Robert’s Rules of Order: Why They Matter

LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Meeting
March 20, 2026

Kevin S. McCarter, AFC Vice Chair

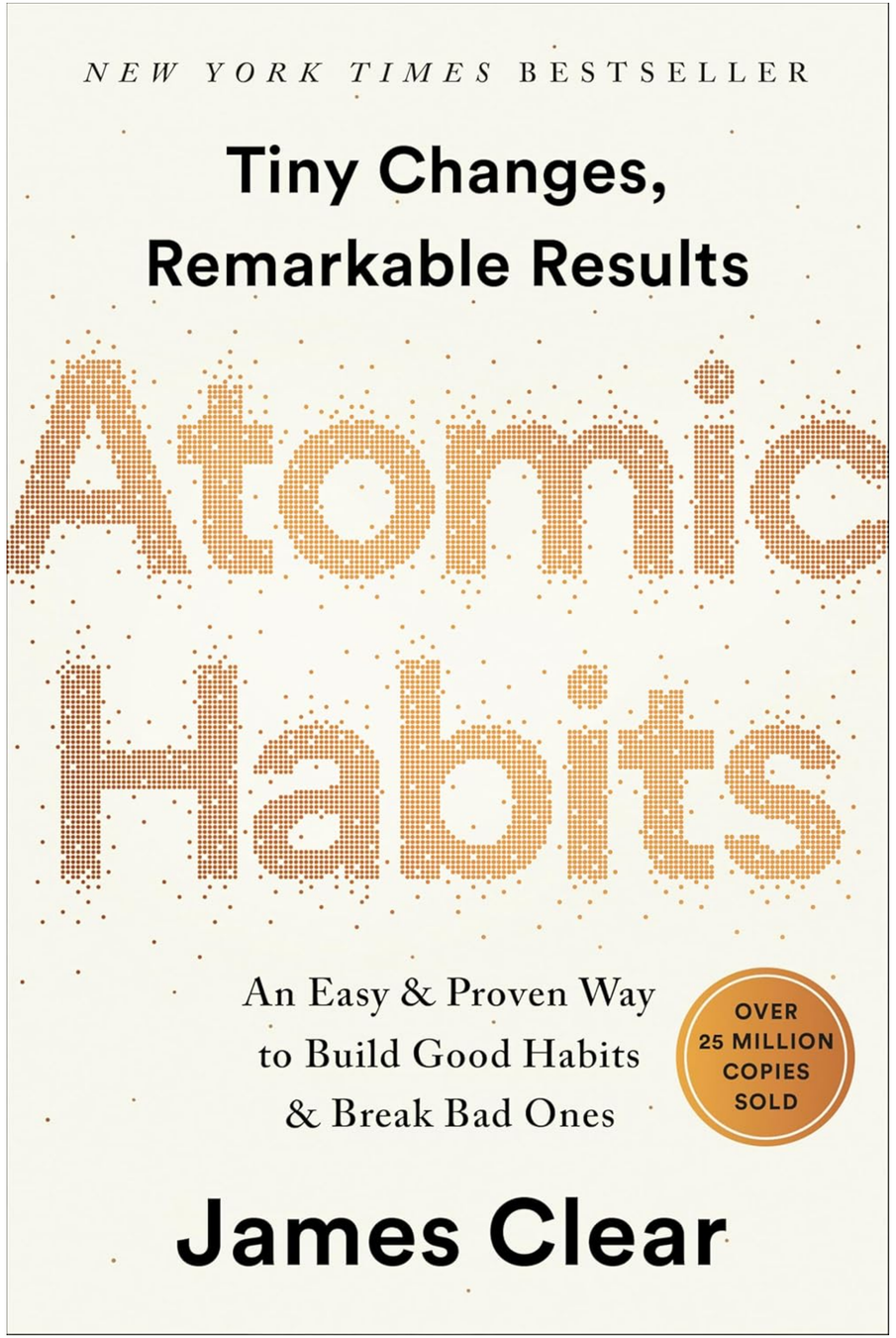
Robert’s Rules of Order: Why They Matter

Why This Series?

