# Robert’s Rules of Order: Motions and Their Hierarchy

## LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Meeting

## August 21, 2026

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# Robert’s Rules of Order

## Presentations

- 3/20/2026 - Robert’s Rules of Order: Why They Matter
- 4/24/2026 - Robert’s Rules of Order: How Meetings Work
- 8/21/2026 - Robert’s Rules of Order: Motions and Their Hierarchy

# Where We Left Off

Motion → Second → Discussion → Vote

but…

What can happen while a motion is being discussed?

# The Starting Point

A Main Motion brings substantive business before the assembly.

It answers the question:

“What are we proposing to do?”

# Several Things Can Happen Along the Way

While a Main Motion Is Pending...

The assembly might want to:

- Change it
- Send it to a committee
- Postpone consideration
- Limit or end debate
- Temporarily set it aside

So...which do we consider first?

# The Motion Hierarchy

Not All Motions Have Equal Rank

Some motions take precedence over others.

Higher-ranking motions are considered before lower-ranking motions.

# Four Classes of Motions

Robert's Rules recognizes four major classes:

1. Main Motions
2. Subsidiary Motions
3. Privileged Motions
4. Incidental Motions

← Today's coverage

They serve different purposes.

# Subsidiary Motions

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What should we do with the Main Motion?

Subsidiary motions help the assembly:

- Modify it
- Delay it
- Refer it
- Regulate debate
- Set it aside

# Ranking of Subsidiary Motions

Higher rank



Lower rank

Lay on the Table

Previous Question

Limit or Extend Limits of Debate

Postpone to a Certain Time

Commit or Refer

Amend

Postpone Indefinitely

Main Motion

# What Does “Rank” Actually Mean?

## Rank Determines Which Pending Motion Is Considered First

Immediately Pending → Refer

Amendment

Starting Point → Main Motion

All three motions remain pending

# Working Back Down

We deal with the highest-ranking pending motion first:

1. Refer

   ↓ if not adopted

2. Amendment

   ↓ after disposition

3. Main Motion

We work our way back toward the underlying business.

# Why Have a Hierarchy?

Without a hierarchy:

- Which motion gets considered first?
- Can one member interrupt another motion?
- When do we return to the original question?
- What exactly are we voting on?

The hierarchy creates an orderly path through competing questions.

# Other Types of Motions

# Privileged Motions

**Some matters concerning the needs of the assembly take precedence over pending business.**

Examples:

- Adjourn
- Recess
- Raise a Question of Privilege

These concern the assembly itself—not the merits of the Main Motion.

# Incidental Motions

**Questions that arise from the proceedings**

Examples:

- Point of Order
- Appeal
- Parliamentary Inquiry
- Division of the Assembly

Their precedence depends on the situation in which they arise.

# The Big Picture

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| Type | The question it answers |
| --- | --- |
| Main | What do we want to do? |
| Subsidiary | What should we do with the proposal? |
| Privileged | Is there a matter concerning the assembly that takes precedence? |
| Incidental | Has a procedural question arisen? |

# Why This Matters for AFC

The hierarchy helps us:

- Keep one clear path through the business
- Know which question has priority
- Protect orderly deliberation
- Return to the underlying proposal
- Know exactly what we are deciding

It is a system for managing complexity.

# One Thing to Remember

When several motions are pending:

Deal with the highest-ranking motion first...

