

# UNDERSTANDABLE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Don Sikkink June 2008

## Introduction

I probably first heard the words "Parliamentary Procedure" at age ten when my parents enrolled me in the Bristol Busy Bees 4-H club of Bristol Township in Fillmore County, MN. 4-H clubs were a project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Extension Service and designed to assist young people growing up in rural isolation. The approach was to provide factual data on newly developed and recommended farming practices along with leadership training. Two of the leadership skills emphasized were the use of parliamentary procedure and effective public speaking. These two skills were taught at monthly club meetings and enhanced at county and state contests.

I learned additional parliamentary procedure in a second rural youth group, the "Future Farmers of America" (FFA), which operated as part of the four years of agricultural classes offered in Harmony High School. We had units of instruction on parliamentary procedure that included oral practice sessions and these skills were used in our FFA meetings. In 1945 the FFA parliamentary procedure team from Harmony won the state contest.

After military service I started at the University of Minnesota in 1947. My major became Speech where courses on Group Discussion, Meeting Management and Group Dynamics included consideration of the role that parliamentary procedure played in decision making. As a university student I became involved in political activity with the Young Republicans Club and I discovered that what I had learned about parliamentary procedure in 4-H and Ag. classes was highly applicable to political involvement. Political activities continued throughout my life with a highlight being elected a McGovern delegate to the tumultuous 1974 Democratic Convention in Miami, Florida.

After completing a doctorate in 1954, I accepted an instructor position as a debate coach at Stanford University. Two years later South Dakota State University offered me a position as an Assistant Professor, Debate Coach and future Department Head. On arriving in Brookings, South Dakota, I was met by Alphus Christenson, the Head of the Speech and Theatre Department, who asked me to consider a change in my teaching schedule. The College of Agriculture had made a curricular

revision in which the Agriculture Education Teaching Major would require a course in parliamentary procedure. They were requesting that I be the instructor. I said "Yes" and sensed that a circle had been completed. As a former high school student who had benefited from instruction by agricultural instructors, I would now help prepare a new generation of those teachers. For seven years at SDSU I taught the course in Parliamentary Procedure three times per year.

In 1963 I accepted a position at St. Cloud State College (now University) as Associate Professor in Speech and Theatre. In 1965, I became a Professor and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I spent the next 25 years at SCSU alternating between teaching and administrative positions, but always teaching a Parliamentary Procedure course at least once each year. The students who enrolled were Speech majors/minors, Political Science majors/minors, individuals who had been elected to leadership positions in campus clubs and members of the Student Government.

In addition I did frequent workshops off and on the campus for several different groups and especially for two groups. From 1968 through 2008 I taught in the summer Municipal Clerks Institute. The students were primarily women serving as Clerks in the City Councils of small towns in Minnesota.

From 1985 until 2005 I served as a consultant and presenter for state groups across the country called "Partners in Policy Making." These groups consisted of parents of children with developmental disabilities and adults with such disabilities. They requested training in parliamentary procedure in order to more effectively manage Advisory Councils and to enable them to go to school board meetings and understand what was happening to their requests.

These two groups had a profound impact on my teaching of parliamentary procedure and were responsible for my serious efforts to clarify and simplify the practice of parliamentary procedure. On my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in April, 2008 our four children urged me to make these ideas available on the web and each of them pledged money to cover the costs. Fortunately, as the Communication Studies Department at St. Cloud State University agreed to place this work on their departmental site, the pledged funds will now go to the Sikkink Library Fund.

I owe thanks to the department and to Julie, Lynn, Kathryn and Jeff for their effort to motivate me to share on the web what I believe is a simplified and understandable approach to parliamentary procedure.

## Simplifying Parliamentary Procedure

Studying and understanding the eight concepts below will do much to increase your understanding of parliamentary procedure:

***(1) You need to understand that there is NO uniform system of Parliamentary Procedure in the United States.***

The widespread belief that there is one and only one right way to run every meeting causes excessive fear of making mistakes, which in turn results in a decision to use no procedure. It is as if Moses had a third tablet which we must totally memorize in order to properly prepare to run an effective meeting.

