

## How To Run a Refuge Recovery Business Meeting

Rules of order are used around the world to allow organizations to make decisions in a timely and mutually accepted manner. They are designed to promote group unity. They are not the only kind of informal parliamentary procedure, but they are relatively simple and familiar in essence to many people. This document presents a simplified version for use in the business meetings of Refuge Recovery groups and reflects common practice.

Main ideas:

- We gather in a spirit of cooperation to discover our group democratic voice. We need never fear the voice of the group.
- In the spirit of unity and in recognition of the connection with the greater RR sangha, it is necessary that all RR groups adhere to the RR Guiding Principles and the Essential Elements of a RR Group.
- For each discussion, everyone should have the chance to speak once before anyone may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times.
- Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- The members discuss only one thing at a time.

RR Group business meetings are run by the elected RR Group Representative as the business meeting chair. The chair performs an invaluable service by running the business meeting according to the rules of order. The Chair can vote, introduce motions, and participate in discussion. In general, no one should speak without first being recognized by the Chair, and if people start speaking out of turn, the chair will call for order.

The RR Group Recording Secretary takes notes so that they can prepare the official written record of the meeting, called the “minutes.” Clear, accurate minutes are very important – they will be used to keep track of the group’s democratic voice, as well as unfinished business from previous business meetings. The Secretary need not record everything that is said; the minutes are not a transcript. But they should include:

- Officer’s reports, if any were made during the meeting.
- The exact wording of any motions introduced, and their fate ( passed, defeated, referred to committee, or tabled ).
- If motions were referred to committee, make sure the group specifies the duties of the committee and when their report should be delivered to the full business meeting.

If at any time the Secretary is unclear about something, they should ask for clarification immediately. The Secretary can vote, introduce motions, and participate in discussion.

### RR Group Business Meeting Format

RR Group business meetings are run according to the following format:

1. Minutes of the previous business meeting should be read by the Recording Secretary. After they are read, if there are no objections to the content, a motion to accept the minutes should be passed.
2. Officers’ Reports. Group Officers (at minimum the Treasurer) report to the group.
3. Old Business.
  - If there are any reports due from committees, they should be delivered during this phase of the meeting.

- If there are any motions pending from a previous business meeting, they should be taken off the table for consideration at this time.

4. New Business. If any member wishes to bring up a new topic for the consideration of the group, it should be done during this phase.

### Motions

A motion is the topic under discussion (e.g., “I move that we create a new service position for this meeting”). After recognition by the chair, any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table. A main motion requires a second to be considered. A motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely) before a new main motion may be considered.

Once a motion has been introduced and seconded, it “belongs” to the group, not the person who introduced it. Instead of the mover “withdrawing” it, the group should amend it, or move to postpone the motion indefinitely.

To bring a new idea before the group: After recognition by the chair, present your motion by starting “I move that we \_\_\_”. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for discussion, or consideration. If a motion passes, it goes into effect immediately or at a specified time. Defeated motions cannot be reintroduced for 6 months.

To change or add to the wording of a motion under discussion: After recognition by the chair, move to amend the motion by proposing a specific amendment. Most amendments are friendly, arising naturally out of the group’s discussion of the motion, and can be accepted by the original mover. But if the original mover objects, a vote will still amend the original motion. An amendment can completely reword or replace a motion without voting it down.

To recommend more study and/or investigation be given to a motion: Move to refer to a committee. Refers a question to be investigated by a specified group, with a specified purpose, and a specified time to report back to the entire group.

To postpone a motion until some later time: Move to table the motion until a specific time. The motion may be taken from the table after the item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead.

5. To end the meeting: Move to close group business meeting. All pending motions will be tabled until the next group business meeting. This motion takes immediate precedence and is not discussed.

### Quick Guide to Meeting Actions

*WHAT* the members discuss:

If you would like to discuss something - motion

If you would like to change a motion under discussion - amend

*HOW* and *WHEN* a motion is discussed:

If you want to limit discussion on something - limit discussion

If you think people are ready to vote – end discussion

If you want a committee to evaluate the topic and report back – refer to committee

If you want to discuss the topic at another time – table until later in meeting or next meeting

You may *INTERRUPT* a speaker for these reasons only:

To get information about business - point of information

To get information about rules - parliamentary inquiry

If you see a breach of the rules - point of order

## Other Meeting Actions

If you are confused about a procedure being used and want clarification: Without recognition, call for a “point of information.” The Chair will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

If you think the rules of order have been violated: Without recognition, call for a “point of order.” The Chair will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

If you have changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side. “Move to reconsider.” If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

If you are not sure that the Chair has announced the results of a vote correctly. Without being recognized, call for a “division of the house.” At this point a standing vote will be taken.

You want to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting. “Move to rescind.”

## Voting

When voting, General Refuge Recovery business meetings operate on the principle of group democracy. The RR group super-majority voting method requires that 65-70% of the quorum be in favor of a motion for that motion to pass. This is a middle path between a simple majority and unanimity.

In Refuge Recovery, cooperation is assumed, and it is often counterproductive to introduce a main motion before there has been discussion of its subject matter. After every voting member has had a chance to offer input, the intent of the group is usually

clearer, and the chair can be of service by attempting to coalesce what he or she has heard into a coherent motion, and ask if anyone will introduce the motion.

The RR group voting method, combined with limited pre-motion discussion by all voting members present, is the most balanced approach we have found for accomplishing necessary group business while promoting group unity. These methods have been practiced successfully in RR group business meetings, RR Service Committee meetings and RR Service Board meetings since that time.

### Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of members of a deliberative assembly necessary to conduct the business of that group.

Refuge Recovery Group business meeting quorums require that the voting officers of the group plus at least two meeting members are present for voting on any motion. Individual RR groups set any further quorum requirements.

For purposes of initial group creation and election of the first set of group officers this quorum rule can be set aside.