

An AFSCME Guide

How to chair a meeting

1 Call to Order

Start Your Meeting on Time.



Rap your gavel and say: **“I call this meeting to order.”** Wait for quiet, and then begin the meeting.

2 Roll Call of Officers



The Chair says: **“The Recording Secretary will call the Roll of Officers.”**

The Recording Secretary then calls the roll in a loud, clear voice, with pauses for response.

3 Reading of Minutes



The Chair says: **“The Secretary will read minutes of the last meeting.”** Alternatively, copies of the minutes can be distributed at the meeting and the Chair says: **“Instead of having the Secretary read the minutes, copies have been distributed for your review.”**



After the minutes are read or reviewed, the Chair asks: **“Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes? [Pause.] If not, the minutes will stand approved as read.”** If corrections to the minutes are made, ask for unanimous consent to additions or corrections at this time. If there is an objection to any addition or correction, it will be necessary to adopt a motion to make that change.

4 Reading of Correspondence



The Chair says: **“The Recording Secretary will now read the correspondence.”**

The Recording Secretary should then read any important correspondence, summarizing the content when appropriate.

Any letter requiring action by the membership should be discussed by the Executive Board prior to the membership meeting. At the membership meeting, the letter should be read along with the recommendations of the board. A motion should be made to adopt the board's recommended action. That motion should then be discussed and voted on by the members.

Routine letters should not be taken up at the membership meeting.

5 Reports of Officers

The **President's Report** might include such topics as:

- Problems facing the local
- Updates on issues affecting the members
- Summary of topics discussed at the latest Executive Board meeting
- Actions the Executive Board recommends that the local take



If the President's Report contains any actions recommended by the Executive Board, a motion should be made to adopt the board's recommended action. That motion is then discussed and voted on by the members. To initiate discussion, the Chair may say something like: **“Does the Chair hear a motion to accept the Executive Board's recommendation?”**

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: This report should be copied and passed out at the meeting. See a sample report in the *AFSCME Officers Handbook*, Appendix A, or in material following Appendix E of the *AFSCME International Constitution*.



The Chair asks: **“Does everyone have a copy of the Secretary-Treasurer's Report? [Pause.] Are there any questions? [Pause.] If there are no objections, the Secretary-Treasurer's Report will stand approved.”**

If someone raises an objection, a motion of approval is required.

6 Reports of Staff and Committees

Staff Report:

This may include the latest information on political and legislative issues, organizing campaigns, important grievances, council activities, an update on contract negotiations, or any other information of current interest to the membership.

Committee Reports:

Before the membership meeting, the President should talk with each committee chairperson and go over his/her Committee Report. Reports from any given committee should be made only when there is something worthwhile to report.



To introduce these reports, the Chair would say:

**“We will now hear a report from the _____
Committee.”**



If a committee report contains specific recommendations, which call for membership action, then after the report is given the Chair would say:

**“You have heard the report of the _____ Committee,
with the recommendation that the membership authorize _____.
Does the Chair hear a motion to adopt the _____
Committee’s recommendation?”**

7 Unfinished Business

Unfinished Business: Includes any items that require membership action that are left over, or postponed, from a previous meeting.



The Chair would say something like:

“We have some old, unfinished business to take care of.”

The Chair can then review the topic. This may be followed by a motion dealing with the specific item of unfinished business.

8 New Business

New Business: Includes items raised at this meeting, which were not necessarily included on the agenda, and which require membership action. This is the membership's chance to raise issues that are not included on the agenda.



To open this part of the meeting, the Chair would say:

“Is there any new business?”

For the group to make a decision on any new business brought up at a meeting, remember what is required: a motion, a second, a chance for discussion and a vote.

9 Good and Welfare

Good and Welfare: A local may have a Good and Welfare Committee. If it does not, this part of the meeting can be used to discuss such things as sending cards or flowers to hospitalized members, soliciting donations for community food banks, announcing happy events like marriages and births, etc. It may also be used for some planned activity, such as a visiting speaker or training. Consider moving this item earlier in the agenda if such an activity is planned.



The Chair asks: **“Is there any Good and Welfare?”**

10 Adjournment



Adjourning the Meeting: When the business of the meeting is finished, and if no one has made a motion to adjourn, the Chair should ask for one by saying:
“Do I hear a motion to adjourn?”

A motion to adjourn must be seconded, and is then voted on without debate.

Some Additional Notes for the Chairperson

- The Chair should make sure that all reports given at the meeting are brief and to the point. This will help keep the whole meeting short. People are more likely to attend meetings that are run efficiently and end on time!
- When a motion is made it must be seconded. The Chair should then state the motion and call for discussion: **“It has been moved and seconded that ... Is there any discussion?”**
- Sometimes an amendment to the motion on the floor may be offered. An amendment must be seconded and then discussed. The Chair should say: **“An amendment has been made and seconded that ... Is there any discussion on the amendment?”** A vote is first taken on the amendment. After the amendment is decided on, the discussion returns to the main motion (as amended if the amendment was passed). A vote is then taken on the main motion.
- During a discussion of a motion or amendment, make sure that each member speaks only once until all other members have had an opportunity to speak. It is a good idea to alternate speakers for and against the motion. If members begin responding to and addressing remarks to each other, remind the group that all comments should be addressed to the Chair. The discussion and debate is for the group as a whole to participate in. It is not an argument between a couple of members.
- A member may raise a **“Point of Information.”** For instance, he or she might state: **“Point of Information. I don’t understand the intent of this motion.”** The Chair should then clarify the intent of the motion or provide the information being requested. You may have to remind the member that a point of information is a question, not a statement.
- Sometimes a member may rise on a **“Point of Order,”** saying something like: **“Point of Order. This discussion does not pertain to the motion on the floor.”** The Chair should make a ruling and say something like: **“Your point is well taken and I direct the member speaking to address the motion on the floor.”**
- There are times when discussion on a topic begins but no motion has been made. In this instance, the Chair may call for a motion by saying, **“Does the Chair hear a motion to ...?”** Of course, this motion must be seconded and the Chair should re-state the motion before asking if there is discussion.

For a chart on Key Parliamentary Rules, see Appendix E of the AFSCME *International Constitution*.

For a detailed description of “Robert’s Rules of Order,” see *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance* by O. Garfield Jones. This can be ordered from: AFSCME F2 Orders, 1625 I Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-5687.

Robert's Rules of Order

Chart of Motions & Procedures

These motions are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

Purpose	You Say	Can Interrupt	Requires a Second	Debatable	Can be Amended	Vote Required
Close the meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Register a complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay the motion aside temporarily	I move to table the motion	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	I call the question; OR I move to end debate	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to a committee	I move to refer the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify the wording of the motion	I move to amend the motion by...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone the decision indefinitely	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority

No order of precedence. These motions arise incidentally and are decided immediately.

Purpose	You Say	Can Interrupt	Requires a Second	Debatable	Can be Amended	Vote Required
Enforce the rules	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
Submit the matter to the group	I appeal the decision of the Chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
Suspend the rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Divide the motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Demand rising vote	I call for a division	Yes	No	No	No	None
Ask a question about parliamentary procedure	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	No	None
Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None

No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending before the group.

Purpose	You Say	Can Interrupt	Requires a Second	Debatable	Can be Amended	Vote Required
Take the matter from the table	I move to take from the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Cancel a previous action	I move to rescind	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3; or Majority with notice
Reconsider a motion*	I move to reconsider the vote	No	Yes	Yes, if motion it applies to is debatable	No	Majority

* can be made only by someone who voted for the prevailing side in the previous vote on the motion



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