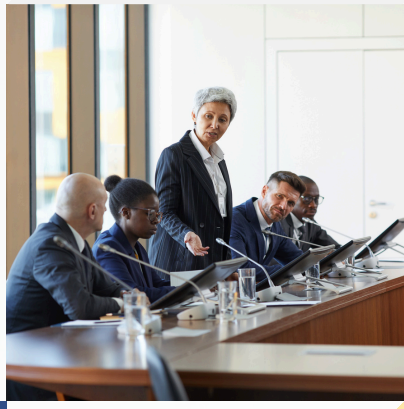
# A Practical Handbook for **Parliamentary Procedure**

American Institute of Parliamentarians















# About AIP

The American Institute of Parliamentarians (AIP) is a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1958 to promote parliamentary procedure. Initially starting with only 48 members, AIP has grown into a dynamic association with active chapters. Members reside in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, and around the world. AIP is distinct in its approach, integrating multiple parliamentary authorities into its educational programs. This approach allows members and students not only to understand common procedures but also to appreciate their historical and theoretical foundations.




03 What Is Parliamentary Procedure?

04 Why Is Parliamentary Procedure Important?

05 The History of Parliamentary Procedure

05 Member Participation

06 Parliamentary Procedure RONR

08 AIPSC Chart of Ranking Motions

09 Rules of Debate and Decorum

09 Standard Order of Business

10 How Motions Are Handled

10 Key Things to Know About Motions

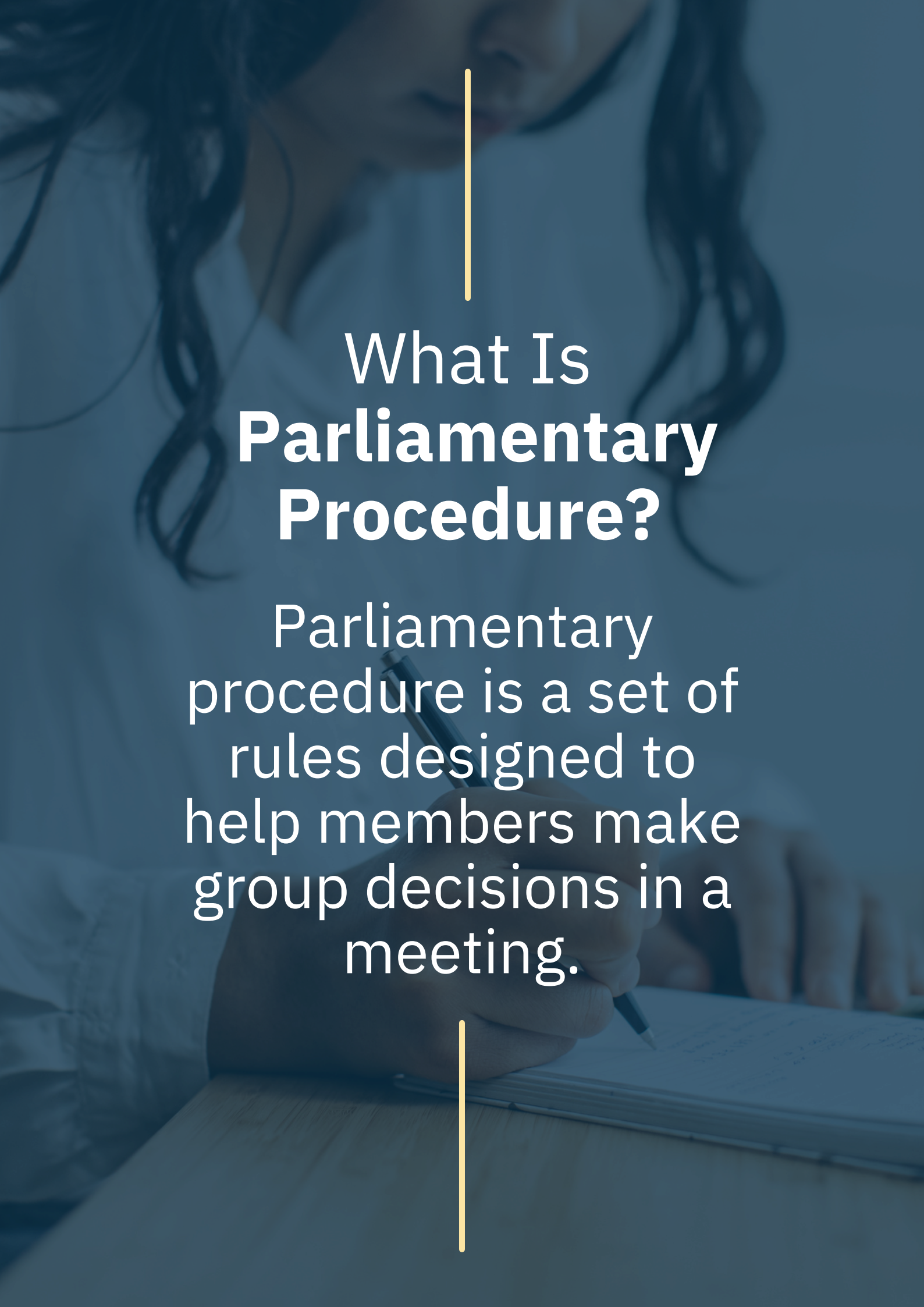
11 Voting Methods

12 Glossary

13 Resources





# What Is **Parliamentary Procedure?**

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules designed to help members make group decisions in a meeting.



# Why Is **Parliamentary Procedure Important?**

Its principles ensure that the majority rules, while protecting the rights of the minority to be heard, and providing courtesy and justice for all.

# The History of **Parliamentary Procedure**

Almost since time began, decisions have been made in groups. Gathering the people of a community together to make decisions on important matters is a custom older than history.

Since ancient times, people have joined together to arrive at group decisions that were binding on everyone. Ancient Rome had its Senate and Councils, Ancient Athens the Assembly, and the Iroquois League its Grand Council.

