

# Basic Rules of Order



**NSGEU**  
EDUCATION

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## Statement of Respect

Harassment or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated at NSGEU functions.

Whenever NSGEU members gather, we welcome all peoples of the world. We will not accept any unwelcoming words, actions, or behaviors against our union members.

We accord respect to all persons, regardless of age, political affiliation, religion, including people of colour, women, men, First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, members of ethno-racial groups, people with disabilities, gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgender people, gender diverse persons, and all persons whose first language is not English.

In our diversity we will build solidarity as union members.

We recognize the dignity and worth of all individuals. To protect their rights we confront bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

If you believe you are being harassed or discriminated against, please contact NSGEU Education Officer at [NSGEUEducation@nsgeu.ca](mailto:NSGEUEducation@nsgeu.ca) or call (902)424-4063 or any member of the current NSGEU Executive for immediate assistance.

## Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) People first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

If you have input on the content of these materials, please contact the NSGEU Education department at 902-424-4063, toll free 877-556-7438, or email: [NSGEUeducation@nsgeu.ca](mailto:NSGEUeducation@nsgeu.ca).

## Table of Contents

<b>Basic Rules of Order .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. The Chair .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Making a Motion .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Second a Motion .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Amending a Motion: .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Amending an Amendment .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. Speaking on Motions and Amendments .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Ending Debate .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. Postponing Debate on a Motion – Table or Refer.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9. Point of Information.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10. Point of Order .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>11. Challenging the Chair or Appealing the Ruling of the Chair.....</b>	<b>8</b>



## Basic Rules of Order

The next few pages give you an overview of the rules of order that we use in the NSGEU. Probably not more than once in 20 years will any situation arise at a meeting which will not be covered by the 10 easily-understood rules explained here.

Using these, anyone can participate effectively in local union meetings.

### 1. The Chair

The Chair's role is to move debate forward not to stand in the way.

- Is in charge of keeping order
- Does not participate in debate
- Is not a "rules" fanatic

### 2. Making a Motion

For discussion purposes, and especially for making decisions, it is easiest if someone "puts a motion on the floor."

You do this by raising your hand, and when recognized by the chair, you say, "I move that we..."

You may make a motion when you want the group to make a decision or take some action, for example:

- a) To send a letter
- b) To accept a report
- c) To make a decision to spend money
- d) To schedule a special meeting
- e) To set up an ad hoc committee

NOTE: If you disagree with a motion or an amendment, you do not defeat it by trying to change the sense of the motion through amendments. Instead, you speak against the motion or the amendments, urging your fellow local members to vote against them. If these are defeated, new motions calling for different action may be made or considered.





### 3. Second a Motion

A motion requires someone to “second the motion.” If the motion is not seconded it stops right there and requires no debate. You should only second the motion if you agree with it. There is no point in being the seconder to a motion that no one in the room wants. It is a waste of time to “put a motion on the floor for discussion” that no one in the room actually agrees with! This happens too often, and should be avoided.

### 4. Amending a Motion:

Amendments are offered in the same way as motions. They are introduced to assist in changing, modifying, or completing a motion to make it more acceptable to the members.

You may offer such an amendment when you agree substantially with the motion that has been made but want to make some change before it is adopted: i.e., a motion has been made to hold a special local union meeting, but no date has been specified. You want to be sure the meeting will be held at a time when all members can attend.

After being recognized by the chair you may then amend the motion by saying: “I move to amend the motion to the effect that the special meeting shall be held two weeks from next Monday at 7:30 P.M.”

As with any motion this requires a seconder in order to be debated.

The amendment is debated and voted on BEFORE the main motion is debated and voted on. The chair needs to be very clear about what motion is on the floor and what is being debated. The secretary should make sure they are clear on the wording of the motion and any amendments and should ask for clarification if the intent and wording are not clear. The secretary may be asked to read back the motion being debated, at any time.

