
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY

SENATE HANDBOOK

Containing the

Standing Rules of Order

Supplementary to *Roberts Rules of Order: Newly Revised*, 12 ed.

Rules of Order

Of the Tennessee Technological University SGA Senate

The Tennessee Technological University SGA Senate Rules of Order are a blend of Robert's Rules of Order, the Rules of Order for the two houses of the Tennessee General Assembly, and the Rules of Order for the United States Senate. Much of the text of this document is based on the Rules of the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature. Anyone skilled with these Rules of Order would be comfortable with the proceedings of Congress or any other legislative body.

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Rule 1. Speaker to Preside

The Speaker will convene the Senate at the time established by the Official Agenda and at such other times as the Senate may establish by adopting a motion to recess.

In the absence of the Speaker, the Speaker Pro Tempore shall convene the Senate at the designated time and proceed with the regular order of business.

In the absence of the Speaker and the Speaker Pro Tempore, the Chief of Staff shall preside until a Temporary Speaker is elected by a majority of members present, provided that a quorum is present.

Rule 2. Rank of Motions

Motions rank in the following order:

1. Adjourn (highest)
2. Recess
3. Lay on the table
4. Previous question (close debate)
5. Postpone to a certain time
6. Refer to committee
7. Amend an amendment
8. Amend the bill
9. Postpone indefinitely
10. Adopt a bill (main motion; lowest)

A motion is in order when it outranks all other pending motions. For example, if a motion to Refer to Committee is pending, a motion to Adjourn shall be in order. On the other hand, if a motion to Adjourn is pending, a motion to Refer to Committee shall not be in order.

All of these motions require a second.

Privileged Motions

Rule 3. Adjourn

A motion to Adjourn is always in order. It is not debatable and shall be voted on immediately. It requires a simple majority to pass.

A motion to adjourn should include a specific time to reconvene. If a motion to adjourn does not include a time to reconvene, the Senate shall reconvene at the next scheduled meeting.

A motion to adjourn sine die (without a time to reconvene) shall be out of order except at the Closing Meeting of the of the Spring Session.

"Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn until the next legislative session."

Rule 4. Recess

A motion to recess should be expressed in terms of recessing for a specified length of time (e.g., recess one hour for lunch), until a specific time (e.g., 8 p.m.), or at the call of the Speaker. A motion to recess is not debatable and takes a simple majority for passage.

"Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to recess for 10 minutes."

Subsidiary Motions

Rule 5. Lay on the Table

The motion to Lay on the Table is used to temporarily stop considering a motion so that a more urgent motion or issue may be dealt with. The motion to Lay on the Table may apply to any motion ranked below it.

All debate ceases when the motion is made and seconded, except that the proponent of the lowest-ranking motion that might be tabled is allowed closing remarks.

The motion to Lay on the Table passes with a simple majority, and the motion to Lift from the Table requires a simple majority (Rule 22).

It is improper and out of order to dispose of a bill or motion by laying it on the table; the only proper motion to dispose of a bill or motion without a vote on the motion itself is to Postpone Indefinitely (Rule 11).

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to lay [motion] on the table.”

Rule 6. Previous Question

Previous Question is a motion to end debate. It requires a second, is not debatable and requires a two-thirds majority to pass. As soon as this motion is made and seconded, the presiding officer puts the motion to a vote. If the motion fails, debate resumes as before.

The previous question may be moved on any motion that ranks below it. However, if more than one motion is pending, the person moving the previous question must specify to which motion the previous question applies.

For instance, if a motion is pending to amend a bill, the previous question may be moved on the motion to amend or on the motion to adopt the bill.

If the previous question applies to the motion to adopt the bill, it implicitly includes closing debate on the motion to amend. If the previous question is adopted, the body will first vote on the amendment

and then, without further debate, on the motion to adopt the bill.

If the motion for the previous question applies only to the amendment and is adopted, the Senate will proceed to vote on the amendment and continue debating the bill.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move the previous question.”

Rule 7. Postpone to a Certain Time

This delays consideration of a bill for a specified period of time (as opposed to tabling, which postpones until a motion to lift from the table is adopted). The motion to postpone is debatable and requires a simple majority for adoption. A motion to amend is in order.

The motion to postpone may be expressed as a specific time (e.g., 3 p.m.), as relative time (e.g., immediately after lunch), or as a specific meeting (e.g., the beginning of the next scheduled meeting).

If a bill is postponed to a certain time, it automatically becomes the next bill considered after the time set in the motion to postpone.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to postpone Bill [number] until [time].”

