



# The Missouri 4-H Meeting Method

## *A new look at Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Clubs*

*Adapted from “Making Group Decisions”, LG776, Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs*

One of the first decisions a new group makes is what decision-making style to use during meetings. Often, that decision isn't even really made—it is usually assumed that the classic Roberts Rules of Order should be followed by the club. This is not necessarily the case! Roberts Rules of Order are 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. Then, there is often a call by some, to return to a strict use of some parts of Roberts Rule of Order, even though Roberts Rules weren't especially followed up to that point.

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 work especially well with large groups with many functioning committees that meet separately from the general business meeting where open discussions occur. ***A strict adherence to Roberts Rules with youth is often organizationally and developmentally inappropriate in the first place, and does not facilitate creative thinking, group problem solving, and team development.*** Besides, Roberts Rules of Order is just one of *many* recognized and effective procedures for conducting a meeting.

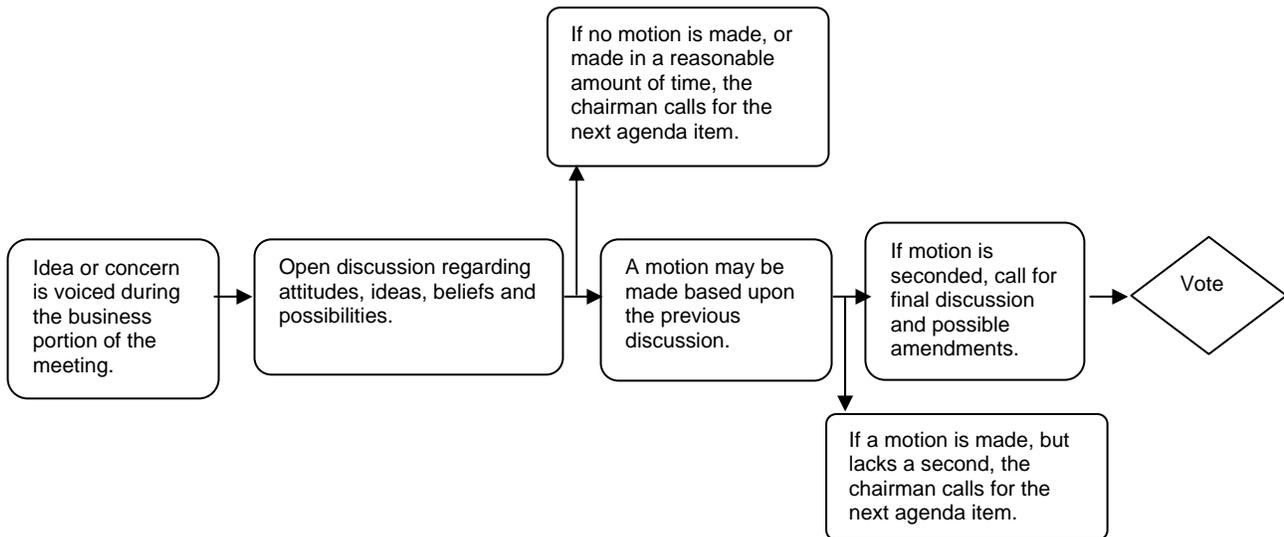
Existing clubs need to review and revisit the process they will use every few years—ideally, at the beginning of **each** 4-H Club year. Often groups end up using an informal procedure that has evolved from Robert's Rules. Though the procedure is flexible, there is general agreement on how to discuss 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. Let's call this “The Missouri 4-H Meeting Method”.

In most cases in our 4-H Clubs, civic organizations and even in most local elected boards, an idea is proposed first. Then, ideas and attitudes are discussed, and *then* a motion is made to formalize the discussion that has already taken place. This approach has organically evolved over time, and seems to be very useful and functional for a group to think together; and in solving problems, while building group consensus and unity along the way.

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. Those skills and habits will serve our members well as they function in other youth organizations and in the community adults.

It is recommended that clubs follow the standard Order of Business published in many 4-H meeting guides. But when it comes to business items or ideas or suggestions that come up, simply use the Missouri 4-H Meeting Method:

### The 4-H Meeting Method decision-making process:



Note: The usual Robert's procedure for making and accepting amendments should be followed after the motion is seconded

Adopting this as the official "Rules of Order" for your club means group leaders and members can concentrate their attention on the problem-solving, decision-making and group dialog skills. 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.
- This formalizes the process already in use by most 4-H Clubs and community organizations.

**Disadvantages:**

- 4-H Members are not exposed to the part of the process described in Roberts Rules of Order, wherein a motion must be placed on the table before discussion can begin.
- The discussion can take a great deal of time on some issues—the responsibility of moving the meeting forward and on track rests with the president of the club.

**Other resources:**

Consensus decision-making: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus\\_decision-making#Criticisms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making#Criticisms)

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