- We are a deliberative body
- We make real decisions and recommendations
- We represent faculty voices
- We need a process that is:
  - Fair
  - Efficient
  - Orderly

Robert’s Rules helps us do this well!

Quote by James Clear, author of “Atomic Habits”



You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.



James Clear

Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones

#kindlequotes

Who Was Robert?

- Henry Martyn Robert
- U.S. Army engineer (1837–1923)
- Asked to preside over a meeting…

  …and didn’t know how
- He agreed to it anyway…

  …and wished he hadn’t!

Robert's Motivation

"Henry Robert's interest in parliamentary law—as he often related—precipitated in 1863 at New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he had been transferred from more strenuous war duty after a recurrence of tropical fever. Without warning, he was asked to preside over a meeting—said to have related to the defense of the city in the event of Confederate attack from the sea and to have lasted for fourteen hours—and did not know how. But he felt that the worst thing he could do would be to decline. "My embarrassment was supreme," he wrote. "I plunged in, trusting to Providence that the assembly would behave itself. But with the plunge went the determination that I would never attend another meeting until I knew something of…parliamentary law.""

—Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition by Henry M. Robert

The Problem?

Meetings were

- Chaotic
- Personality-driven
- Inconsistent
- No shared standard

The Result: Decisions were often unclear or perceived to be unfair.

The Solution

Robert’s Rules of Order

- First published: 1876
- Now: 12th Edition
- A common system for decision-making
- Almost universally adopted in some form or another

Why Rules of Order Matter

- Protect the right of the majority to decide
- Protect the rights of the minority and the individual to be heard
- Keep meetings focused
- Produce clear decisions

Robert’s Rules: What It Is — and Isn’t

IS

- A framework for fair process
- A shared language
- A decision-making tool

IS NOT

- Bureaucratic red tape
- A weapon
- Meant to slow meetings

The Core Goal

KISS Method

- Consider one thing at a time
- Discuss it fairly
- Decide clearly

Motion → Discussion → Decision

What This Means for AFC

- Clearer motions
- More focused discussion
- Less confusion
- Stronger decisions

Bylaws and Robert's Rules

How They Work Together

Bylaws and Robert’s Rules — How They Work Together

Two Layers of Governance

- The Bylaws — What We Can/Must Do
- Robert’s Rules of Order — How We Do It

Bylaws and Robert’s Rules — How They Work Together

Two Layers of Governance

The Bylaws — What We Can/Must Do

- Define the structure of the Council
- Establish membership, roles, and authority
- Set quorum, elections, and procedures specific to this body
- Reflect the unique needs and mission of the Council

Bylaws and Robert’s Rules — How They Work Together

Two Layers of Governance

Robert’s Rules of Order — How We Do It

- Provide a standard process for meetings
- Ensure order, fairness, and efficiency
- Protect the right of all members to be heard
- Guide motions, debate, and decision-making

Bylaws and Robert’s Rules — How They Work Together

Two Layers of Governance

How They Work Together

- The bylaws take precedence when they address an issue
- Robert’s Rules applies in all cases not covered by the bylaws
- Together, they create a system that is both:
  - Structured (bylaws)
  - Fair and consistent (Robert’s Rules)

Bylaws and Robert’s Rules — How They Work Together

Two Layers of Governance

Why This Matters

- The bylaws ensure representation and define authority and responsibility
- Robert’s Rules ensures everyone is heard within that structure
- The result is greater trust and confidence in both the process and the outcome

