



## Six Steps to Every Motion

Source: Robert's Rules of Order, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, p. 31-54

### 1. A member raises hand, is recognized, and makes a motion.

*Examples:* "I move to recommend that City Council adopt the staff report and recommendations"

Staff recommends that Planning Commission take the following actions:

- Recommend that City Council adopt this report;
- Recommend that City Council amend the Zoning Code as shown in this report;
- Recommend that City Council adopt the report and commentary as further findings and legislative intent;
- Recommend that City Council adopt the ordinance; and
- Direct staff to continue to work on the language in this report to further refine and clarify it.

*(Staff will provide all PSC members with a cheat sheet for the motions needed for a positive recommendation or decision.)*

***Common Mistake:** Members do not raise hand, do not wait to be recognized, and typically start to discuss their motion before completing steps 2, 3, and 4 below.*

### 2. Another member seconds the motion.

*Example:* "I second the motion."

***Common Mistake:** The person seconding the motion dives into the merits of the motion.*

### 3. The presiding officer restates the motion to the assembly.

*Example:* "\_\_\_\_\_."

***Common Mistake:** Motion is restated differently from the wording of the maker. Beware because the motion that is adopted is the one stated by the presiding officer, not the one stated by the maker of the original motion.*

### 4. The members debate the motion.

***Common Mistake:** Debate gets out of control in temper, in duration, in relevance. Members talk at each other across the room rather than through the presiding officer.*

### 5. Presiding officer asks clerk to call the roll.

*Example:* "\_\_\_\_\_."

**Common Mistake:** *The presiding officer states 'All in favor' and fails to tell the members what to do as a matter of voting (for example, 'say aye', 'stand up', 'raise your hand', etc.); or the negative vote is never requested or counted!*

**6. The presiding officer announces the result of the voting; instructs the corresponding officer to take action; and introduces the next item of business.**

**Example:** *"The motion carries." Or "The motion fails."*

**Common Mistake:** *Presiding officer fails to pronounce the result of the voting! No one is instructed to take action. Commonly, dead silence follows because the presiding officer is lost and stares at the assembly.*

## Five Ways to Modify a Motion

Motions are rarely perfect for everyone. Modifications are inevitable.

1. **Between the time that a motion is made and *before the chair states the motion***, any member may informally offer modifying suggestions to the maker of the motion. The maker may accept or reject that member's recommendations.
2. **After the chair has stated the motion**, the maker of the motion may *request unanimous consent* from the members to modify the motion. Remember that at this time, the motion belongs to the assembly and not the original maker.
3. **By means of the subsidiary motion to Amend**, any member may propose changes to the motion, before the motion is voted upon. These proposed changes must be seconded and may be amended and/or debated.
4. **If a motion requires further study**, the members may vote to *Refer the Main Motion to a Committee*. When the committee returns the motion to the assembly, the committee normally **proposes** amendments for the assembly to vote upon.
5. **Sometimes the motion is so complex** that the only way to do it justice is for a member to urge its rejection and offer to propose a simpler version as a *Substitute Motion*. Upon defeat of the complex motion, anyone may propose the *Substitute Motion*.

## Three Ways to Amend a Motion

As a matter of survival, the most common motion a club member needs to know completely is the ***Motion to Amend a Pending Motion***.

The difficult part is remembering that the more urgent motions can not be amended - *Adjourn, Question of Privilege, Orders of the Day, Lay on/Take from the Table, Previous Question, Point of Order, Appeal, Parliamentary Inquiry, Suspend the Rules, and Reconsider*.

During the Debate step of a Pending Motion, one may move to Amend the Pending Motion. All one needs to remember is that there are really **only 3 basic processes of amendments**:

**Let's Amend this Sample Motion:** "I move that we buy a new sign."

1. **You can Move to Amend by *Inserting* words or paragraphs.**  
*I move to Amend by Inserting the phrase "not to exceed \$50 dollars" at the end of the motion.*
2. **You can Move to Amend by *Striking out* (not deleting) words or paragraphs.**  
*I move to Amend by striking out the word "new".*

3. **You can Move to Amend by *Striking out and Inserting* words or paragraphs.** One can even Amend by *Substituting* (Striking out and Inserting) entire paragraphs or the complete motion.  
*I move to Amend by Striking out the word "sign" and Inserting the word "billboard".*