Group decision-making processes have been refined over the centuries. Today, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)* is the leading guide to parliamentary procedure, valued for its fairness, protection of members' rights, and adaptability to organizations' needs.. However, many professional organizations prefer the *AIP Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (AIPSC)* for its clear language, simplicity, and inclusion of modern practices such as electronic meetings. This brochure will highlight the key similarities and differences between these two authorities.

## Member **Participation**

Members are guaranteed 13 fundamental rights — below are four of the most important.

1. Attend Meetings – Be present to hear and consider motions.
2. Make Motions – Propose ideas or actions for the group to consider.
3. Debate Motions – Share your views and discuss proposals.
4. Vote on Motions – Help make decisions by casting your vote.

# Parliamentary Procedure
# ***Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised***

| MOTION | INTERRUPT | SECOND | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE | RECONSIDER | RONR SECT (12TH ED) | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MOST COMMONLY USED RANKING MOTIONS** | | | | | | | | Make motions going UP this list, and vote on items going DOWN this list. |
| Adjourn | N | Y | N | N | M | N | §21 | Ends the meeting |
| Recess | N | Y | N | Y | M | N | §20 | Allows a short intermission |
| Raise a Question of Privilege | Y | N | N | N | C | N | §19 | Interrupts business to state an urgent request (too cold, too noisy) |
| Previous Question | N | Y | N | N | 2/3 | Y | §16 | Ends debate on the pending question |
| Limit or Extend Limits of Debate | N | Y | N | Y | 2/3 | Y | §15 | Changes the rules of debate |
| Postpone to a Certain Time (Definitely) | N | Y | Y | Y | M | Y | §14 | Delays the motion to a later time |
| Commit (Refer) | N | Y | Y | Y | M | Y | §13 | Sends the motion to a committee for further study or redrafting |
| Amend | N | Y | Y | Y | M | Y | §12 | Changes the wording of a motion |
| **MAIN MOTION** | N | Y | Y | Y | M | Y | §10 | Brings business before the assembly |

**KEY:**
C: Chair decides
D: Demand of a single member
M: Majority vote required
*: Consult RONR 12th edition for further details