Rule 8. Refer to a Committee

All bills are referred to a Standing Committee by the Secretary of Internal Affairs and the Legislative Advisor upon introduction and are to be considered by the committee before being reported to the floor.

The Senate may vote to send the bill back to committee for further consideration or for modifications in the bill as directed by the Senate.

A motion to refer to committee must specify the standing committee to which the bill is being referred. The motion to refer to committee is debatable, may be amended, and requires a simple majority for passage.

In lieu of referring a bill to a standing committee, a motion may create a special ad hoc committee, which will be appointed by the Speaker.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to refer Bill [number] to the [committee name] Committee.”

Rule 9. Amend an Amendment

Also known as an amendment to the second degree. After an amendment has been proposed (Rule 11), an amendment to the first amendment may be proposed. The second-degree amendment is considered before the main amendment.

A second-degree amendment is debatable and requires a simple majority for adoption. An amendment beyond the second degree (e.g., an amendment to the third degree) is out of order.

Rules for amendments (Rule 10), also apply to second-degree amendments.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to adopt Amendment [number] to Amendment [number].”

Rule 10. Amendments

An amendment is a method to change part(s) of a motion to eliminate flaws, ambiguities, or to otherwise modify the motion.

The motion to amend is debatable, may be amended further (Rule 10) and requires a simple majority for adoption.

Amendments to bills are to be submitted in writing on an Amendment Form available from the Secretary or committee Secretary.

When a Senator submits an amendment to the Secretary for the pending bill, the Secretary shall notify the Speaker, and the Speaker shall recognize the sponsor as soon as possible.

The sponsor of the amendment shall ask the Secretary to read the amendment. If the bill is seconded, the sponsor will be allowed introductory remarks on the amendment, after which the floor will be open for debate.

An amendment may take one of three forms:

1. To Delete ... Be specific about the part of the bill to be deleted.

Delete Section 3 and renumber subsequent sections accordingly.

2. To Insert ... Give the specific wording to be inserted and the specific location of where it is to be inserted.

In Section 3, insert “or community college” after the word “university”.

3. To Delete and Insert ... A combination of the above.

In Section 5, delete “5,000” and insert in lieu thereof “10,000”.

Tabling an amendment has the effect of defeating it unless the same body votes to lift the amendment from the table before the President has acted on the bill.

Amendments to the title of the bill are out of order. Amendments that are not germane to the motion being amended are out of order.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to adopt Amendment [amendment number] to Bill [bill number].”

Rule 11. Postpone Indefinitely

This causes a main motion to face a preliminary test of support. It is debatable, may not be amended, and requires a simple majority for passage. If the motion is adopted, consideration of the bill ceases and the Senate proceeds to consider the next item of business.

The only way the Senate can return to consider the bill is to reconsider the motion to postpone indefinitely. (Rule 22).

Rule 12. Main Motion

This is primarily the motion to adopt a bill as presented to the Senate by the sponsor.

It is subject to all of the motions listed above, is debatable, and requires a simple majority to pass, unless otherwise stated in the text of this document or in the SGA Constitution.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move that this Senate adopt Bill [bill number].”

Incidental Motions

Rule 13. Incidental Motions

Incidental motions concern matters that need to be brought before the Senate immediately.

Incidental motions must pertain to the business before the Senate. They have no rank among themselves and outrank all other motions. Only one incidental motion of each type may be pending at a time.

Rule 14. Point of Order

If a Senator believes the rules of order are being breached, he/she makes a Point of Order, asking the Speaker to rule on the issue. If the Speaker doesn't understand the Point of Order, he/she may ask the Senator to explain the point.

If the Speaker agrees with the Point of Order, he/she will rule that the point “is well taken.” Conversely, he/she will rule that the point “is not well taken.”

This motion does not require a second or a vote.

Point of Order is the only motion that doesn't require recognition from the Speaker and can interrupt when someone else is speaking.

“Point of Order!”

Rule 15. Appeal the Ruling of the Chair

After the Speaker has ruled on an issue such as a Point of Order, the Senate may review his/her decision.

For example, if the Speaker rules that a motion is out of order, a Senator who believes the motion is in order may appeal the Speaker's ruling. If the appeal is seconded, the Senate decides whether to uphold or overrule the Speaker's decision.

An appeal is subject to the general rules of debate, and the presiding officer may explain his/her

decision. The presiding officer does not have to relinquish the chair during the discussion. A simple majority can overrule the presiding officer's decision.

The Parliamentarian may be consulted by the Speaker and the body, and may address the floor on the issue of a breach of parliamentary procedure.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I appeal the ruling of the chair.”

