

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR COMMITTEES

“Some look at the world and ask why? I dream of things and ask why not?”

– Robert Kennedy

Parliamentary procedure functions a bit differently within a committee or subgroup than it does for the large group meeting. To serve its purpose effectively, a committee (especially the chairperson) needs to have the following items:

- An up-to-date list of all committee members.
- A copy of the motion or problem which has been referred to the committee for a solution and/or action.
- Copies of all documents and correspondence related to the issue assigned to the committee.
- A report of all the rules, policies, regulations or decisions of the organization which relate to the issue.
- A list of any special instructions given to the committee, if applicable. This might include what exactly is expected of the committee and what action should be taken (discussion, investigation, action, etc.).
- A statement of what powers the committee holds.
- A deadline or set date of implementation for the action plan.

After the committee has agreed upon a recommendation, it should submit a report to the appropriate person(s). This might be the organization’s chairperson, advisor or higher authority. The report, at minimum, should contain the following items:

- Names of all committee members.
- A statement explaining what responsibility was given to the committee.
- A description of the methods and strategies the committee utilized to accomplish the goal.
- A summary of the information that was gathered through these methods and strategies.
- A statement of the committee’s conclusions and findings.
-

The committee's recommended course of action, accompanied by an explanation for that rationale.

- For long reports, a brief summary at the beginning is helpful to those reading the report.

The following guidelines for processing a committee report are recommended:

- The report is usually made by one person (oftentimes, but not necessarily, the chair or recorder). The report, however, is a group effort, so all members of the committee should have a chance to review and revise it before it is submitted.
- Although there is no mandatory form for submission, the report should generally be both written and verbal. It should also be carefully planned and meet high professional standards (typed, checked for spelling and grammar, and so forth).
- The report does not necessarily need to be long, but it should be long enough to present the plan and justify it in a competent, persuasive, logical manner.
- When preparing the report, keep these two goals in mind:
 - To persuade the higher authority to adopt the committee's recommendations.
 - To make this decision easy to reach through a clear, concise report.

The contents of the report may vary depending on who your audience is, how much time is available, the nature of the issue at hand and so on. There are some basic elements which typically should be included in all reports of this nature:

- Executive summary: This summarizes the entire report in less than one page and is generally included in longer reports.
- Preamble: The preamble is an introduction to the report which includes the basic, necessary information—including the name of the committee and its members, the task presented to the committee and a review of the strategies used to accomplish the task.
- Background: This should include background information regarding the task and why it was presented to the committee, as well as a factual summary of the problem (causes, effects, etc.).
- Proposed solution: This portion of the report details the task and the proposed action plan. It should include several elements such as: the objectives and goals of the plan, who is

assigned to which tasks, what resources (time, money, space) will be needed to accomplish the goal and an evaluation of the impact this plan should have.

- Rationale: The committee's arguments for the proposed action plan are included in this section. It explains how the plan will solve the problem or meet the goals established and why it is favorable to other courses of action.
- Recommendation: Finally, the committee should make its formal request for the authority to adopt this plan.

Reference:

Cagle, J.A. (1990). Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. CA State University at Fresno: On-Line.

Related Leader Readers: Parliamentary Procedure

[Leader Readers](#) | [Illini Union](#)