

10 Basic Rules of Order for Teacher Councils



(adapted from LTU Manual of Policies and Procedures)

*These rules ensure that discussions at Council proceed in an orderly fashion so that the outcome reflects the collective will. Incorporate them as part of the **internal rules of procedure**¹ Council establishes to fix the schedule and duration of meetings, establish the quorum, determine who is eligible to attend, who may speak, decide, how the minutes will be written, published, and circulated, etc. **If all members know the rules, everyone will be comfortable in speaking and understand the way business is being conducted.***

1. WHAT IS A MOTION? WHY DO WE ADOPT MOTIONS?

While there's nothing wrong with having a general discussion about a topic, at some point following an exchange of information, it is useful for someone to propose a **clear and specific action** in order to focus the debate (where opinions are expressed) and arrive at a recommendation or decision. The proposal takes the form of a **motion**, e.g., *"I move the adoption of the extra curricular activities as presented, with the addition of weekly basketball during lunch on Fridays."* (Normally, a copy of documents referred to in the record of the meeting is appended to the minutes.)

2. WHEN CAN A MOTION BE PROPOSED – AND BY WHOM?

When the item it refers to is up for discussion, according to the agenda. Any member – voting or non-voting – may propose a motion.

3. WHEN CAN THE AGENDA BE CHANGED?

The adoption (by motion) of the proposed agenda, with any additions, deletions, or changes in the order, is the first item of business, normally followed by *Approval of the previous minutes, Business arising from the minutes (follow-up), and then New business.*

4. SHOULD THE AGENDA FOLLOW A PARTICULAR FORMAT?

It is sound practice to include certain recurring items automatically:

- Correspondence
- Report from Governing Board liaison
- Professional improvement/curriculum implementation

The next-to-last item, preceding *Adjournment*, is *Other business* – where new items may be added when the agenda is adopted.

5. WHAT IS SECONDING A MOTION?

Before a motion can be debated, another voting member of the Teacher Council must be recognized by the chairperson as seconding the motion. Having a seconder ensures that the motion has some support and is not frivolous.

6. WHAT IF THE MOTION IS NOT CLEAR OR MAKES NO SENSE?

If no objection is raised, the mover and seconder can withdraw the motion or re-word it. A defective motion can be ruled out of order by the Chairperson.

7. WHAT IS "SPEAKING TO THE MOTION?"

Your comments must be relevant to the topic. If not, you may be ruled "out of order." You may speak to the motion before it is voted on. Usually, new speakers are allowed to precede those who have already spoken, and the mover is accorded a "right of reply" just prior to the vote.

8. WHAT IS AN AMENDMENT?

An amendment is a proposed change to the original motion. It cannot contradict the spirit of the original motion, and must be debated and voted on prior to dealing with the original or main motion. If you vote for an amendment, you should logically be voting in favour of the main motion or proposing a further amendment to make the main motion acceptable.

9. CAN A MOTION BE RECONSIDERED?

Only, a member who voted in favour of the original motion can vote to reconsider. Reconsideration normally requires a two-thirds majority.

10. WHICH MOTIONS TAKE PRECEDENCE?

Matters of procedure (e.g., to delay adjournment) and points of privilege (e.g., a member considers that his rights have not been respected or that the rules of order have not been observed) should be considered before returning to the agenda item.

¹ Review internal rules of procedure at the beginning of the year (clause 4-2.13) – before a hot topic emerges!

