

(SAMPLE) Rules of Order for _____ School Council Meetings

Date reviewed: _____

1. We will assume the good intentions of all members of the School Council.
2. We will address all comments to the Chair, who is to be addressed as *Chair*.
3. We will wait to speak until recognised by the Chair.
4. We will debate and discuss ideas only, and not people. To facilitate this, we will remember to speak to the Chair; even if asking a question of another person; and we will avoid using the names of other members.
5. We will each be allowed to speak for two minutes, twice (2 times) on each issue.
 - We will wait to speak for a second time until everyone has had the opportunity to speak once.
 - We will not speak in response to a question or comment without the express permission of the Chair.
 - We cannot save our time for another issue or transfer it to another person.
6. When necessary, without taking offence, we expect the Chair (or other members of the School Council) to remind us:
 - To stay on topic
 - To not repeat ourselves
 - To stay within the time limit
 - To extend courtesy to all members
7. We will make decisions together, using these processes:
 - Consensus**
 - A topic for decision will be listed on the Agenda
 - The Chair will introduce, or ask the appropriate individual to introduce, the issue to be decided.
 - The Chair will open the floor for comments, concerns or questions.
 - The Chair will summarize the discussion, highlighting areas of agreement with, or proposed changes to the initial issue.
 - The Chair will test the group for agreement and allow for more discussion if needed.
 - The Chair will again test for agreement. If all parties present are in general agreement, and can support the direction, the decision is made and the minutes will reflect this.
 - Vote**
 - A topic for decision will be listed on the Agenda.
 - A motion will be made that clearly defines a proposal related to the topic. (“I move that *clearly defined proposal* ...”).
 - The motion will be seconded.
 - The Chair will state the motion. (“It is moved and seconded...”)
 - The Chair will ask for any comments or discussion (debate) on the motion, starting with the person who made the motion.
 - The Chair will repeat the motion after debate, and will call the question (give direction for the vote).
 - Voting will be by show of hands: in favour or opposed. Anyone is free to abstain from voting, but abstentions will not be recorded.
8. We will support, and not hinder, the Chair in fulfilling his/her duties which include, but are not limited to:
 - Moving the meeting through its agenda in a timely manner
 - Promoting discussion
 - Facilitating group decision-making
 - Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to be fairly heard
 - Ensuring that no voice dominates
 - Avoiding repetition and preventing dysfunction



Tips for Directing the Discussion

The agenda should indicate the start and end time of the meeting, as well as the time allotted for each topic. Ensure there are enough copies for everyone.

The role of the Chair is to ensure the agenda is followed and items accomplished in a timely manner. A large influence on whether or not this will happen is how (or if!) the Chair controls the discussion.

At the beginning of the meeting – introduce yourself, give a brief overview of what to expect, and explain your role is to move things along in order to cover the issues in the time allotted.

Always refer back to the agenda items and time(s) indicated as required.

As Chair, it is necessary to watch the clock, keep the group on topic, and move the discussion(s) along in order to conclude each agenda item.

The following are examples of some issues that may occur during a meeting that hinder progress and what you can do to help the school council move through them.

Action required	Issue indicators	What to do
Move on to the next topic	<p>People are repeating points already made.</p> <p>There are lapses in discussion.</p> <p>Members not speaking to the issue are losing interest.</p> <p>Members are confused about what is being discussed.</p>	<p>Summarize what is being discussed.</p> <p>Ask members if it is an accurate summary.</p> <p>Ask if anyone has anything to add before moving on.</p>
Provide mediation at the table	<p>Members are having difficulty understanding each other, are arguing, or are in conflict at the table.</p>	<p>Paraphrase the viewpoint of each of the parties involved.</p> <p>Clarify with each party that you have correctly interpreted their point.</p> <p>If the members involved seem to have a greater understanding of the issue, suggest further discussion with a time limit, to clarify the points again, toward an agreeable solution.</p> <p>If the members involved still cannot overcome the issue, suggest a meeting after the regular meeting to continue the discussion.</p>
Get back on topic	<p>Members are discussing an issue for longer than necessary.</p> <p>Members are getting off topic while discussing an issue.</p> <p>Members are discussing issues that are not relevant to the school council as a whole.</p>	<p>Interrupt the discussion, or even an individual, if necessary.</p> <p>Remind members about the issue at hand and refer back to the agenda.</p> <p>Suggest a more appropriate venue for some of the important discussion taking place (ie. a separate committee meeting or meeting with the principal).</p>



Tips for Directing the Discussion

“Standard Phrase” Examples (add your own on the lines provided)

Summarize

“So far... we have discussed establishing an extracurricular computer club for the junior high students to help facilitate management of the school’s website, which hasn’t been updated regularly this year. In order to accomplish this, it’s been suggested we need to have a better computer lab. John has suggested that we approach the fundraising society to help cover the cost of new equipment. Does that seem correct? Does anyone have anything to add to this discussion before we move on to discuss additions to the school council plan for next year?”

Paraphrase

“I think what John is saying ... is that he believes we should concentrate on providing input on equipment updates to the fundraising society before we can establish plans for an extracurricular computer club. Is that correct John?”

