rapping once with the gavel, if desired.*

#### Opening

The president says, “Please repeat the Panhellenic Creed.”

#### Roll call

The president says, “The secretary will call the roll.”

#### Reading and approval of minutes

The president says, “The secretary will read the minutes.” *Note: The secretary stands to read the minutes. The president sits down. This should only happen if the minutes are not distributed before the meeting.*

Or the president says “The minutes were distributed before the meeting.”

The president says, “Are there any corrections to the minutes?” (Pause) [Choose one of the following statements:]

[“If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as read/distributed.”]

[“If there is no objection, the secretary will make the correction(s) [insert proposed corrections]. If there are no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected.”]



### **Reports of officers**

The president says, “The next business in order is hearing reports of the officers.” *Note: Officers are called on in the order they are listed in the bylaws. The president should only call on those who have reports to make. An officer should not move the implementation of a recommendation in her report; another member can make such a motion following the officer’s report.*

The treasurer reports at every meeting. In calling on the treasurer the president says, “May we have the treasurer’s report.” *Note: A treasurer’s report is never adopted. An audit report, usually presented annually, is the only financial report that is adopted. This language is used to adopt the audit report: “The question is on the adoption of the audit report. Those in favor of adopting the audit report say ‘aye’. Those opposed say ‘no’. The ‘ayes’ have it and the audit report is adopted.”*

### **Reports of standing committees**

The president says, “The next business in order is hearing reports of the standing committees.” *Note: Standing committees are called on in the order they are listed in the bylaws. The president should only call on those who have reports to make.*

The chairman or other reporting member of a committee says, “On behalf of the committee, I move the adoption of [insert motion needed to implement any recommendations the committee makes].” *Note: A motion arising out of a standing committee’s report is taken up immediately.*

### **Reports of special committees**

*Note: Announced only if there are such committees prepared or instructed to report.*

The president says, “The next business in order is hearing reports of special committees. The committee appointed to [insert special committee name] will now report.” *Note: Special committees are called on in the order in which they were appointed.*

The chairman or other reporting member of a committee says, “On behalf of the committee, I move the adoption of [insert motion needed to implement any recommendations the committee makes].” *Note: A motion arising out of a special committee’s report is taken up immediately.*

### **Special orders**

*Note: Announced only if there are such items.*

Matters set by the bylaws for a particular meeting, such as elections, are taken up at this time.

### **Unfinished business and general orders**

*Note: Announced only if there are such items.*

Unfinished business — sometimes incorrectly referred to as old business — refers to questions that have carried over from the previous meeting as a result of that meeting having adjourned without completing its order of business. General orders refer to business that has been postponed to the present meeting.

The president says, “The next item of business is the motion relating to [insert motion] that was postponed to this meeting. The question is on the adoption of the motion that [insert motion]. Is there any discussion?”



### **New Business**

The president says, “Is there any new business?”  
“Is there any further new business?”

### **Announcements**

The president says, “The chair has the following announcements [insert announcements]. Are there other announcements?”

### **Program**

The president does not “turn the meeting over” but announces, “[Insert name of speaker] will now present the program” or “[insert name of person giving introduction] will introduce our speaker.”

### **Adjournment**

The president says, “Is there any further business? (Pause) Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned.” Or she may say, “A motion to adjourn is in order.” In announcing the affirmative vote: “The ‘ayes’ have it and the meeting is adjourned.” *Note: A single rap of the gavel may be used.*

### **How is Business Brought Before the Panhellenic Council?**

To get business before the College Panhellenic Council a delegate must make a motion. A main motion is a formal proposal for consideration and action. Since only one subject can be considered at a time, no main motion can be made while another motion is before the council.

### **Main Motions that are not in Order**

- Conflicts with the governing documents of the College Panhellenic Council or NPC Unanimous Agreements.
- Presents substantially the same question as previously rejected during the same meeting.
- Presents essentially the same question as one that was temporarily disposed of but is still in the control of the College Panhellenic Council (such as referred to a committee).
- Proposes action outside the scope of the College Panhellenic Council’s objects (unless by a 2/3 vote the delegates authorizes its introduction).

