



# Summary of the Rules

**Fairness** (equal rights of members) and good order are the underlying principles ([page 8](#)).

**The final authority** is the majority of voting members, provided a quorum is present, subject always to any applicable higher law (a law of the land, a constitution, a bylaw, or an existing standing rule) ([page 15](#)).

**In formal meetings**, the chair guides impartially without taking part in discussion. In informal meetings, the chair participates as an equal member ([page 16](#)).

**A motion** should be worded affirmatively and must not conflict with any higher law. Each motion requires a seconder ([page 18](#)).

**The mover's privilege** allows the mover to reword or withdraw the motion provided there is a seconder and not more than one member objects ([page 19](#)).

**Amendments** can delete, substitute, or add words to a motion on the floor but must not negate it or change its topic. An amendment cannot be amended ([page 20](#)).

**Postpone, refer:** A motion can be postponed to an indefinite or a specific future occasion or referred to a committee for further study ([page 21](#)).

**Voting:** Common voting methods include voting by ballot, standing, show of hands, show of voting cards, and voice. For a motion to pass, a quorum must be present and more than half the votes cast must be affirmative ([pages 21-24](#)).

**Informal discussion:** A motion to informally discuss some topic, if passed, allows members to consider an idea without the formality of a motion ([page 24](#)).

**Rescind, reconsider:** A previous decision can be rescinded or reconsidered by the members at any appropriate time ([pages 24 and 25](#)).

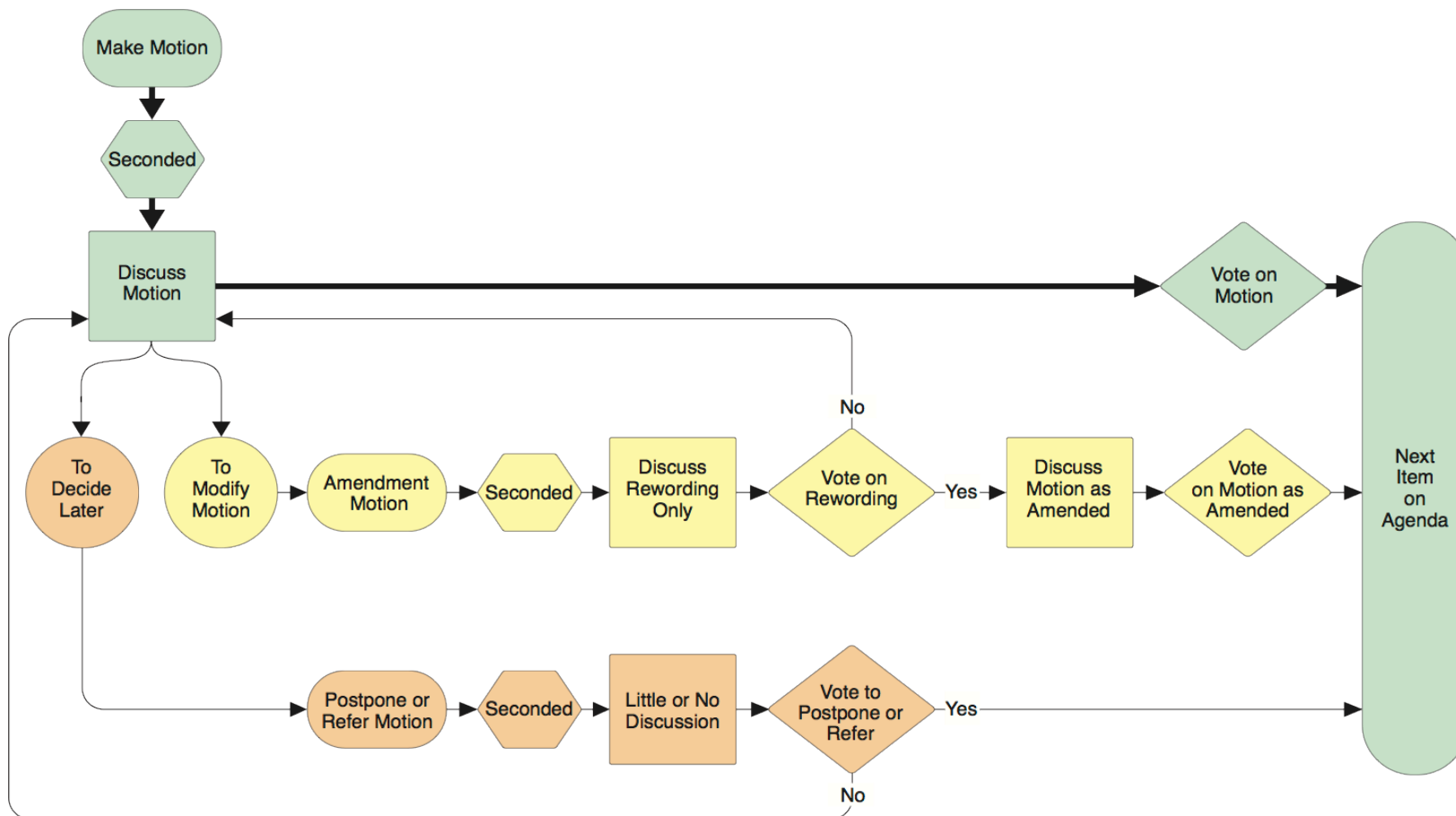
**Ratify a previous decision:** A decision exceeding the authority of a member, committee or meeting can be ratified at a later meeting ([page 27](#)).