We do not have a uniform system because Moses did not bring a third tablet, and we never formally adopted a one system approach. While our models (e.g. U.S. Senate, U.S. House, MN Senate, MN House, AZ Senate, AZ House, etc, etc) use similar approaches, they have distinct differences.

The one uniformity in parliamentary procedure theory is the agreement that each club/organization has the right to create its own rules and to select a book (called a parliamentary authority or code) of its choice to use with all issues which are not covered by its rules. If organizations can write their own rules and pick their own book, their approach will obviously be different from other clubs. I remember being shocked in my early participation in meetings other than 4-H (e.g. U.M. Young Republicans Club) that they did not follow the process (including a pledge) that we had used in the Bristol Busy Bees. I later understood it was because they had written different sets of rules to fit the particular needs of their organizations and 4-H and the Young G.O.P. are two different "breeds of cats".

The solution to the fear of being a Chair of an organization is to stop believing there is a complex, detailed and uniform system of rules you must totally understand in order to properly run a meeting. Instead, you need to recognize that the first step in leading an organization is to find the rules, bylaws or constitution that were written for your group, and then to study these rules to find out what you can and cannot do. You should also read those rules to see what code has been selected and familiarize yourself on how to find things in that book.

What happens if you decide to take that first step of searching for and studying the rules for your club, but you do not find any rules?

First, celebrate. No one can accuse you making any mistakes! After the

celebration, sit down with a small committee to write a brief set of basic rules for the membership to amend and adopt. One approach is to find one or two similar organizations with rules and adapt those rules to your club. Be sure the basic categories below are covered:

1. The Club's specific purpose
2. Membership (who, selection, duration, termination)
3. Officers (duties, elections, terms, vacancies, removal)
4. Meetings (types, call, order of business, code, quorum number)
5. Committees (names, selection, duties, reports)
6. Finances (bills, dues, payment, audits)
7. Changing the Rules (amend, suspend, vote required)

It is best to start with a simple and perhaps imperfect set of rules that cover the minimum aspects and let experience show you what additional rules you need to adopt. Every time your club has a painful meeting experience, consider adopting a new rule or modifying an existing rule to prevent such pain in the future. Your club-written rules take precedence over the code selected.

**(II) You should select Robert's Rules of Order as your Parliamentary Code ONLY if you are a national, regional or state organization with a large membership, complex business and serious disputes.**

Robert's is the only book that most of us have ever heard of, and for that reason it is frequently selected as a club's code. The book is long, complex and difficult to read. It contains far more motions (86) and explanations than most organizations need. Check both the current Barnes and Nobles web site or the Amazon site for a listing of books on this topic and you will find at least 30 possible choices. In selecting a code, the Chair should ask two or three members with good reading and evaluative skills to review five or more of the books available and recommend one that seems to best fit the size, educational level and complexity of your group. Some of my current favorites are Hugh Cannon's **Cannon's Concise Guide to Rules of Order** which contains excellent advice for chairpersons; **Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure**, by Alice Sturgis which was taken over and revised by the American Institute of Parliamentarians ([aip@parliamentaryprocedure.org](mailto:aip@parliamentaryprocedure.org)); for a 4<sup>th</sup> edition and **Modern Parliamentary Procedure** by Ray Keesey which is the code for the American Psychological Association and published by them. Older, but still good choices are **The Majority Rules**, and **The Practical Guide to Parliamentary Procedure**. Very small and informal groups should take a good look at **The a-b-c's of**

**Parliamentary Procedure.** It is only 15 pages in length and is available from the National Association of Parliamentarians. ([hq@nap2.org](mailto:hq@nap2.org))

***(III) If you learn how to use nine regular motions and four incidental motions, you are well prepared to be an effective member/Chair!***

Robert's discusses 86 motions and books modeled on Robert's typically discuss 40-70 motions. I believe that if you understand 13 frequently used motions, you will do well in meetings. I break these 13 into a group of nine that I call "regular" motions and have an order of precedence. Precedence is the rank of the motions. If the motion you wish to make is higher than the motion on the floor (the pending motion) you can make the motion, if it is lower, you must wait. The other four motions are called "incidental" and have no precedence. They may be used anytime in a meeting if they are applicable to the situation on the floor. You will find two names listed for some of these 13 motions; the first is the Robert's name and the second is the name used in books/codes of a more recent date.

