

Clerks' Tip of the Month

Robert's Rules of Order for Small Committees

Any of us who have attended a session or presbytery meeting know that the Book of Order mandates that those meetings should be conducted in accordance with Robert's. You may not know, though, that Robert's permits more relaxed procedures for small boards (in our case, most of our sessions and committees) of not more than about a dozen members. Here are some of the things permitted:



- Motions need not be seconded.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a debatable question (a member may speak only two times in a large meeting). However, the motion to limit debate would still be in order.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
- When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced.
- Vote can be taken by show of hands.
- If the chairman is a member, he or she may, without leaving the chair, speak in informal discussions and in debate, and vote on all questions.
- Informal discussion may be initiated by the chair, which, in effect, enables the chair to submit proposals without formally making a motion.

RONR (11th ed.), p. 487-488.

Some of this may be your practice anyway—but you may not have realized you were entirely in order!

If you have a tip you think others could use or a topic you would like information on, please let me know at scoe@thepresbytery.org.

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