### 5. Amending an Amendment

Just as a motion may be amended, an amendment may also be changed in the same way.

As with the first amendment, any or all amendments must relate to the motion.

## 6. Speaking on Motions and Amendments

- When you want to speak at a meeting, you raise your hand, asking the chair for recognition.
- As soon as you are recognized by the chair you may proceed to speak either for or against the motion or amendments that are being considered. You should make it clear whether your remarks are in support of, or against, the motion.
- Motions or amendments are proper only after they have been offered to and accepted by the chair, and have been supported (seconded) by someone in the group. Remember it is efficient and good practice to NEVER second a motion that you do not agree with. If there is no seconder, a motion should not be debated.
- When someone speaks a second time it normally will (or should) trigger the end of the debate.
- When you are recognized and may speak you must either speak for or against the motion (and it should be clear which) or amend or refer or table the motion. You cannot speak for or against the motion and then refer, table or amend.

## 7. Ending Debate

- Sometimes it may feel like debate is not moving forward but going round in circles. If you think there has been enough discussion of any motion or amendment being considered, you may try to close the discussion.
- You do this by getting recognition from the chair after which you say “brother or sister chairperson, I call for the question.”
- If seconded, the chair must put the question to a vote.
- If enough votes are cast for the question, debate on the issue ends and the chair must call for an immediate vote.
- Voting takes place in reverse order. For example, the amendment to the amendment is voted on first. If carried, the amendment as amended is then voted on. Finally, the motion as amended is voted on.

## 8. Postponing Debate on a Motion – Table or Refer

- You can table, or refer a motion in order to postpone debate.
- If you feel that the motion before the meeting should be delayed so that more information can be made available, or for some other reason, you may move a motion to table.
- If seconded and the motion to table passes, the main motion is put aside: no action is taken and the meeting goes on to other business. If the motion to table is defeated, discussion on the main motion continues.
- A motion to table IS NOT DEBATABLE or amendable; and if it is supported by ONE other member, it should be put to an immediate vote by the chair.
- It is helpful if a motion to table has instructions for a committee to review, or an individual to collect more information, before it comes back to a vote. If you just table it, you may find that at the next meeting no one has been instructed to get

information or to check with a venue availability etc. So you should “table with instructions.”

- If you are sending the motion to a committee, or to the officers to reassess, or get information, or to reword it, it is usually called “a motion to refer” and, usually, the motion would refer the motion to a person or group with instructions, i.e., one might refer a motion to the treasurer until the next meeting, who will be expected to cost it and report on whether it is affordable.

## **9. Point of Information**

- If at any time during the meeting you are confused about the business being discussed or if you want the motion more clearly explained, you may rise to ask the chair for a POINT OF INFORMATION. However, you may not interrupt a speaker who has the floor.
- After you are recognized, ask for the explanation you desire.
- With only a few limitations, a point of information is in order at almost any time during a meeting, but can and should only be used to ask for information relevant to the current discussion.

## **10. Point of Order**

- If you disagree with any of the chair’s rulings or if you believe that the person who is speaking is not talking about the business being considered, you may raise a POINT OF ORDER and state your objection to the chair.
- The chair then is required to rule one way or another on your point of order.

## **11. Challenging the Chair or Appealing the Ruling of the Chair**

- If you disagree with a ruling of the chair on a point of order, you may APPEAL THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR.
- After you make such an appeal, it must be supported by at least one other member. If someone supports you, the chair must be turned over to the next highest ranking officer.
- You will then be given an opportunity to state your reasons for believing the chair should be overruled, after which the chair who made the ruling will also have an opportunity to give their reasons for the ruling.
- No one else may participate in this discussion. There is no debate.
- The acting chair will then place your appeal before the group for a vote.
- The group can then, by majority vote, overrule your appeal and uphold the chair, or support your opinion by overruling the chair.
- Whether the chair’s ruling is overturned or upheld, the chair returns to chairing the meeting following the vote.

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