**Regular:**

1. Main. It brings ideas to the group for a decision.  
E.g. "I move that anyone reading this web site send the author a Dove candy bar."
2. Amend. It proposes a change in the pending motion.  
E.g. "I move to amend the main motion about a Dove candy bar by adding the words 'dark chocolate' between 'a' and 'Dove'." Robert's and many other writers allow a motion called "amend the amendment." This approach causes confusion because to be correctly used it must modify the amendment and not the main motion. This distinction is not always clear. I prefer the advice of Keesey who allows only one amendment at a time. When you have passed or defeated that amendment a second amendment is in order. This approach avoids time wasting arguments.
3. Commit (Refer to Committee) It proposes to send a pending motion to a committee for study and a recommendation. E.g. "I move that we send the main motion concerning the Dove candy bar to the Finance Committee."
4. Postpone to a Certain Time (Postpone definitely) it proposes to delay action on the pending motion to a future time not beyond the next meeting. E.g. "I move that we postpone the 'Dove candy bar' motion to our next regular meeting."
5. Limit Debate. E.g. "I move to limit debate on the pending question to 5 minutes" or "I move to limit debate to one speech in favor and one

speech against before voting on the pending question” or some other limitation. This requires a two-thirds vote.

6. Previous Question (Close Debate or Vote Immediately) If passed by a two-thirds vote, you go immediately to a vote on the pending question without more debate on that issue. It is sometimes made by calling out “Question, Question,” trying to get the Chair to close debate immediately, but this call should still be treated as a motion requiring a second and a vote.
7. Lay on the Table (Postpone Temporarily) This motion varies depending on what book you use as a code. Many books allow it to set aside the pending question without debate and by a majority vote and to take up another question. Needless to say, with those rules, it is a popular motion in legislative bodies for it provides a way to avoid a direct vote on some “uncomfortable issue” by making it appear they are just postponing the issue. The last revision of Robert’s eliminated that weakness by stating that you cannot make this motion unless you have an emergency. I prefer not to use this motion at all and instead use Postpone Definitely (# 4 above) for postponing.
8. Recess. It provides for a break. E.g. “I move that we recess until 3:40 P.M.” or, “I move that we recess until 9 A.M. tomorrow.”
9. Adjourn. It is just what it says. You end the meeting using a majority vote. Note that “adjourn” has the highest precedence. You could have the other 8 motions all on the floor (all pending questions) and still make the motion to adjourn and end the meeting. Some of us find that a very comforting thought!

### Incidental

- Appeal. In any organization, decisions by the chair are essential in moving the decision-making process forward. At the same time, we need a method for club members to challenge chair decisions that seem unwise or biased. “Appeal” is that procedure. After the chair makes a decision, members can call out “appeal” with out recognition. The chair asks for a second and if s/he gets one, discussion takes place, including comments by the chair. When there is no more discussion, a vote takes place. If there is a majority vote against the chair’s decision it is overturned. E.g. “I appeal the decision of the chair in ruling that the ‘Dove bar’ motion falls within the objectives of our club.”
- Division of the Assembly. It is sometimes difficult to tell with a voice vote (all in favor say “YES”, all opposed say “NO.”) as to which group had the largest number of votes. In those

circumstances, it is appropriate for a club member to call out "Division" without recognition by the chair. If the chair makes a decision to accept the request, s/he will take the vote a second time using a countable method.

- Parliamentary Inquiry. When a club member calls out "Parliamentary Inquiry" without recognition from the chair, s/he is asking for permission to ask a question. The chair will make the decision about allowing the inquiry.
- Point of Order. A member who calls out "Point of Order" without recognition from the chair is saying that s/he believes a procedural error has been made. The chair then listens to the possible error and either accepts it or rejects it, and like any decision by the chair, it can be appealed.

What do you do if a member brings up a motion not on this list? You "confess" that the motion is one you don't understand, and say you will stop the meeting while you or the secretary look that motion up in your parliamentary code and read it to the members. If you don't find it in your code, ask the member making the motion to explain the motion and to tell the group if it needs a second and allows discussion. With that information you can act on the proposed motion.