**Good order:** Members should discuss only one motion at a time. A member must not take more than a fair share of floor time nor interrupt another member except as allowed with a point of order ([pages 28-30](#)).

**Point of order:** A member who believes that a law or the meeting's good order is being breached may rise immediately and say "point of order." The chair should allow the member to explain and, if necessary, should call for a vote for a decision ([page 29](#)).



## Flow Chart Using *Democratic Rules of Order*



### GOOD ORDER

- Stay on topic
- One speaker at a time, acknowledged by chair
- No interrupting

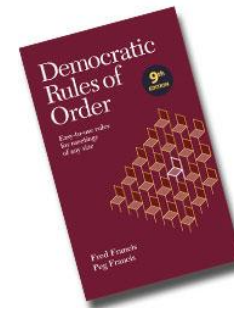
### POINT OF ORDER

- Member explains how a law or good order is being breached
- Chair rules on point of order
- Vote if necessary



## DEMOCRATIC and ROBERT'S RULES compared

DEMOCRATIC	ROBERT'S
* 27 pages of rules plus 37 pages of answers to questions, examples, etc.	* Up to 700 pages of rules and protocol (depending on which edition)
* All motions have similar properties so there are no complicated classifications to learn	* There are many kinds of motions: main, subsidiary, incidental, privileged, and they all have special properties which must be learned or found in tables. Some are debatable, some aren't. Some can be amended, some can't. Some require a majority to pass, some more. Some need seconding, some don't, etc.
* Uses plain language so no need to learn a specialized vocabulary	* Contains some special phrases which must be learned e.g. "the previous question", "orders of the day", "lay on the table", "question of privilege," "suppress debate", etc.
* Allows informal decision-making but automatically requires more formality when necessary	* Rather formal when its rules are consistently followed
* Members with a greater knowledge of the rules have no special advantage	* Members with a greater knowledge of the rules can use it for personal advantage
* Originally written in 1994 as rules of order for meetings of any size	* Originally written in 1876 based on rules of order for the United States Congress
* Contains rules for every likely situation	* Contains rules for every likely situation
* Likely to be read and understood by the Chair and many members	* Likely to be partially read and understood by the Chair and a few members



## Some basic information about *Democratic Rules of Order*

***Democratic Rules of Order* is a complete**, concise, parliamentary authority, made to be adopted as the official rules of order for meetings of any size.

**Its rules are written in plain language**, free of complex protocol to enable people to participate in meetings equally and efficiently. Since they do not contain complicated procedures which reduce the rights of members less familiar with them, they produce a significantly higher standard of democracy. Members can make better decisions with greater ease in less time.

**Its rules allow informality** but automatically require more formality when good order requires it. Although free from legalese, these rules are exact, unambiguous and give the members and the Chair all the power needed to keep good order in a kindly way. It also contains thirty-one questions and answers, a summary of the rules, an index and a fifteen-page sample meeting which is both fun and informative.

**Through nine editions**, this book has been thoroughly revised and perfected. The rules of all editions are so similar, however, that earlier editions can be used along with the latest edition without conflict.

**A truly democratic, complete, official, parliamentary authority**

**Q. Are *Democratic Rules of Order* very different from other parliamentary authorities?**

**A.** Yes and No. They codify much common practice and on the surface meetings would sound the same with motions, seconding, voting, etc. But rules are less obtrusive, deliberations are smoother; and equal rights exist in practice as well as in theory.

**Q. Since *Democratic Rules of Order* is so much shorter than most older rules, how can it be as reliable for large organizations to adopt for governing their meetings which might include some strongly divided opinions?**

**A.** Progress is natural in today's world and streamlining rules of order so that they are simpler and easier to understand does not reduce their reliability for large or small meetings in the slightest. *Democratic Rules of Order* is not missing any regulation necessary for the best run meetings. Its rules have been adopted and tested by organizations of various kinds and sizes all over North America, and have been accepted by many as the ideal and most reliable parliamentary standard.

**Q. Does it contain anything new?**

**A.** Its rule on "Informal discussion" (page 24) and the "Mover's privilege" (page 19) are two examples. Allowing members to informally discuss an idea before forming a motion is sometimes a great time saver. The mover's privilege allowing the mover and members to reword a motion during discussion makes perfecting the wording of the motion easier. It can not be abused as the change requires a formal amendment if more than one member objects.

**Q. Why was this book written?**

**A.** In hundreds of meetings, the authors saw the frequent frustrations caused by the complexities of the traditional rules with the resulting awkward situations and poor decisions. The few who knew the rules had an unfair advantage in debate.

They searched for a set of rules which were simpler but found none satisfactory. Nearly all were incomplete or were modifications of the same complex procedures. Finally they decided to write a complete set of rules based only on democratic principles and common practice.

The basic text was written in a week but it took several years of refining and input from many executives, parliamentarians and others to perfect the rules, to be sure that each point was crystal clear, and that not a single necessary rule was missing.

**Q. Why is it called Democratic?**

**A.** Because it preserves in meetings the fundamental principles of democracy: justice, equal individual rights, right of the majority to decide and the simplicity of good order.

*Democratic Rules of Order* ISBN 978-0-9699260-6-1

**Authors:** Fred and Peg Francis

**Information and orders:** Cool Heads Publishing

PO Box 197, Merville, BC, Canada V0R 2M0

Toll free: 1-888-637-8228

Email: books@coolheads.ca

www.DemocraticRules.com

**Quantity pricing:**

1 book \$8.95 each

2 books \$8.50 each

3 - 20 books \$7.95 each

21 - 40 books \$6.95 each

41 + books \$5.95 each