PRINCIPLES

Lochrie’s six principles of a meeting

The fundamental essence of a meeting is the equal opportunity of members to initiate ideas, oppose ideas, and to do so without coercion. Six principles underlie the rules of any meeting.

James Lochrie, Meeting Procedures, p. 1
used with permission

ADVANCE QUIZ

Take a guess and fill in the blanks, using the words given below

1. The __________________________ must be allowed to rule.
2. The __________________________ have rights that must be respected.
3. Members have a right to __________________________ to help make decisions.
4. __________________________ and __________________________ are required.
5. All members have __________________________ rights, privileges and obligations.
6. Members have a right to an __________________________ meeting.

respect  efficient
minority  courtesy
equal    information
majority
Precedence of motions

Each motion has a number or rank. When lower motions are pending, motions with a __________ rank may be made, but motions with a __________ rank are out of order.

The motion with the lowest rank is the ________________.

There are ________________ motions with ranks in all.

The flying dinosaurs do not have a number, but merely “fly over” the heads of the other motions and are dealt with immediately.
Flow of authority

The principles produce this flow of authority at a meeting:

1. The group adopts its rules and guidelines.
2. In attending, members accept the rules of the group.
3. During meetings, the presiding officer applies the rules for the benefit of the group.
4. All persons present at a meeting have an obligation to obey the legitimate orders of the presiding officer. (RONR p. 645)
5. Any member who disagrees with a ruling, decision or order by the presiding officer may appeal the ruling.
6. If another member seconds the appeal, the group will decide by majority vote whether the ruling, decision or order is legitimate. (RONR p. 650)
7. The presiding officer obeys the group’s decision.

Appealing a Ruling of the Chair

Any member who disagrees with a ruling of the chair can appeal it. The member does not have to be recognized and may even interrupt another speaker, saying “Appeal!” or “I appeal from the ruling of the chair.” If a second member seconds the appeal, the presider immediately turns the matter over to the group as a whole.

EXAMPLE

**Member A:** Madam President, I rise to a point of order.

**Presider:** State your point.

**Member A:** My esteemed colleague from Dinopolis has used the term “cream-faced loon” in referring to the mayor of our fair city. According to Robert’s Rules, insults are not allowed in debate.

**Presider:** The point is well taken. Members will refrain from using improper language.

**Member B:** I appeal from the decision of the chair on the grounds that “cream-faced loon” is a literary reference and not an insult.

**Member C:** Second!

**Presider:** Very well, since the ruling of the chair has been appealed, the group will decide. Note that appeals pertaining to proper use of language and decorum may not be debated. All those who believe that “cream-faced loon” is an insult, please say “aye.” All those who believe that it is not an insult, please say “no.”

[if the ayes have it] The ayes have it, the ruling of the chair is upheld, and members will refrain from using this term.

[if the noes have it] The noes have it, the ruling of the chair is not upheld, and members may use this term.
Member A: Chair, I rise to a point of order.
Chair: State your point.
Member A: My esteemed colleague has used the term “cream-faced loon” in referring to the Mayor of Fernville. According to Robert’s Rules, insults are not allowed in debate.
Chair: The point is well taken. Members will refrain from using improper language.

Member B: Chair, I rise to a point of order.
Chair: State your point.
Member B: You announced the motion that I made and then called for the vote right away. We have to have discussion on this motion before we decide what to do about it!
Chair: The point is well taken. As the maker of the motion, you have the right to speak first, so Member B has the floor.

Member C: Chair, I rise to a point of order.
Chair: State your point.
Member C: Sam Stegosaurus has spoken three times already, but other members are waiting to speak.
Chair: The point is well taken. Who would like to speak next?
Member D: Point of order, Chair!
Chair: State your point.
Member D: We voted to approve the amendment, but we haven’t yet voted to approve the motion itself.
Chair: The point is well taken. Are you ready to vote on the motion as amended?

Member E: Chair, I rise to a point of order.
Chair: State your point.
Member E: My colleague has called me a “bozo.” It is improper to use such personal insults during our meetings.
Chair: The point is well taken. Members will refrain from making personal attacks on their colleagues – or anyone else!

Member F: Point of order, Chair!
Chair: State your point.
Member F: You have declared the meeting adjourned, but we still have business to discuss. The chair of the meeting doesn’t have the power to adjourn the meeting like that.
Chair: The point is well taken. Our meeting will continue. The next item of business is...
Say What?!

Six Types of Unacceptable Remark and How to Respond

Ann G. Macfarlane, PRP, Jurassic Parliament

PRINCIPLES

• Groups should adopt some simple guidelines, including time limits for discussion.
• The presider is the servant of the group, and the group is the final authority.
• All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
• To ensure this, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
• Discussion at a council meeting is NOT A CONVERSATION. Structure is necessary if discussion is to be fair and efficient.
• Presider must be a “benevolent dictator” as regards rules.
• Presider should speak in the “third person.” Don’t say “you.”
• Interrupting is not allowed (except in special cases).
• The motions “point of order” and “appeal” are the heart of Robert’s Rules of Order.
• The rules of decorum also apply for remarks to and about staff, and to and about the public.
• The public should be encouraged to be civil in their remarks, but councils must be careful about how they enforce their guidelines. In case of questions, consult your attorney.
UNACCEPTABLE REMARKS

1. Personal remarks
2. Discourteous remarks – insulting language, attacks, profanity
3. Inflammatory language
4. Referring to another member’s motives (except in case of conflict of interest)
5. Criticizing past actions of the group (unless subject is under discussion, or you are going to propose a change at the end of your speech.)
6. Remarks that are not germane (relevant) to the discussion

WHAT TO DO?

If you’re the chair, stop the speaker! (You may interrupt.)
If you’re a member, say “Point of order!” (You may interrupt.)

Member says: “Point of order!”
Chair says: “State your point.”
Member explains the violation. “That language is inflammatory” (or whatever).
Chair says: “The point is well taken” (if chair agrees) OR “The point is not well taken” (if chair disagrees). “Members will not OR may use this term.”

Any member can say: “Appeal!”
Chair says: “Is there a second?”
If another member seconds: Group decides.

Chair may also turn to the group in the first place to decide.