



# 4-H Parliamentary Procedure: Decision-making Process

*Adair County 4-H Council Guiding Document*

One of the first decisions a new group makes is what decision-making style to use during meetings. Often groups use an informal procedure that appears like a group of people talking together. Though the procedure is flexible, there is general agreement on how to discuss information and make decisions. There is usually a list of items to cover or an agenda. Everyone shares responsibility for keeping the discussion moving and making decisions. This is called the problem-solving approach.

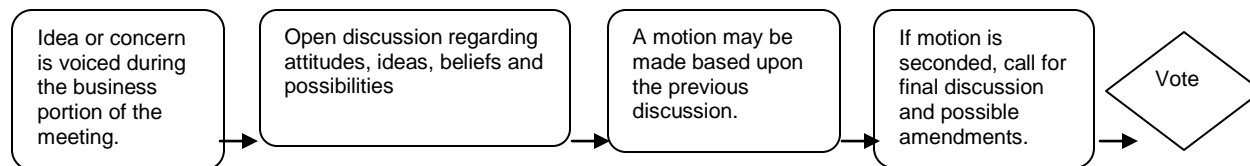
Under strict “Roberts Rules of Order”, most ideas or items of business cannot be discussed in a business meeting until a motion has been made and seconded. Then, the discussion can begin. “Roberts Rules of Order” is a traditional standard for conducting business meetings, but are often poorly understood and only the “convenient” parts are used most of the time. This usually works fine until there is a strong difference of opinion in the club. Taken to the extreme, strict adherence to Robert’s Rules of Order in a 4-H club setting can be used more as a tool to intimidate and silence those less skilled in its use by demanding to return to a strict use of some parts of “Roberts Rules of Order”, even though Roberts Rules weren’t especially followed up to that point. (It is never appropriate for anyone to argue that “parliamentary procedure” wasn’t followed if they disagree with the outcome of an item voted on by the group).

“Roberts Rules of Order” is just one of many possible procedures for conducting a meeting. Roberts Rules work especially well with large groups with many functioning committees that meet separately from the general business meeting. ***A strict adherence to Roberts Rules with youth is often developmentally inappropriate and does not facilitate creative thinking, group problem solving, and team development.*** Volumes have been written on the fine points of parliamentary procedure, but only the basics are necessary for 90 percent of the business conducted at 4-H club meeting.

In most cases in our 4-H Clubs, civic organizations and even in most local elected boards, an idea is proposed, ideas and attitudes are discussed, and then a motion is made to formalize the discussion that has already taken place. This approach has evolved over time, and seems to be a very useful and functional way for a group to think together - and to solve problems while building group consensus and unity along the way (it also minimizes the need for many amendments, keeping procedures uncomplicated). At the same time, it is important that 4-H members and volunteers understand and use the basics of Roberts Rules of Order as it pertains to correctly stating, seconding, amending and voting on motions.

It is recommended that clubs follow the standard Order of Business published in many 4-H meeting guides. When business items, ideas or suggestions come up, simply use this process:

### Revised decision process:



The usual Robert's procedure for making and accepting amendments should be followed after the motion is seconded. This approach will enable the parliamentarian a functioning role in the meeting—by helping other youth and some adults learn how to make a motion, how to second, how to amend, etc. All decisions made by the group should be respected and supported.

Using this approach in your club means group leaders and members can concentrate their most creative thinking on the discussion topic, rather than on the proper way to make and dispose of motions and amendments. And, this is probably the process that most clubs and civic organizations use already!

### Advantages:

- Emphasis will be on resolving differences and arriving at the best possible solution for the entire group.
- The group can work together, discuss ideas and solve problems collectively before a motion is made.
- In a cooperative effort, members come to see the need for some “give and take.” What is best for an individual is not always best for the entire group.

### Guiding Principles

Attention will be given to providing a positive, nurturing environment, where youth are given priority, encouraged to voice their opinions, and are shown high levels of respect.

All decisions made by the group should be respected and supported.

### Adapted from:

A New Look at Parliamentary Procedure North Central Regional Extension Publication No. 48

The Missouri 4-H Meeting Method: A new look at Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Clubs

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