

THE “DIRTY DOZEN”

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Note: References are to *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised* (11th ed.). These references use an abbreviated prefix of “RONR” followed by appropriate page and line numbers.

1. **Motion to Postpone to next year or improper use of the motion to *Commit* or *Refer***
 - a. Any attempt to postpone a motion beyond the current session is out of order when an organization meets less than quarterly (RONR 183, lines 7-11).
 - b. It is also out of order if postponement would kill the main motion (RONR 184, lines 3-6).
 - c. The motion to *Commit* or *Refer* is out of order if it is obviously absurd or would defeat the purpose of the main motion. (RONR 172, lines 20-24).

2. **Calling “Question”**
 - a. Calls of “Question!” by members from their seats are not motions for the *Previous Question* and are disorderly if another member is speaking or seeking recognition (RONR 207, lines 18-20).
 - b. The *Previous Question* motion requires a 2/3 vote (RONR 200, lines 24-29). Care should be taken to understand the rules that protect the members’ rights with respect to debate (RONR 202, lines 8-10).
 - c. The *Previous Question* motion is out of order in committees (RONR 198, line 12).

3. **Motion to *Lay on the Table***
 - a. In ordinary assemblies, the motion to *Lay on the Table* is out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a measure (RONR 210, lines 9-11).
 - b. It is out of order to move to lay a pending question on the table if there is evidently no other matter urgently requiring immediate attention (RONR 215, lines 13-15).
 - c. It is proper for, and the chair can ask, the maker of this motion to state the reason first before accepting the motion to *Lay on the Table* (RONR 211, lines 30-34).

4. **Motion to close nominations**
 - a. The motion to close nominations is out of order if a member is **seeking the floor** to make a nomination (RONR 287, lines 18-19).
 - b. The chair can close nominations by asking if there are further nominations and receiving no response (RONR 288, lines 25-28). Otherwise, a 2/3 vote is required to close nominations (RONR 288, lines 29-34).

5. Motion to Adjourn

- a. The **privileged motion** to *Adjourn* is high ranking and not debatable.
- b. The chair must know when the motion to *Adjourn* should be ruled out of order.
- c. The motion to *Adjourn* is **not a privileged motion** if any of the following exists:
 - (1) the motion is qualified in any way (such as adjourn at a future time);
 - (2) a time for adjourning has already been established; or
 - (3) the effect of the motion, if adopted, would be to dissolve the assembly with no provision for another meeting.
- d. Under any of the previous circumstances, the motion to *Adjourn* is treated like any other main motion (RONR 234, lines 23-25) and **is debatable**.
- e. **If debatable**, the motion to *Adjourn* cannot interrupt a pending motion.

6. Reading papers (not requiring action by the assembly)

- a. If any member objects, a member has no right to read from-or to have the secretary read from-any paper or book as part of his speech without permission of the assembly (RONR 298, lines 9-12).
- b. Action of the assembly granting the request to read a paper can be reconsidered at any time until the reading is concluded (RONR 298, line 31 through RONR 299, lines 1-2).

7. Request for Information (formerly Point of Information): Ask the Speaker a Question

- a. A *Request for Information* is a request directed to the chair, or through the chair, for information relevant to the business at hand, but not related to parliamentary procedure (RONR 294, line 19-23). It is not a debatable motion (RONR 293, line 11).
- b. The chair must ensure this does not lead to debate. Members may not carry on discussion directly with one another (RONR 295, lines 17-19; RONR 396, lines 17-27).

8. Chair entering into debate

- a. The chair must not enter into debate on the merits of pending questions (RONR 394, lines 26-31). This rule is relaxed in small boards and committees (RONR 488, lines 18-20; RONR 500, lines 17-18).
- b. To participate in debate, the individual must relinquish the chair until the pending main question has been disposed of (RONR 395, lines 1-18).

9. Members directing remarks at each other

Members of an assembly cannot address one another directly, but must address all remarks through the chair (RONR 295, lines 17-19; RONR 392, lines 28-29).

10. Monopolizing debate with only pros or cons

- a. The chair should alternate assignment of the floor between members in favor and members opposed to a motion (RONR 379, lines 32-35 to RONR 380, lines 1-2).
- b. This is quite difficult to accomplish in small groups.

11. Monopolizing debate by individual members

- a. The general rule is that there is no debate on a matter until it is brought before the assembly in the form of a motion proposing a specific action (RONR 386, lines 6-8). This rule is relaxed in small boards and committees (RONR 488, lines 18-20; RONR 500, lines 17-18).
- b. If there are no other rules, each member can speak twice on each debatable motion (except *Appeal*), 10 minutes each time, per day (RONR 388, line 28 to RONR 389, lines 1-5).
- c. A member is not entitled to the floor a second time on the immediately pending question on the same day so long as any member who has not spoken on that question claims the floor (RONR 389, lines 25-28). The chair can use this rule to help keep the debate “on track” and minimize the monopolization of debate by individual members.
- d. The debate rules are frequently shortened (e.g. from 10 minute speeches to 2 minute speeches) in order to expedite business.

12. Remarks and their relationship to the minutes

- a. The minutes should contain a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members (RONR 468, lines 16-18).
- b. An “assembly’s proceedings” are not the same as “minutes”, even if published (RONR 475, lines 26-34; RONR 476, lines 11-15). The minutes are the official record.

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