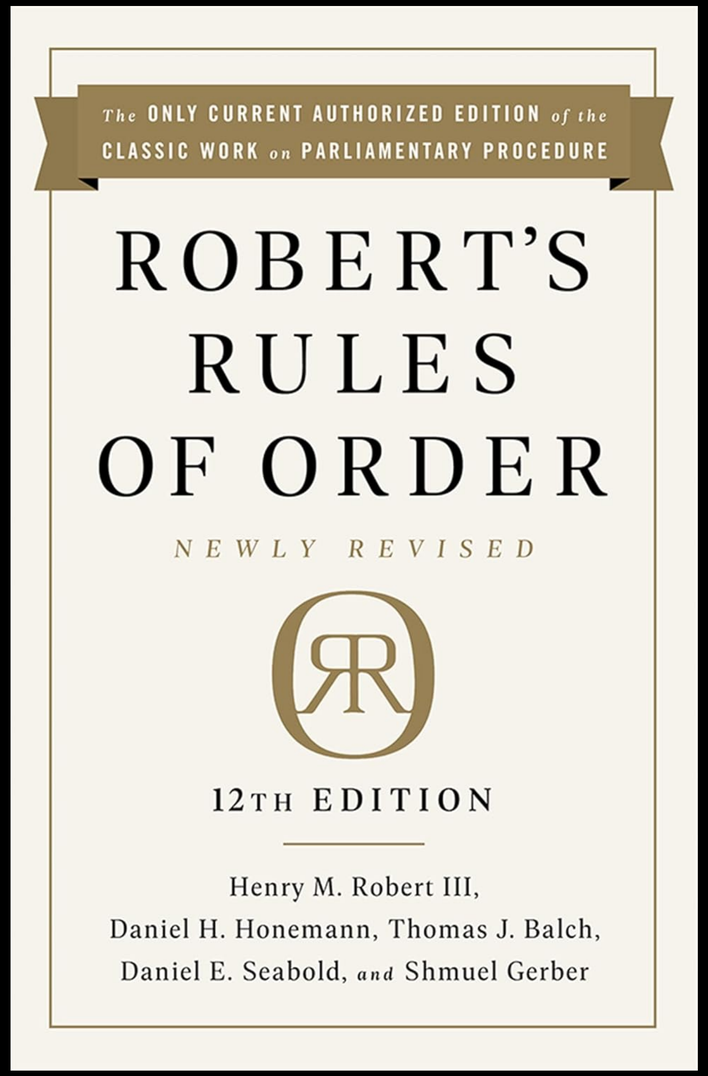
...then work your way back toward the Main Motion.