# Parliamentary Procedure
# ***Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised***

| MOTION | INTERRUPT | SECOND | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE | RECONSIDER | RONR SECT (12TH ED) | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS** | | | | | | | | These items have no rank but arise out of a pending motion. |
| Suspend the rules of order | N | Y | N | N | 2/3 | N | §25 | Allows an assembly to do something that it otherwise cannot do |
| Objection to consideration of a question | N | Y | N | N | 2/3 Neg | Neg Only | §26 | Avoids an original main motion the assembly does not wish to be considered |
| Point of Order | Y | N | N | N | C | N | §23 | Calls for the rules to be followed |
| Requests and Inquiries | Y | N | N | N | C | N | §33 | Allows members to obtain information or do something that requires permission |
| Appeal | Y | Y | Y | N | M* | Y | §24 | Takes a question from the chair and the assembly makes the decision |
| Division of the assembly | Y | N | N | N | D | N | §29 | Requires a vote to be retaken by rising |
| Division of the question | N | Y | N | Y | M | N | §27 | Separates parts of a motion as if they were distinct questions |
| Motions relating to voting and the polls | N | Y | N | Y | M* | Y | §30 | Allows motions related to form of voting, opening and closing polls |
| **BRING BACK MOTIONS** | | | | | | | | Allow the assembly to consider a question that has previously been disposed of |
| Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted | N* | Y | Y | Y | * | Neg Only | §35 | Allows the assembly to change a previous action |
| Reconsider | Y* | Y | Y* | N | M | N | §37 | Brings back for further consideration a motion that has already been voted on |

# AIPSC Chart of **Ranking Motions**

| BASIC RULES GOVERNING MOTIONS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Order of Precedence**[1] | **CAN INTERRUPT?** | **REQUIRES A SECOND?** | **DEBATABLE?**[2] | **AMENDABLE?** | **VOTE REQUIRED?** | **RENEWABLE?** |
| **PRIVILEGED MOTIONS** | | | | | | |
| 1. Adjourn | No | Yes | No | Yes | Majority | Yes |
| 2. Recess | No | Yes | No | Yes | Majority | Yes |
| 3. Question of privilege | Yes | No | No | No | None | Yes |
| **SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS** | | | | | | |
| 4. Table | No | Yes | No | No | 2/3 | No |
| 5. Close debate & vote immediately | No | Yes | No | Yes | 2/3 | Yes |
| 6. Limit or extend debate | No | Yes | No | Yes | 2/3 | Yes |
| 7. Postpone to a certain time | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority[4] | Yes |
| 8. Refer to committee | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority | Yes |
| 9. Amend | No | Yes | Yes[3] | Yes | Majority | Yes[5] |
| **MAIN MOTIONS** | | | | | | |
| 10. a. The main motion | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority | No |
| b. Specific-purpose main motions | | | | | | |
| Adopt in lieu of | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority | No |
| Amend a previous action | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Same Vote | No |
| Ratify | No | Yes | Yes | No | Same Vote | No |
| Recall from a committee | No | Yes | Yes | No | Majority | Yes |
| Reconsider | Yes[6] | Yes | Yes | No | Majority | No |
| Rescind | No | Yes | Yes | No | Same Vote | No |
| **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS** | | | | | | |
| ***No order of precedence*** | | | | | | |
| **MOTIONS** | | | | | | |
| Appeal | Yes[5] | Yes | Yes | No | Majority | No |
| Suspend the rules | No | Yes | No | No | 2/3 | Yes |
| Consider by paragraph | No | Yes | No | No | Majority | Yes |
| Counted vote | Yes | Yes | No | No | Majority | No |
| **REQUESTS** | | | | | | |
| Point of order | Yes | No | No | No | None | No |
| Inquiries | Yes[7] | No | No | No | None | No |
| Withdraw a motion | Yes | No | No | No | None | No |
| Division of question | No | No | No | No | None | No |
| Division of assembly | Yes | No | No | No | None | No |

[1] Motions are in order only if no motion higher on the list is pending
[2] Debate must always be germane to the pending motion
[3] Is not debatable when applied to an undebatable motion
[4] Postpone and make a special order requires 2/3 vote
[5] At the discretion of the presiding officer
[6] Can interrupt proceedings, but not a speaker
[7] Only if it requires an immediate answer

# Rules of **Debate and Decorum**

### 1 RECOGNITION BY THE CHAIR

A member must be recognized by the chair before speaking. Only one person may speak at a time.