### **The Eight Steps in Processing Main Motions**

1. A delegate rises and addresses the chair when nothing is pending, “Madame president.”
2. The president recognizes the delegate by nodding at her or saying, “The chair recognizes Amy.”
3. The delegate states her motion, “I move that we have a canned food drive.”
4. Another delegate, without recognition, seconds the motion, “Second.”
5. Chair states the motion and places it before the delegates for discussion. “It is moved and seconded that we have a canned food drive. Is there any discussion?”
6. Delegates have the right to get recognition and debate the motion. During debate subsidiary motions (e.g., amendments or postponement) may be introduced to help the council perfect the motion and make a final decision.
7. When discussion is finished the president puts the question to a vote. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that we have a canned food drive. Those in favor, say ‘aye.’” (Pause.) “Those opposed, say ‘no.’” (Pause.)
8. The president announces the results of the vote. “The ‘ayes’ (‘noes’) have it; the motion is adopted (lost); we will (not) have a canned food drive; the next business in order is ...”



## The Process of Amending

1. To insert or to add (a word, consecutive words or a paragraph).

Phrasing:

- “I move to amend the motion by inserting the word ‘consecutive’ before the word ‘terms.’”
- “I move to amend by adding the words ‘at a cost not to exceed \$100.’”
- “I move to amend by adding the following paragraph ...”

2. To strike out (a word, consecutive words or a paragraph).

Phrasing:

- “I move to amend by striking out the word ‘every.’”
- “I move to amend by striking out the third paragraph.”

3. To strike out and insert (words) or to substitute (paragraph or entire main motion).

Phrasing:

- “I move to amend by striking out the word ‘monthly’ and insert the word ‘annually.’”
- “I move to amend by substituting for the pending main motion the following ...”

## Forms of Voting

A majority is usually required to pass a motion. It is a fundamental principle of parliamentary law that the right to vote is limited to the members of an organization who are actually present at the time the vote is taken in a legal meeting.

Voting may be done by:

- General (unanimous) consent: The president asks if there is any objection, and if none, the motion passes. “If there is no objection, we will adjourn. (Pause.) There being no objection, the meeting is adjourned.”
- Voice vote: Regular method of voting on any motion that does not require more than a majority vote; most common form of voting. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that \_\_\_\_\_. Those in favor, say ‘aye.’” (Pause.) “Those opposed, say ‘no.’” (Pause.)
- Rising vote: Method used when a two-thirds vote is required for adoption; is also used when a delegate calls for a division of the assembly. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that \_\_\_\_\_. Those in favor, please stand.” (Pause.) “Thank you, please be seated. Those opposed, please stand.” (Pause.) “Thank you, please be seated.”
- Show of hands: An alternative method for a voice vote; used in small boards, committees or very small meetings. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that \_\_\_\_\_. Those in favor please raise your hand.” (Pause.) “Thank you. Those opposed please raise your hand.” (Pause.) “Thank you.”
- Voting cards: An alternative method for a voice vote; cards must be issued during the credentialing process. “The question is on the adoption of the motion that \_\_\_\_\_. Those in favor please raise your voting card.” (Pause.) “Thank you. Those opposed please raise your voting card.” (Pause.) “Thank you.”
- Counted vote: Can be ordered by the president when it appears a voice vote is unclear, and it can be ordered by a majority vote of the delegates.
- Ballot or roll call vote: Can be ordered by a majority vote of the delegates and is required if specified in the bylaws.

## Ties

Because the NPC Unanimous Agreements provide that each installed NPC chapter of the College Panhellenic Association shall have one vote, the Panhellenic president, nor any other individual, does not have the power to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie. A tie vote on a motion requiring a majority vote means that the motion was defeated.



## Nominations

- Nominations do not need a second.
- Closing nominations requires 2/3 vote. To reopen requires a majority vote.

## Parliamentary Rules for a Committee

The formality necessary in a large group would hinder business in the smaller group. Therefore, in a committee:

- Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking.
- Motions need not be seconded.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member may speak to a question.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while there is no motion about it pending.
- All proposed actions must be approved by vote.
- Voting may be by voice or show of hands; minutes may be taken.
- The chairman may make and debate motions. She is usually an active participant in the discussions and work of the committee. She may vote on all questions.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the difference between a majority, a simple majority and a super majority?

A majority is defined as more than half. Although the phrases simple majority and super majority are used in some organizations and in the media, they are not recognized parliamentary terms and therefore do not have definitions.

### 2. When there is a tie vote (i.e., two for and two against), does the Panhellenic president cast the deciding vote? If not, what are the options?