Interrupt

“These are all great points and valuable to our work, but, as I look at the agenda, I see quite a bit more that we need to cover. Perhaps John and Sara could bring this up with the fundraising society and report back to us at the next meeting?”

Or

“This is an interesting discussion, but I see on the agenda that we need to discuss additions to the school council plan. Perhaps we could table this topic for the next meeting?”



Tips for Directing the Discussion

Reframe

“It is frustrating and concerning that the school’s website hasn’t been updated regularly. Regardless of the cause, the School Council has agreed to try to provide some solutions. We may establish an extracurricular computer club for the junior high students, who could then help with the updating. It’s been suggested that we need better computer equipment before we can do that. Does the School Council wish to explore options related to what is needed and how that could be accomplished?”

Defer

“John, I can appreciate that you are upset about the situation relating to the school’s website. The School Council meeting isn’t the appropriate place to discuss individual staffing concerns. Our principal is in charge of personnel issues, and has assured us that he has handled the situation. It is our role, if we choose it, to help provide solutions that support and enhance student learning. Do you want to assist us in identifying possible solutions?”

Or

“John, I can appreciate that you are upset about the situation relating to the school’s website. The School Council meeting isn’t the place to try to market the software your company represents. Please meet with the principal at another time to discuss the channels you need to access.”

Other Situations



Making and Amending Motions

Making Motions

- All business should be done by first putting a motion on the floor and then discussing it. The reality is that at most school council meetings, the discussion takes place before any motion is put forth. Try to move toward the model of having a motion first. As soon as you realize there may be a motion resulting from the discussion, ask someone to place one on the table and then go from there.
 - ❖ Someone other than the Chair makes the motion
 - ❖ Use precise wording, especially if the motion deals with money. Also try to use positive words; that is, don't make a motion about what you are not going to do.
 - ❖ Mover of the motion must agree with it
 - ❖ For procedural motions (like approving the agenda or passing last month's minutes), just have someone make the motion, second, ask for discussion (likely none), call the vote, and move on.
- Second the motion. Again, someone other than the Chair seconds the motion. Secunder does not have to agree with it; just has to want to discuss it
- State the motion (The Chair states the motion, especially if it is long or complicated, and then, the Chair makes sure everyone knows exactly what the motion means: "if we pass this, it means we will spend \$360 on staff appreciation gifts")
- Debate/discuss the motion
 - ❖ Chair controls discussion. As mentioned, the main discussion often takes place before there is a motion; when this happens, the Chair still controls the debate in the same ways.
 - ❖ The motion can be amended or have other things done to it.
- Vote on the motion. The Chair asks for "all in favor" and for "all opposed."
- State the result
- The Chair says that the motion passed or failed and again says what it means: "Since this motion didn't pass, we will not be participating in the..."

Amending Motions

- There are three ways to amend a motion: to insert words, to strike out words, to both strike out and insert words. If you are trying to do something else to the motion, it's not an amendment and you should probably start from scratch!
- Make sure the amendment is clear: don't rush, let the secretary write it down and say it back, make sure everyone knows what it is, then start discussing it.
- Simple amendments (when an amendment has been made and seconded, discussion on the main motion stops and discussion on the amendment goes ahead; then vote; go back to the main motion, then vote on it)
- Friendly amendments (When an amendment has been made and the Chair feels that everyone agrees with it, he/she can say "I'm seeing heads nodding—is there anyone who disagrees—anyone who doesn't agree with this amendment?") If everyone agrees, then the amendment is made; however, if someone disagrees with the amendment, it stays as a regular amendment and is voted on after discussion.
- Amendments to amendments (this is the limit; much more unusual; debate on the amendment to the amendment, then vote; go back to the amendment, then vote; go back to main motion, then vote)



Other Useful Points

These additional processes, or meeting tools, may be helpful in some circumstances, but likely won't be used very often at your school council meeting.

- Refer (not defer!): In the middle of a debate, if the group realizes that they need more information, the motion can be **referred** to a committee or person with instructions as to what information they should bring back to the school council and when it will be brought back.
- Postpone to a definite time: This can be used when you are running out of time; you can postpone some of the items to the next meeting (but not longer)
- Table (lay on the table): Make this motion when something urgent occurs and needs to be dealt with immediately so you need to stop discussing the motion that is on the table. "I move to table the motion under discussion." The motion that gets tabled must be taken off the table and finished during the same meeting. ("I move to take from the table the motion that was under discussion.") This is very seldom used.
- Recess: Use to take a short break (to let the principal go check something, to let tempers cool down, etc.)
- Withdraw a motion: Once a motion is being debated, the only way that it can be withdrawn is if everyone agrees to withdrawing it (Chair: "Is there any objection to withdrawing this motion?") If even one person objects, debate carries on. If no one objects, the Chair says "the motion is withdrawn by unanimous consent."
- Point of Order: Another member calls this out when they think that the Chair has failed to call a member to order or failed to call an action out of order (for example, if one member calls another a name or if the group is off topic). The Chair will either agree with the point or not. It is most usual for the Chair to agree because few people call a point of order over nothing (which would be a wrong action itself). If the Chair agrees, the person who did the bad behavior is considered to be out of order.