#### **(IV) It is highly desirable to prepare and distribute a Detailed Agenda for a meeting.**

Most parliamentary codes will stress the importance of having an Order of Business. A typical order is: (1) Call to Order, (2) Act on the Minutes of the Last Meeting, (3) Reports of Officers, (4) Reports of Committees, (5) Old/Unfinished Business, (6) New Business, (7) Announcements, and (8) Adjournment. The order is determined by the club and placed in their rules or they can use the recommended order in their code. You should pick an order that fits the current needs of your organization. I know of one organization that after Call to Order, starts with New Business and they have an excellent reason for doing so. Even more important is the conversion of this Order of Business into a Detailed Agenda which is distributed to all members attending the meeting. The difference between the two is "detail." Instead of just Old Business you list the specific items of old business; instead of Committee Reports you list the names of the committees that will report and the name of the person who will make each report. You need to do this for each item that has the possibility of more detail.

**(V) Learn how to correctly use "General Consent" or "Unanimous Consent," teach it to the members of your club and then use it frequently.**

I prefer calling this procedure General Consent. It is based on the assumption that much of the business carried out in small and less formal organizations is "cut and dried" and we can save time by not using a **motion** for the approval process. That process requires a main motion, a second, discussion, probably an answer to the discussion and finally a vote. General Consent assumes that the pending issue on the detailed agenda is not controversial, almost certainly will be approved, that few persons, if any, want to discuss and even if a person is opposed s/he knows that it is probably useless to discuss or oppose.

In such a circumstance, it is appropriate for the chair to say, "If there is no objection, this agenda item will be approved by general consent." The chair hesitates for just a moment and if no person says "I object", the chair says "The item is approved by general consent." If at the point when the chair hesitates, a member says, "I object," the chair immediately asks for a motion to approve the item, asks for second, allows discussion and takes a vote.

The key to using this procedure is the good sense of the chair in knowing what items are almost certain to pass and the willingness of a person or two opposed to realize there is no good reason to hold up the item. Business that can usually be handled by consent includes: approval of the minutes, needed amendments that clarify a point, an obvious need to delay a decision because a key officer (e.g. treasurer) on a money question is absent, and the motion to adjourn.

Items not suitable for general consent are: budget/finance questions, removal of an officer or a member, proposals on which non-members in the audience need to hear the discussion, and any item on which 15-% or more of the members are in opposition. General consent, wisely used, can do much to speed up meetings. It also has the advantage of not wasting time on easy items and thus saving time for the difficult items that can benefit from more debate and consideration.

**(VI) Write a rule for your club that allows discussion of an agenda item without having a motion on the floor or select a code that allows it.**

Smaller groups need lots of interactive discussion before a motion is made, in order to understand the issue and to help them move in the direction of framing a clear motion for final action. Forcing such groups to have a motion before any discussion reduces their effectiveness.

However, National, Regional and State organizations using Robert's as a code, should enforce the rule from Robert's that does not allow discussion without a motion. It works for them because they have committee hearings and/or study sessions where most of the discussion takes place. They also may have paid staff to take the results of those discussions and frame resolutions or motions so the members of these groups can focus on the motion in a final meeting action step.

**(VII) If you are the chairperson of a group, use a Chart to help you to remember motion details in conducting the meetings.**

Here is how you make the Chart; across the top of page write "Summary of Rules Chart for (name of club) based on the written rules of this club and on the (Name of your Code/Authority)." Below this title, list the following:

<u>*Motion</u>	<u>Recognition</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Debate</u>	<u>Amend</u>	<u>Vote</u>
----------------	--------------------	---------------	---------------	--------------	-------------

Under the Motion heading list the motions that you want to remember, list the 13 motions I used above, or you could study the past minutes of your club and list the 10 motions most frequently used. Once your motion list is complete, fill in the next four headings (Recognition, Second, Debate, Amend) put a YES or NO in those four columns for each motion listed. Finally, fill in the last column with the size of vote required to pass the item. This is usually "Majority" or "2/3rds", but some clubs do have different requirements such as 60% or a majority of the membership.