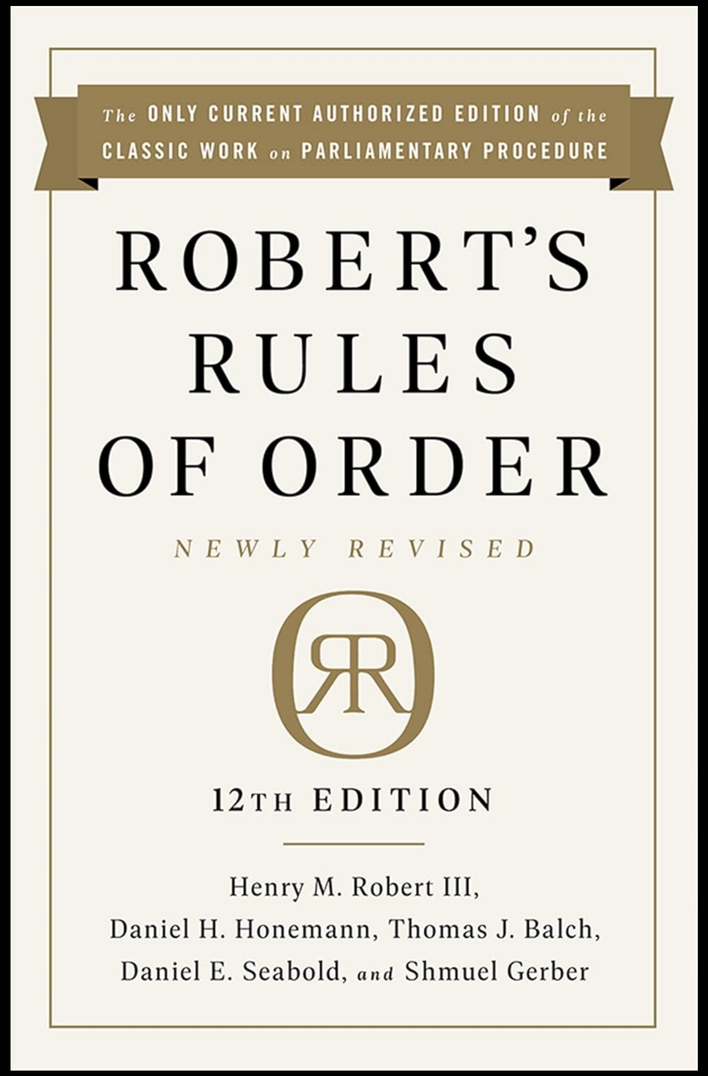
Our bylaws define our authority—
Robert’s Rules ensures we
exercise it fairly.