### 2 SPEAKING LIMITS

Under RONR, a member may speak **twice on the same motion**, but not more than **once until everyone else who wishes to speak has had a chance**. Each speech is typically limited to **10 minutes**, unless the group decides otherwise. AIPSC does not limit the time or number of speeches.

### 3 RELEVANCE

Debate must stay **focused on the motion** being discussed. Personal attacks, off-topic comments, or inappropriate language are not allowed.

### 4 ADDRESSING REMARKS

All comments should be **directed to the chair**, not to individual members. This keeps the tone formal and respectful.

### 5 INTERRUPTIONS

Members should **not interrupt** another speaker except for specific, recognized purposes (*e.g.,* a point of order or a question of privilege).

### 6 RESPECT AND COURTESY

Members must remain courteous, avoid inflammatory language, and respect differing opinions. The chair may step in to preserve order and enforce decorum.

### 7 DEBATE ENDS BEFORE VOTING

Debate must be **closed before a vote is taken**, either by consensus or a formal motion to close debate (called "Previous Question" in RONR and “Close Debate and Vote Immediately” in AIPSC).

## Standard Order of Business

- **Call to Order:** The chair officially opens the meeting once a quorum is confirmed.
- **Approval of Minutes:** The group reviews and approves the record of the previous meeting.
- **Reports:** Officers and committees share updates and relevant information.
- **Unfinished Business:** Discussion continues on unresolved items from prior meetings.
- **New Business:** Members introduce and consider new topics or proposals.
- **Announcements:** General information is shared, including upcoming events and other matters of interest.
- **Adjournment:** The meeting is formally concluded.

# How Motions **Are Handled**

### ASK TO SPEAK
Wait for your turn, then address the chair to get permission to speak.

### MAKE YOUR MOTION
Clearly and concisely state your proposal in positive terms.

### GET A SECOND
Another member must agree to consider the motion; otherwise, it doesn't move forward.

### CHAIR REPEATS THE MOTION
Once restated by the chair, the motion belongs to the group.

### DISCUSS THE MOTION
The person who made the motion speaks first, followed by general discussion.

### VOTE ON THE MOTION
When discussion ends, the chair calls for a vote.

### ANNOUNCE THE OUTCOME
The chair shares the result, and the group acts accordingly.

## Key Things to Know About Motions

- **Is It Relevant?** The motion must relate to the topic being discussed and follow the organization's rules.
- **Can It Interrupt?** Only certain urgent motions can interrupt a speaker.
- **Does It Need a Second?** Most motions need another member to support it before discussion begins.
- **Is It Open for Debate?** Many motions can be discussed, but some are decided without debate.
- **Can It Be Changed?** Some motions can be amended (modified) before a vote.
- **What Vote Is Needed?** Most motions pass with a majority vote, but some need a two-thirds vote.
- **Under RONR, Can It Be Reconsidered?** In some cases, members can vote again on a motion if they want to revisit the decision. **Under AIPSC, Can It Be Renewed?** In some cases, a motion can be renewed (made again).

# Voting **Methods**

The way members vote can vary based on the organization's rules and the situation:

**General Consent:** *If no one objects, the motion automatically passes.*



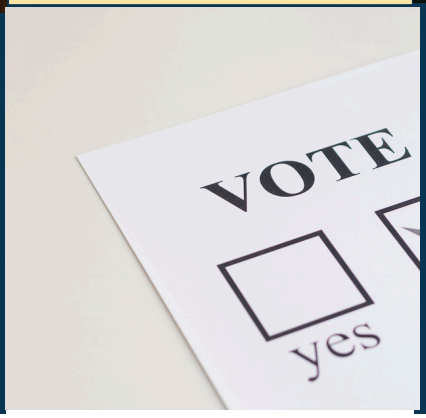
**Voice:** *Members say "aye" or "no."*



**Show of Hands or Stand:** *Members raise hands or stand.*



**Ballot:** *Members vote privately.*




**Roll Call:** *Each member's vote is recorded individually by name.*

# Glossary

**ADJOURN**
To formally end the meeting

**AMEND**
To make changes to a motion

**CHAIR**
The person running the meeting

**COMMITTEE**
A group given a specific task or responsibility

**DEBATE**
Discussion about a motion

**GENERAL (UNANIMOUS) CONSENT**
A motion is approved when no one objects

**MAJORITY**
More than half of the members who vote

**MOTION**
A formal suggestion for the group to consider

**QUORUM**
The minimum number of members needed to hold a valid meeting

**SECOND**
A way to show support for discussing a motion

**VOTING**
How the group makes decisions

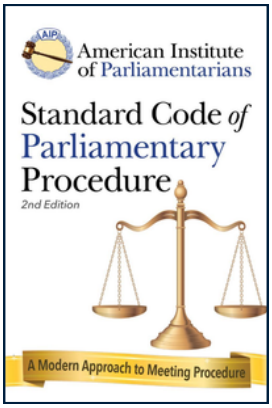


# Resources

AIP provides a range of resources to support the study of parliamentary procedure, including publications, study guides, and lessons to enhance knowledge and skills. Educational programs are available in in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats, and the online learning center offers a self-paced series of four comprehensive courses.

***AIP STANDARD CODE OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE***

It has been over a century since Alice Sturgis began her ground-breaking work reimagining parliamentary procedure. Her Standard Code has been fully updated and re-imagined as the second edition of the *American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*. This updated edition provides new rules related to electronic (virtual) meetings, a new chapter on the art and skill of serving as a presiding officer, and an expanded review of the role of a professional parliamentarian.




**BUY NOW**

**AIP BOOKSTORE**

The AIP Bookstore also sells several other publications designed to further the understanding of parliamentary procedure:

- *AIP Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure Workbook*
- *Fundamentals of Parliamentary Law and Procedure*
- *Teacher's Guide to Using Fundamentals of Parliamentary Law*
- *Comparisons of Parliamentary Authorities*
- *Comparisons of Parliamentary Authorities*
- *How to Be a Parliamentarian*
- *Presiding: You Can Do It!*
- *The Complete Minutes Manual*
- *Parliamentary Study: For AIP Chapters*
- *Here is the Answer! What is the Question? RONR*
- *Here is the Answer! What is the Question? AIPSC*
- *A Study Guide for those Preparing for an AIP Exam*

# Resources

## EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

AIP holds at least educational conferences each year.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Winter Practicum** | The Winter Practicum is a three-day event traditionally held in Las Vega, NV, in January of each year. |
| **Spring Practicum** | The Spring Practicum is a three-day virtual event traditionally held virtually in June of each year. |
| **Presiding Practicum** | This unique, standalone event focuses on the art and science of presiding. It is offered as needed and features plenary content and dedicated sessions to improve the presiding skills of participants. |
| **Annual Session** | The Annual Hybrid Session is held in July or August in a different region of the U.S. or Canada each year. |

## LEARNING CENTER

The American Institute of Parliamentarians is excited to announce the upcoming launch of its new online Learning Center — a dynamic, self-paced educational platform designed to strengthen members' parliamentary skills. This four-course series will include Meeting Management Skills, Participating in a Meeting, Administrative Skills, and Parliamentary Law and Practice, offering flexible, high-quality training to enhance knowledge and confidence in parliamentary procedure.

## ACCREDITATION

For members who wish to advance their parliamentary knowledge and serve as a parliamentarian, AIP offers two levels of accreditation along with a parliamentary procedure teacher certification course.

# Parliamentary Procedure **Drives Action.**

Parliamentary procedure ensures meetings are productive and fair. Following these guidelines allows organizations to function smoothly, ensuring every voice is heard and decisions are made efficiently.

## Get In Touch

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