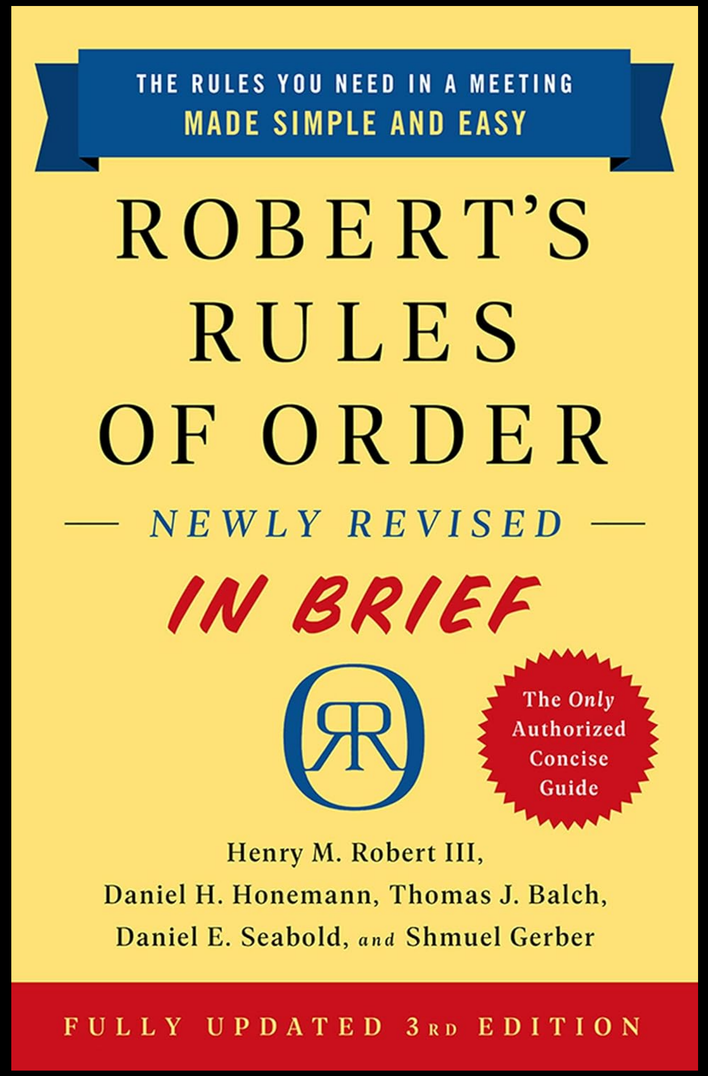
# Looking Ahead

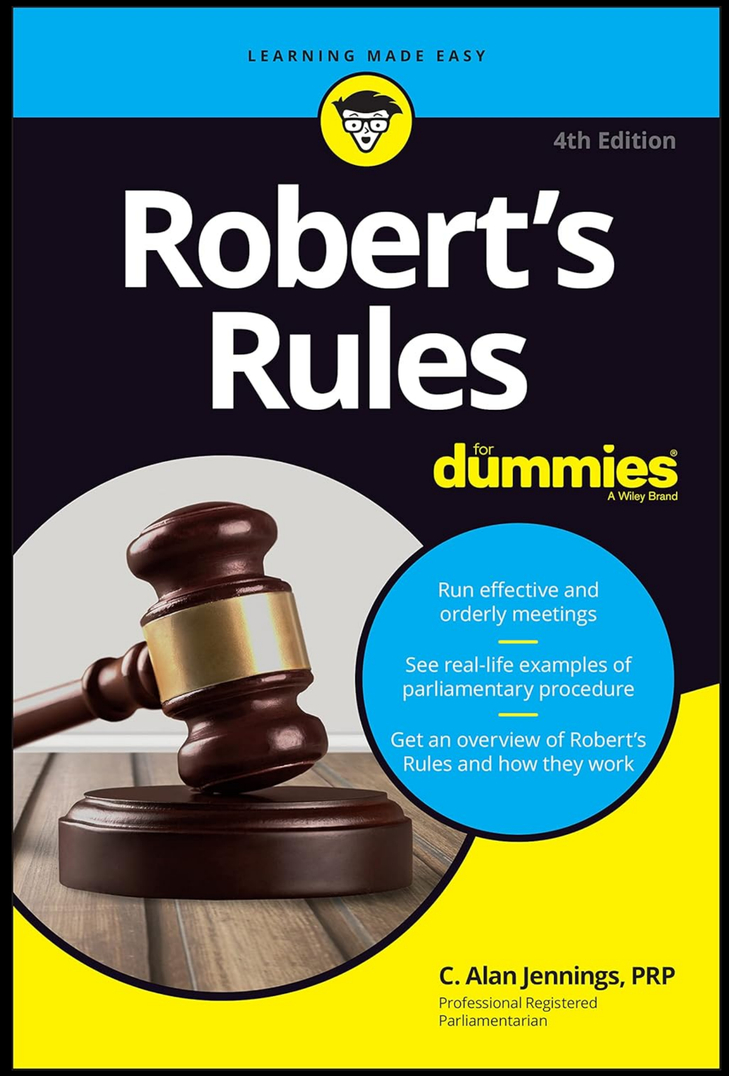
**Next Presentation**

- Understanding the Subsidiary Motions
- What each one does
- When to use it
- Whether it can be debated
- Whether it can be amended
- What vote is required

# Resources


The ONLY CURRENT AUTHORIZED EDITION of the CLASSIC WORK on PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER
NEWLY REVISED
12TH EDITION
Henry M. Robert III,
Daniel H. Honemann, Thomas J. Balch,
Daniel E. Seabold, and Shmuel Gerber


THE RULES YOU NEED IN A MEETING
MADE SIMPLE AND EASY
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER
NEWLY REVISED
IN BRIEF
The Only Authorized Concise Guide
Henry M. Robert III,
Daniel H. Honemann, Thomas J. Balch,
Daniel E. Seabold, and Shmuel Gerber
FULLY UPDATED 3RD EDITION


LEARNING MADE EASY
4th Edition
Robert's Rules
for dummies
A Wiley Brand
Run effective and orderly meetings
See real-life examples of parliamentary procedure
Get an overview of Robert's Rules and how they work
C. Alan Jennings, PRP
Professional Registered Parliamentarian

# End of Today’s Presentation