

Rules of Debate

1.Procedure:

It is important that the President or Chairman of a meeting has a clear knowledge and understanding of the Rules of Debate, but it is equally important for each participating member to also know the rules under which the meeting is being conducted.

In a Lions Club, the basic objective is to harness and direct the collective “know how” of a group into meaningful discussion, leading to effective and efficient decision making and action.

The Australian Multiple District 201 of Lions International accepts as its standard “Law and Procedure at Meetings in Australia” by Joske. Joske’s Book, however, has a legal background and is unnecessarily complicated for an ordinary Lions meeting.

While still accepting Joske as the authority therefore, the following abridged rules can be adopted for use by your Lions Club.

These rules are not for the purpose of scoring points against each other, or long debates or technicalities.

Good fellowship must be the keynote of all of our meetings, and when all else fails the “Rule of Common Sense” applies.

2. Rules of Conduct:

2.1 No member shall address the assembly without first obtaining permission and direction from the President or Chairman, and shall address himself to the chair.

2.2 The President or Chairman may remain seated but members addressing the meeting shall stand.

2.3 Members speaking shall confine themselves to the question under debate and avoid personalities and indecorous language.

2.4 The mover of a motion shall be allowed a maximum of 4 minutes and his right of reply shall not exceed 3 minutes. All other speakers, including the seconder, shall be limited to 3 minutes, provided that an extension may be given to any speaker by resolution.

- 2.5 No new matter shall be introduced in the reply, and all speakers should avoid tedious repetition and trivia.
- 2.6 Questions must be directed to the Chairman and he may direct the mover to reply. Such reply should not exceed 2 minutes and shall be confined to the question alone.
- 2.7 Members wishing to move a motion or address the meeting must advise the President before the meeting to ensure that such intention has the approval of the President and is placed on the agenda.

3. The Motion:

- 3.1 A Motion is usually positive in nature, beginning with the word “that”, it should be carefully researched and worded, and where possible a copy submitted to the President and Secretary in writing.
- 3.2 The Motion must be moved and seconded before discussion and the motion lapses if a seconder cannot be found.
It is acceptable for a member to second a motion in order to hear the proposal. He is not committed to vote for the motion.
- 3.3 After the motion has been formally moved and seconded, the proposer may speak to the motion for a maximum of 4 minutes.
- 3.4 The seconder shall then be invited to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. He may request a deferment but loses the right if the debate is terminated before he speaks.
- 3.5 If the above two speakers i.e. the mover and seconder, speak for the motion, the chairman must then call for two speakers against the motion. Thereafter, speakers for and against must be selected alternately until the debate is exhausted or terminated.
- 3.6 If there are no speakers against the motion, it may be put to the meeting immediately.
- 3.7 No person may speak more than once on any question, but the motion and an amendment are considered to be different questions. Therefore a member who has spoken to a motion may speak again to an amendment.
- 3.8 If an amendment is moved and debated, the mover of the original motion is given the right of reply before a vote is taken on the first amendment.
- 3.9 If any member feels more time or investigation is needed, provision is made later in these rules under formal motions for the debate and subsequent decision to be adjourned.

4. Amendments:

Amendments are the main cause of confusion at meetings, as members, and even the chairman, can easily lose the thread of the debate.

The golden rule is therefore one step at a time.

In matters of a complex matter it helps if every member has a copy of the motion in front of him.

The simple rules governing amendments are:

4.1 An amendment must not be a direct negative to the motion. The simple way to negate a motion is to vote against it. Indicate your intention and reason for doing so in the course of the debate.

4.2 An amendment is an alteration to the wording of a motion. It may leave out certain words, change certain words, or add certain words, but the basic intention of the motion must remain and the amended motion must stand up to common sense interpretation.

4.3 More than one amendment may be made to the original motion but the amendments to Amendments are not permitted.

e.g. A motion may contain several elements such as a purpose, intention, a method, a time, a place, and a cost. While maintaining the basic purpose or intention any or all other elements may be altered by amendment either singly or collectively.

4.4 The wording of a motion may also be amended to assist common sense interpretation of its intent.

4.5 Further amendments (plural) may be foreshadowed to indicate the direction for debate and the chairman in his wisdom may decide the order of debate to ensure continuity.

4.6 After debate each amendment must be voted upon, and if passed, becomes the motion.

4.7 The mover of a amendment has no right of reply.

4.8 When all required amendments (have been passed) are in position, the amended motion known as “The Substantive Motion”. This motion must then be voted upon to become a resolution of the Club.

5. Voting:

5.1 Voting by proxy is not permitted.

5.2 Generally an affirmative vote shall consist of a simple majority of members present providing they constitute a quorum. Refer to your club

constitution for times when a higher majority is required e.g. amendments to the constitution.

5.3 The number of members, in good standing, that constitute a quorum may differ from state to state (to abide by the state regulations). The Quorum for a Board meeting may also differ from the quorum for a general meeting of the Club. You will need to refer to your club constitution.

5.4 If a motion is passed it becomes a resolution

5.5 Most resolutions require action of some sort. Before the matter is closed the President must ensure that responsibility for such action is allocated.

6. Point of Order:

No speaker shall be interrupted except on a “Point of Order”, when he shall sit down until the point of order is settled by the President or Chairman whose decision shall be final in such matters.

7. Formal Motions:

When a debate is becoming tedious, time consuming or perhaps heated, or when a member feels more investigation is required or more pressing business is on the agenda, several options are available in the form of Formal Motions as follows:

All formal motions are subject to acceptance by the President or the Chairman And are not debated.

7.1 The Closure (No seconder required)

“I move that the motion be now out”

This motion has priority if accepted by the chairman and terminates the discussion if passed.

7.2 Adjourn the meeting (Secunder required)

“I move that the meeting be adjourned until”

This motion terminates the meeting, if passed, and applies to all motions and amendments under discussion.

7.3 The Previous question. (Secunder required)

“I move that the motion be **NOT** now put”

This motion prevents a vote from being taken and shelves the motion for that meeting. It applies to motions, not amendments.

7.4 Proceed to next question. (Secunder required)

“ I move that the meeting proceed to the next question”

7.5 Adjourn the Debate. (Secunder required)

“I move that the debate be adjourned.”

7.6 Lie on the Table. (Seconder required)

“I move that the question lie on the table”

Defers the matter to a more convenient time which may be later in the same meeting or a later date.

8. Changes to Rules of Debate:

These rules may be extended, amended or deleted only by two weeks notice of a Motion to be presented to a full meeting of the Club and then by a two / thirds majority vote of the members present.

NOTE:

(It is important to remember that each state has its own Incorporated Association regulations. Therefore it is important that you are aware what rules and regulations are included in the Club Constitution and if there is any conflict between these rules and the Constitution than the rules included in the Constitution take precedent)