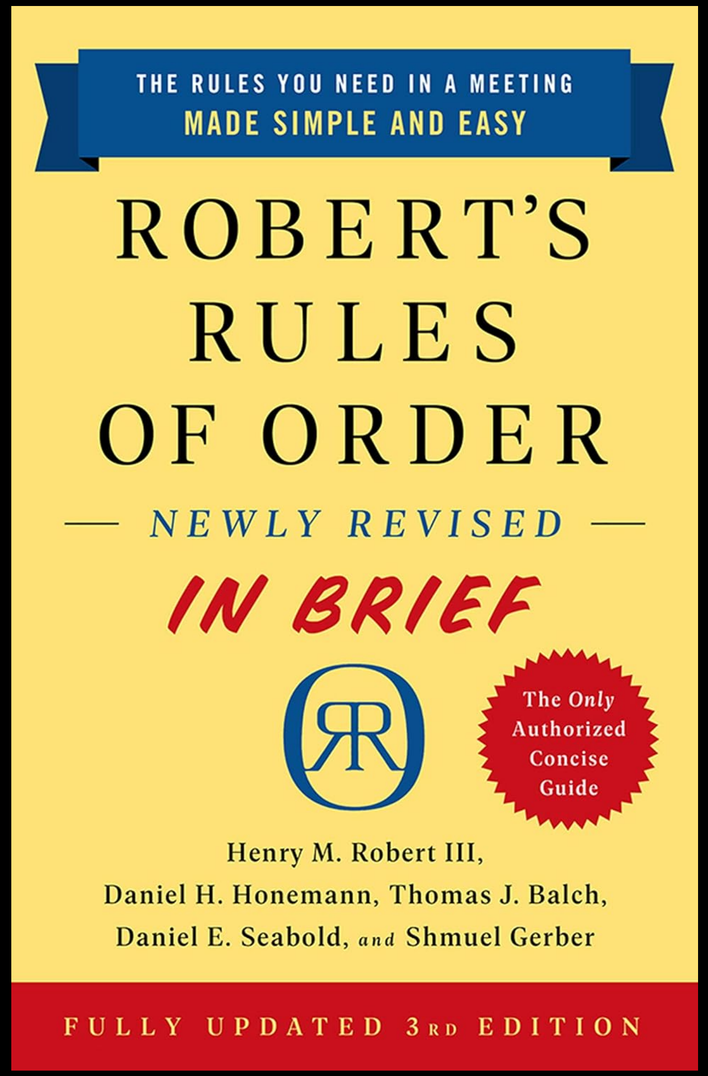
Looking Ahead

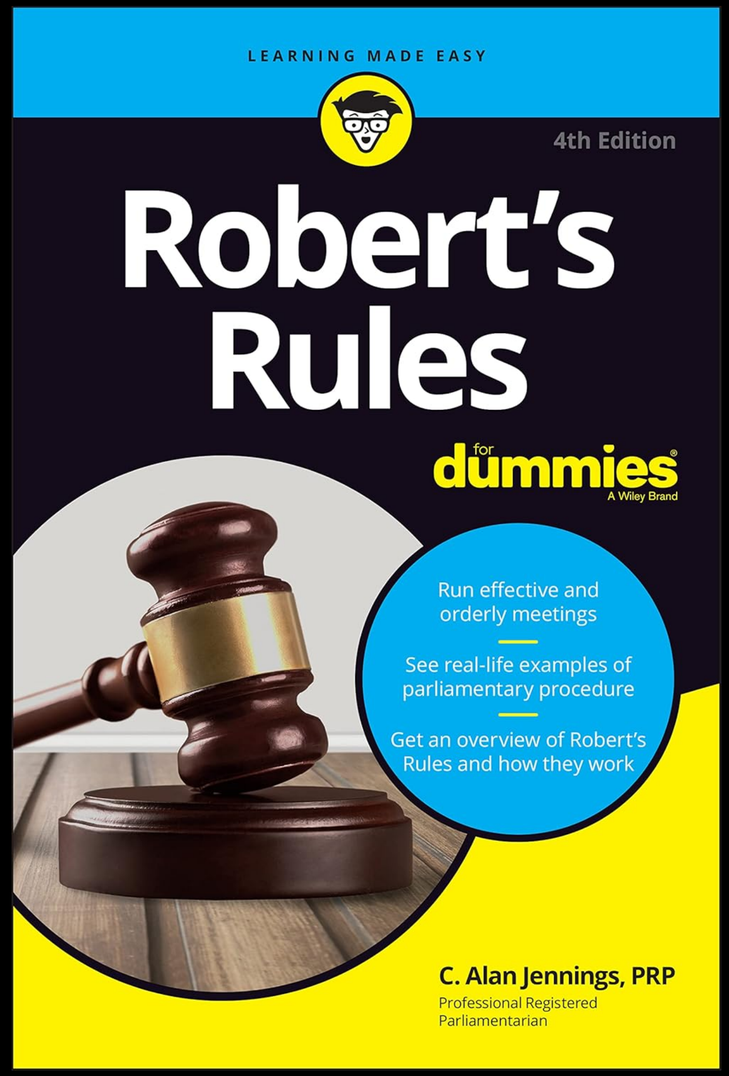
April Presentation

- Structure of meetings
- How decisions are made
- Managing discussion

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
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FULLY UPDATED 3RD EDITION


LEARNING MADE EASY
4th Edition
Robert's Rules
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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
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