Once your chart is completed and works for you as a chairperson, it would be desirable to make copies for each member of the organization. Please remember that once you move to a different organization you will need to construct a new chart based on the rules and the code in use by that organization because WE DO NOT HAVE A UNIFORM SYSTEM!

**\*On page 12 you will find a chart for Sikkink's Seven Motion System which reflects the form and style to use for your chart.**

**(VIII) In the clash between enforcing the Rules of Parliamentary Procedure vs. serving the Principles of Parliamentary Procedure, please "join" the Principles Group.**

This is not an issue which is widely discussed by teachers of parliamentary procedure, but in my mind it is a critical topic. Years ago, I reviewed several widely used books/codes that had index listings for

"Principles....." I copied each Principle they listed on a card and sorted the cards into stacks. Below are the five principles most frequently proposed:

- The principle of using the most direct method
- The principle of the majority making the decisions
- The principle of protecting minority views
- The principle of treating all members equally/impartially
- The principle of allowing full and free discussion

The significance of the list above is that in attempting to involve citizens in democratic decision-making, we should be committed to a process of using the most direct method, utilizing free and open discussion in which each member is treated equally and impartially, and in which the final outcome is made by a majority vote while protecting minority viewpoints.

If you accept my proposal you are agreeing that "principles" are more important than rules. I take this position because experience has taught me that people with little concern for ethics may use strict enforcement of rules as an excuse to manipulate an outcome that violates the principles of democratic decision-making. \*

**\*(Go back to (III) and the discussions of Incidental Motions, Point of Order and Appeal to see the approach I would use to force a vote on what I would consider a violation of a Principle. I am saying that in some cases we may be following the correct rule, but in doing so we also may be violating a principle. I would prefer to violate the rule rather than violate the principle.)**

## **SIKKINK'S SEVEN MOTION SYSTEM**

An organization can write its own rules for conducting a meeting and also develop its own "parliamentary system." Here you have an example of such a proposed system.

### **Rules for Conducting our Meetings**

- Agenda items may be discussed without having a motion.
- Any proposal, motion, request or discussion which appears to have as its purpose unreasonable delay, manipulation, or serving individual ends rather than group ends, can be ruled out of order by the chair, subject to appeal.
- In discussion/debate, the chair should first recognize the person who made the motion or placed the item on the agenda, and next recognize other persons while trying to alternate between persons "for" and "against". The chair should recognize a person who has not spoken over a person speaking for a second time.
- There is no limit on the number of times a member may speak unless a motion to limit or close debate passes.
- Only one amendment at a time may be considered.
- Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice Sturgis shall be used to rule on any issues not covered by our rules and our motions.

### Explanation of this Motion System

Based on a study of the minutes of various clubs to determine what motions were most frequently used, the motions are grouped to reduce the number to seven. In addition, the motion to amend can be used, allowing one amendment at a time for the five amendable motions. (Don't use amend the amendment.)

- The numbers on the chart on the next page indicate the precedence level of the motion. Main Motions at # 1 have the lowest precedence and # 7, Restrict Debate motions, are the highest.
- You cannot consider two motions of the same precedence level at the same time.
- The chair may allow some exceptions to the rules of precedence when they seem appropriate. For example, you should allow, Request # 5 while considering motions # 6 or # 7.

### CHART FOR SIKKINK SEVEN MOTION SYSTEM

	RECOG. By Chair	NEED A Second	CAN Discuss	CAN Amend	VOTE Req.
(1) Main	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
(2) Termination (Recess/Adjourn)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes****	Majority

(3) Refer (to committee)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
(4) Postpone (Definitely)* (Lay on Table)**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
(5) Requests (Division) (Pt of Order) (Parl. Inquiry)	No	No	No	No	Chair Decides***
(6) Appeal	No	Yes	Yes	No	Negative^ Majority
(7) Restrict Disc. (Limit Debate) (Close Debate)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3rds

Amend may used on any amendable motion with a second, discussion and a vote. Only one amendment at a time is allowed.

\* Not beyond the next regular meeting.