When a question requires a majority vote to adopt, and the results of the vote produce a tie, there is usually some consternation in the meeting because it exhibits an equal division. Because the NPC Unanimous Agreements provide that each installed NPC sorority of the College Panhellenic Association shall have one vote, the Panhellenic president does not have the power to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie. A tie on a motion requiring a majority vote means that the motion was defeated. Besides just realizing that the motion was defeated and moving on, a motion could be made in the current meeting to reconsider the vote, or the same motion could be presented again at any future meeting.

### 3. When Panhellenic adopts a motion and then wants to have a revote, who can call for the revote, and what is the procedure?

The motion to reconsider allows the delegates to change their minds about how they voted on a motion in the same meeting. The motion to reconsider must be made by a delegate who voted on the prevailing side of the motion (if the original motion was adopted, then someone who voted for it, or if the original motion was defeated, then someone who voted against it). The motion to reconsider requires a majority vote and if it is adopted, the motion being reconsidered comes again before the Panhellenic Council as if it had never been voted on. If the original motion was adopted in a previous meeting, a delegate can make a motion to rescind the action or make a motion to amend something previously adopted. Both of these motions require a majority vote with previous notice or a two-thirds vote with no notice.

### 4. Who casts the vote for each group in Panhellenic? The Panhellenic delegate or her alternate, and/or the chapter president?

To find the definitive answer to the question, one must read the governing documents of the Panhellenic Association. The model bylaws suggests the following provision:

“The [name of institution] Panhellenic Council shall be composed of one delegate and one alternate delegate from each regular, provisional and associate women’s-only member organization at [name of institution] as identified in Article III. The delegates shall be the voting members of the Panhellenic Council except as otherwise provided in Article III of these bylaws. The alternate delegate shall act and vote in the



place of the delegate when the delegate is absent. If both delegate and alternate are absent a designated member of the specific sorority may cast the vote, provided the credentials of this individual have been previously presented to the Association president.”

Unless the governing documents provide otherwise, the chapter president does not automatically become an alternate delegate.

**5. What happens if a chapter cannot be at the meeting and still wishes to cast a vote? Must the Panhellenic have this in its bylaws?**

It is a fundamental principle of parliamentary law that the right to vote is limited to the members of an organization who are actually present at the time the vote is taken in a legal meeting. Allowing a vote of an absent delegate to be made at a meeting would be considered proxy voting. Favorable state statutes and a provision in the association’s bylaws are required for proxy voting to be valid.

**6. How are votes counted? Is it a majority (2/3, 3/4) of those voting or of all member organizations? How are abstentions handled?**

The governing documents of the Panhellenic Association must be consulted first. It is important to understand that the governing documents might require separate requirements for different classes of business (i.e., voting on a Greek Weekend theme is likely to differ from voting on membership recruitment rules, to set the date for pledging and extension).

- If the rules state that motions are adopted by a majority (2/3, 3/4) vote, then that means a majority (2/3, 3/4) of those delegates voting.
- If the rules state that motions require a majority (2/3, 3/4) of those present, then one must know how many delegates are present for each vote. Have any delegates arrived or departed before each vote?
- If the rules state that motions require a majority (2/3, 3/4) of the voting members of the Panhellenic Council, then that means a majority (2/3, 3/4) of all members, whether or not they are present and/or voting.
- If the rules do not state anything about the vote required, the default is a majority of the votes cast.

Abstention means not to vote. The president should never call for abstentions. If a delegate does not vote yes or no, she has abstained.

**7. What happens to a motion if there is no second? Do the minutes have to reflect who seconded the motion?**

Once someone makes a motion, another voting member must second it. If there is no second, the motion dies, and the members move on to the next business in order. The member making the second does not have to necessarily agree with the motion; she just has to believe that the issue is worthy of discussion and a decision. Motions from a committee with more than one member do not need a second. The maker of the second does not get any special privileges such as priority in debate, and the name of the seconder is not included in the minutes.

**8. If the bylaws of a College Panhellenic Association say that it must present a motion one week and vote on it one week later, must it vote in one week even if it hasn’t gathered sufficient information?**

Previous notice is usually required when proposing a change to something that has been previously adopted, such as amendments to bylaws or changes to recruitment rules. Notice is informing the voting delegates of the proposed change in advance of the meeting. Unless the governing documents provide differently, notice is given at one meeting, and the motion is on the agenda for a vote at the next meeting.

If, when a motion that was “noticed” at the previous meeting comes before the Panhellenic Council, the delegates are not prepared to vote on the issue, a delegate can move to postpone the motion. The motion to postpone requires a second and a majority vote to adopt. When a motion is postponed, it automatically comes up at the next meeting under unfinished business/general orders.