Rule 16. Suspend the Rules

When the Senate desires to consider a matter, or do something that would violate these rules or to establish a special rule for itself, it may suspend the rules.

A motion to suspend the rules requires a second, is debatable, and requires a two-thirds majority for passage.

A motion to suspend the rules must include the purpose for suspending the rules. Once that purpose has been accomplished, the rules are automatically reinstated. No motion or action is necessary to reinstate a rule that has been suspended.

A suspension of the rules applies only to actions that are in pursuit of the stated purpose for suspending the rules.

It is necessary to suspend the rules to make any motion not listed in this Senate Manual.

A Standing Committee may suspend the rules only as they affect the order in which the committee considers legislation or the rules of debate in committee.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to suspend Rule [number] for the purpose of [purpose].”

Rule 17. Division of the House

Immediately after a voice vote or show of hands, any member may request a roll call vote by voice if there is reasonable doubt about the result.

A Senator requesting a roll call should state it out loud after the presiding officer announces the results.

“Division!”

Requests and Inquiries

Rule 18. Requests and Inquiries

Requests and Inquiries require no motion, second, or vote and are the prerogative of any Senator. They are proper at any time, but they may not interrupt another speaker. All Requests and Inquiries are non-amendable.

Rule 19. Parliamentary Inquiry

A request for information about the parliamentary situation or for the Parliamentarian’s opinion on a matter concerning the Rules of Order. This is not a request for a ruling.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I rise to a parliamentary inquiry.”

Rule 20. Request for Information

A request for facts affecting the business at hand directed at the chair or another member. A request for information cannot address the substance of legislation.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I have a request for information.”

Miscellaneous Motions

Rule 21. Lift from the Table

After a motion has been tabled, a motion to lift it from the table can bring the question back before the Senate. A motion to Lift from the Table requires a second, is not debatable, is not amendable, and requires a simple majority for adoption.

If a bill is still pending on the floor, a motion is in order to lift from the table a motion previously tabled that pertains to the pending bill. If the bill is no longer being considered, it is necessary to

bring the bill back before the Senate by reconsideration or other appropriate motions.

For example, if an amendment is tabled and the bill is defeated: to revive the amendment, the Senate must first pass a motion to reconsider the bill, and then vote to lift the amendment from the table. In the same circumstances, if the amendment was tabled but the bill is still pending on the floor, the motion to reconsider would be unnecessary.

If a main motion is tabled, a motion to lift it from the table is in order when no other main motion is pending.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move to lift from the table [motion to be lifted].”

Rule 22. Reconsideration

Reconsideration is a motion to bring back before the Senate or committee a question that was previously decided.

Reconsideration requires a second, is debatable, and requires a simple majority for adoption.

A motion to reconsider must be proposed by someone who voted with the prevailing side. For instance, if a bill is defeated, only someone who voted against it may move to reconsider it.

A motion to reconsider may be made only during the same session vote was taken.

The rank of a motion to reconsider is the same as the rank of the motion to which it is applied.

For example, a motion to reconsider an amendment is in order in the same circumstances as a motion to adopt an amendment.

A motion to reconsider a bill is in order only when no other motion is pending. If the bill has already been disposed of, it is first necessary to reconsider the bill, then the amendment. If the bill is still before the Senate, it is necessary to only reconsider the amendment.

“Mr./Madam Speaker, having voted with the prevailing side, I move to reconsider our action in regard to [motion to be reconsidered].”

Rule 23. Reconsideration of a Veto

If the President returns a bill to the Senate after vetoing it from becoming law, the sponsor may move that it be passed notwithstanding the objection of the President. Said motion must be seconded to be considered.

The sponsor will notify the Secretary and the Legislative Advisor in writing of his/her intention to make such a motion at least three hours before meeting, and said notice shall be read in open session at the beginning of the meeting the motion is to be considered.

The motion to override a veto is debatable. The motion may not be amended but is otherwise subject to all other subsidiary and incidental motions.

Having once failed, the motion to override a veto may not be put to the Senate again except by adopting a motion to reconsider the previous action (Rule 22).

“Mr./Madam Speaker, I move that the Senate pass Bill ____, notwithstanding the objection of the President.”

Rule 24. Other Motions

The rules must be suspended to consider any motion not set forth in the Rules of Order.

Miscellaneous Rules

Rule 25. Amend the Rules

To amend the rules herein, a bill must be passed with majority amending the Standing Rules of the Senate.

Rule 26. Majority Vote

A majority of those present shall decide any question unless a different majority is specified by these Rules of Order or by the SGA Constitution.