\*\* *Only* if there is an emergency

\*\*\* Subject to Appeal

\*\*\*\* Amend only as to the time

^ The wording of the appeal of a chair's decision is phrased affirmatively such as "All in favor of the chair's decision say 'YES'. All opposed say 'NO'." In this type of wording, it would take a majority off 'NO' votes to overturn a decision.

**PRACTICE EXERCISES**; The Exercises which follow are designed to teach about Parliamentary Procedure details. The answers are at the bottom of the page and you will learn a lot more if you do the exercises *before* you look at the answers! If you can't resist such temptation, place a piece of paper over the answers right now.

**Exercise on Main Motion Writing:** Parliamentary decisions result from motions, debate and a vote. If we start with a poorly worded main motion it will result in debate about wording instead of debate over the issue. In each of the following situation which is the best motion?

TOPIC 1. Water Supply

- (A) I move that the City Council be forced to come to our next meeting and explain why they did nothing on our water problems for the past 10 years.
- (B) I move that a committee of five be appointed by the chair to study the water supply problem and report their findings at our next annual meeting.
- (C) I move that we take immediate action to solve the water problem.

TOPIC 2. 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY

- (A) I move that we follow Walt's suggestions in planning our involvement in the 4<sup>th</sup> celebration.
- (B) I move that we accept the offer of the East Side Legion Post, Northwest VFW and the Mayor's Office to join them in planning and carrying out a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration for the city.
- (C) I move that we all think up superior plans to help with the glorious celebration of this great country's birthday.

TOPIC 3. CONGRESSIONAL SPENDING

- (A) I move that we all write the President to express our feelings about Congressional spending.
- (B) I move that this Club go on record as opposing an increase in the federal deficit and that we mail this motion with our vote result to the members of the U.S. House and Senate.
- (C) I move that we let our leaders know that we are on to their reckless and unnecessary spending as well as our opposition to this unnecessary war.

The best answer for all three topics is (B). In the space below, list what makes these motions superior to the motions listed for (A) & (B)

**Exercise on Calculating the Vote:**

Unless you have written a club rule to the contrary, a majority always means **"of those who voted"**, but there are other possibilities selected to fit special circumstances. These possibilities are the following:

- a majority of the total club memberships

- a majority of the members present
- a majority of the votes cast
- a majority of the legal votes (illegal votes are those by non paid-up members, those without a signature on a ballot envelope, etc.)

In calculating a simple majority, remember it is defined as **just over half of the votes** so that a tie defeats the motion, If 27 persons vote, half is 13.5 so 14 would constitute a majority. Do NOT add +1 to the half which would make the result 14.5 and when you round up you get 15 as a majority. 14 is the correct answer.

In calculating 2/3rds of 27 persons voting, divide that figure by 3. ( $27/3 = 9$ , for one third). Multiple that number by two and you have the answer which is 18. If 26 persons vote and you divide by three the answer is 8.67. Multiply that number by two and you have 17.3 which you must round to UP to 18! If you round down to 17 and check your work by dividing by 25 you will get 65.4% which is not two third's!

Calculate: Club has 58 members, 41 attend, 37 vote, 31 votes are legal

Majority	Two Thirds	
_____	_____	of the memberships
_____	_____	of the members present
_____	_____	of the votes cast
_____	_____	of the legal votes

The most important thing to remember is that a majority usually and typically means just over half of those who vote. People who abstain are not counted in calculating the majority. At times the abstainer may request that s/he be listed in the minutes so there will be evidence that s/he did not cast a vote on a matter in which they had a personal involvement. Such a request should certainly be granted by the chair.

26/34, 21/28, 19/25, 16/21

**Exercise on Selecting the Voting method:** Match the following five methods of voting to the appropriate situation: Roll call, Secret Ballot, Show of Hands, Unanimous consent, or Voice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your PTA is about to vote on an all night party for the Junior Class. The debate has been "tense." You and your spouse disagree with each other.

\_\_\_\_\_ A vote of thanks to a guest who gave an excellent speech

\_\_\_\_\_ The vote is on the motion to Limit Debate.

\_\_\_\_\_ A vote is being taken at a National Convention and your delegate was instructed to vote against a dues increase.

