

Greg F.'s Extremely Brief Guide to Parliamentary Procedures for the TCU Faculty Senate

Disclaimer: This will focus on one person's interpretation of the situations that arise most often in the TCU Faculty Senate. Many other procedures might be relevant at various times.

The Most Important Rule: Strict adherence to established rules of parliamentary procedure is only critical when there are disagreements about how to proceed or when there is a risk of viewpoints being suppressed. Otherwise, it's probably best not to be too picky. If we're all sitting in the dark and someone turns on the lights, we probably don't need to argue about whether it was properly seconded.

Main Motions: In principle, anyone can make a motion when recognized by the chair and when another motion is not already on the floor. In practice, due to limited Senate time, most Senate motions will come from Senate Committees. In such situations a second is not necessary, as coming from a committee already implies that more than one person wants the issue considered.

Debate Decorum: By official Robert's Rules, no one may speak more than twice on a given motion, and no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to has spoken once. On the other hand, Robert's Rules says that when you do speak you can have 10 minutes. All in all it's probably for the best that the Senate is flexible on such matters, but the underlying moral is that no one should hog the floor.

Amendments: While a motion is being debated, anyone (when properly recognized by the chair) may move for an amendment. Consideration of the proposed amendment requires a second. While we often play fast and loose with multi-person editing, which is fine as long as it doesn't get out of hand, the final proposed amendment must be voted upon, whether "friendly" or not, to ensure the amendment is the will of the body.

Calling the Question (or, more correctly, "moving the previous question"): This is not the same as voting on a motion. A motion to call the question is a motion to end debate and proceed to a vote on the pending main motion (or amendment). This requires a second and does not allow for debate. *It requires a two-thirds vote to pass.* This is a good motion to make if most of the assembly seems ready to vote but discussion is lingering on among a few. If it passes, the Senate goes right into a vote on the pending main motion (or amendment). If it fails, debate continues.

Making Motions Go Away Without Voting on Them: Despite common usage, a motion to "lay on the table" is only a motion to set the currently pending motion aside temporarily to deal with more urgent business, after which the motion comes right back. To get rid of a motion permanently without voting directly on it, one should move to "postpone indefinitely." Alternatively, a motion can be referred out to a committee for further work; this is a "motion to commit." Both of these motions require a second, are debatable, and pass with a simple majority.

Adjournment: Once the appointed time for the end of a meeting has arrived or when the agenda for the meeting has been finished, the chair may declare the meeting adjourned. This does not require any motion, any second, or any vote.