Rule 27. Voting

In putting a question, the presiding officer will specify the method of voting. Each Senator shall vote from his/her desk in the manner prescribed by the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall make clear the question being decided and give everyone a reasonable opportunity to vote.

Rule 28. Voting by Proxy

Voting by proxy is prohibited in all situations.

Rule 29. Voting by the Speaker

The Speaker or Speaker Pro Tempore shall only vote on a motion to break a tie.

Rule 30. Time Limits for Introductory and Closing Remarks

The prime sponsor of the bill will be recognized by the Speaker for introductory remarks not to exceed five minutes and for closing remarks not to exceed two minutes.

Rule 31. Responses by the Sponsor

The Prime Sponsor will have the option to respond to any debate, and the Speaker will give them the opportunity to be recognized after every address of the floor.

Rule 32. Quorum

A quorum is required to conduct any business except to adjourn, fix the time at which to adjourn, recess, or other measures to obtain a quorum (for example, a *Call of the House*).

A quorum is defined by the SGA Constitution as having two-thirds of the voting membership of the Senate present.

Upon recognition by the presiding officer, a Senator may question the presence of a quorum. If the quorum is questioned, the presiding officer will direct the Secretary to ascertain whether a quorum is present. If so, the body shall proceed with its business. If not, business stops until a quorum is present.

The Speaker may take actions to ensure the maintenance of a quorum and may direct the Sergeant-at-Arms to summon absent members.

Rule 33. Dilatory Motions

The presiding officer may declare a motion as dilatory and refuse to put it to a vote. Such a decision may be appealed to the members present. However, if the presiding officer has consistently won such appeals, he/she may rule further appeals out of order.

Rule 34. Modification of a Motion

A Senator making a motion may modify or rescind that motion before a vote has occurred, with the permission of the Senate and of the person who seconded the motion.

Rule 35. Omnibus Bills

Bills that embrace more than one subject are prohibited. A bill that might embrace more than one subject or be broader than its title may be referred to a standing committee or a select committee to review the issue and make a report.

"I move to refer Bill ___ to ___ committee to consider whether it violates Rule 35."

Rule 36. Two-Thirds Majority

The following motions require a two-thirds majority for adoption. A motion requiring a two-thirds majority is adopted if the 'aye' votes are twice or more as many as the 'no' votes.

- a. Previous Question
- b. Suspend the Rules

The preceding list is not exhaustive, and other motions not listed here may also require a two-thirds majority, according to *Robert's Rules of Order: Newly Revised 12th ed.*

Rule 37. Filling Blanks

No bill or amendment shall be considered which leaves to the floor the task of filling blanks.

Rule 38. Motions to be Seconded

Every motion must be seconded unless otherwise provided.

Rule 39. Prime Sponsor to be Present

The Prime Sponsor of a bill must be present when the bill is considered by the Senate.

The Prime Sponsor shall stand in the well of the Senate while the bill is being considered. The Prime Sponsor may not bring a laptop computer or other electronic device to the well when presenting a bill.

If a bill is the next order of business and the Prime Sponsor is absent, the bill shall be postponed a reasonable interval to give the Prime Sponsor an opportunity to arrive.

Rule 40. Withdraw a Bill

To withdraw a bill from consideration, file a Withdraw a Bill form with the Legislative Advisor signed by all prime sponsors of the bill. A blank form is available from the Secretary.

Rule 41. Add or Delete a Sponsor

To add or delete a sponsor from a bill, file an Add or Delete Sponsor form with the Legislative Advisor. A blank form is available from the Secretary.

Rule 42. Discharge from Committee

A bill pending in committee may be discharged and brought to the floor by duly submitting a petition to the Legislative Advisor and to the Secretary bearing the signatures of 10 Senators.

Upon receipt of a properly executed discharge petition, the Secretary shall assign the bill to the next-published calendar.

Rule 43. Considering a Bill During a Committee Meeting

A bill passed through committee may be considered in the same meeting by duly submitting a petition to the Legislative Advisor and the Secretary bearing the signatures of 10 Senators.

Upon receipt of a properly executed discharge petition, the Secretary shall assign the bill to the bottom of new business on present calendar.

A motion may be made and seconded to suspend the rules and roll the bill to the top of the calendar for immediate consideration. This motion requires a two-thirds majority.

Rule 44. Committees of the Whole

The Senate may not enter into a committee of the whole.

Rule 45. Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised: 12th ed. et seq. is the basis for interpreting these rules and for resolving issues not otherwise addressed herein.