\_\_\_\_\_ An Election of Officers for next year is taking place.

\_\_\_\_\_ Motion to adjourn is made as the last item on the agenda.

\_\_\_\_\_ Motion to adjourn is made in the middle of a meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ A member requests a roll call vote so the public will know who voted for and against the issue.

---

Selecting a Voting Method: **Secret Ballot**—protect yourself, **Unanimous Consent**---routine action. Who wants to vote "NO" on a good presentation?, **Show of Hands**—you can't hear a 2/3rd's, **Voice**—routine but UC was rejected, **Roll call**—it provides a record, **Secret Ballot**---don't embarrass the losers, **unanimous consent**---everybody knows you are DONE, **voice vote, voice vote.**

***Exercise on Choosing an Appropriate Procedure:*** In each of the following situations choose which motion from the list of 13 you should make.

1. All persons discussing a motion represent only one side of the issue. You could \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A proposed motion has caused confusion. There is no need to act at this meeting. You could \_\_\_\_\_.
3. There have been 15 minutes of good debate, most members seem to have decided to support the motion, but two members are continuing the discussion. You could \_\_\_\_\_.

4. An important motion has been made, but action today is not required. There are just enough members present to maintain a quorum and they seem to favor the motion. You believe that is not the feeling of the total membership. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
5. The motion for your annual picnic was made and passed without a date. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
6. The chair asks for a vote on an amendment without allowing discussion. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
7. Discussion on a controversial motion is taking place. You would like to know what method of voting the chair will use when discussion ends. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
8. The chair has just denied your request for a secret ballot on the motion. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
9. On a voice vote, the chair stated that the motion was defeated. That is not how you heard it. You could\_\_\_\_\_.
10. You feel that the resolution of a difficult issue might be possible if some informal conversations could take place. You could\_\_\_\_\_.

(1)Point of order and hope the chair asks for discussion on the other side or limit debate to 3 for and 3 against, (2) Refer to a Committee, (3) Close Debate as it appears the majority is ready to act, (4) Postpone Definitely and if it passes work to get everybody there, (5) Suggest that the chair use unanimous consent to pass an amendment, (6) Point of order to show the error of no discussion, (7) Parliamentary Inquiry so you can ask the question(8) Appeal, (9) Call out Divison and hope the chair will grant a second verifiable vote and (10) Recess, so they can talk.

**AND FINALLY \_\_\_\_\_A FEW WORDS IN SUMMARY**

***Stop worrying about making a mistake.*** There is no perfect, UNIFORM system you must compare yourself to. Instead you must compare yourself to the rules your organization has written for conducting their meetings and the book they have selected as a code. In many cases your club has no rules or code so you can be a "heroine/hero" by helping them get rules and a code.

***Do NOT select Robert's Rules of Order for a code unless you are a national, regional or state organization.*** Instead pick an easy to read and understand code that fits your club.

**Teach and use General Consent.** Allow discussion of agenda items without a motion. Provide your members with a Detailed Agenda. Put your minutes, treasurer's report, committee reports, etc in writing and e-mail them out prior to the meeting. Doing these things is almost certain to produce a meeting in which all members understand what is happening and gives them the comfortable feeling that they are involved in democratic decision-making.

Last, but certainly not least, please remember my concern that you **keep the Principles of Parliamentary Procedure in mind as a group member and especially in being a chairperson.** Whenever there is confusion about the application of a specific procedural rule, make the decision that is consistent with one or more of those principles. You have probably made the right decision and a decision that will be upheld in an appeal.

In concluding I am thankful that 70 years ago my parents enrolled me in 4-H and that good Ag. teachers in high school taught me parliamentary procedure. It led to the opportunity to teach this subject for almost 40 years and to work with Partners in Policy Making and Municipal Clerks. I would guess that I have chaired over 30 clubs/groups. I started as chair of my 4-H club at age 14 and finished at age 79 with the Governing Board of the HOA in which we live.

I am grateful for our kids who on my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday offered money and encouragement to put these ideas on the Internet. I encourage you to use this simplified approach to parliamentary procedure to make the philosophy of democracy a reality and may your journey of chairing and meetings be as much fun as mine has been. Don Sikkink