



General Membership Self-Help

A PTA/PTSA is membership-driven organization. Although elected and appointed leaders generally play a big role in giving a PTA/PTSA direction, the general membership is ultimately in charge. If the members of a PTA/PTSA have concerns with how their general meetings are run—or desire to take their PTA/PTSA into a different direction from that set forth by the elected and appointed leaders of their PTA/PTSAs—the general membership has numerous self-help options available. The following are some of the tools available to PTA/PTSA members seeking to exercise their collective authority effectively.

This is not an exhaustive list and other procedural tools are available. For further guidance, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, in Brief* (3rd ed.) and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (12th ed.) should be consulted. In particularly challenging situations, members may even seek, at their own expense, the support of a floor parliamentarian (those with training from and credentials issued by the National Association of Parliamentarians or the American Institute of Parliamentarians may be particularly useful in ensuring members understand and are able to exercise their rights effectively).

Making a motion during new business

Members can make motions during the new business portion of the meeting. Most motions only require a majority vote.

Presiding Officer	Is there any new business?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to . . . / I move that . . .
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to . . . If adopted we will [summarize impact]. Is there any discussion? There being no further discussion, all those in favor of . . . say <i>aye</i> . Those opposed say <i>no</i> . The <i>ayes</i> have it and we will . . . OR The <i>noes</i> have it and the motion is lost.

Amending a main motion

Before a main motion has been adopted, members can make modifications to it by adding new language, inserting new language, striking language, or striking and inserting language. The motion to amend is debated and voted on before other motions to amend the main motion can be taken up and before the vote on the main motion itself. Amendments require a majority vote.

Presiding Officer	The question is on hosting a cupcake fundraiser in April. Is there any discussion?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to amend the main motion by striking “cupcake” and inserting “baked goods.”
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to amend the main motion by striking “cupcake” and inserting “baked goods.” If adopted, the main motion will be on hosting a baked goods fundraiser in April. Is there any discussion?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I encourage members to vote in favor of this amendment because not everyone likes cupcakes. By having a larger variety of baked goods, we should be able to raise more money.
Presiding Officer	Is there any further discussion? There being no further discussion, the question is on amending the main motion by striking “cupcake” and inserting “baked goods.” If adopted the main motion will be on hosting a baked goods fundraiser in April. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still trying to vote? There are 80 in favor of the motion to amend and 15 against. The motion to amend passes. The question is now on hosting a baked goods fundraiser in April. Is there any discussion? There being no further discussion, the question is on hosting a baked goods fundraiser in April. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still trying to vote?

	There are 99 in favor of the main motion and 1 against. The motion passes and we will hold a baked goods fundraiser in April.
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Amending something previously adopted

If something has been previously adopted, it can be amended through a main motion. If notice was given of the intent to make the motion (e.g., by orally giving notice at the previous meeting), then only a majority vote is required. Otherwise, either a two-thirds vote or a vote of the majority of the entire membership is required.

Presiding Officer	Is there any new business?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	Consistent with notice given at the last meeting, I move to amend the previously adopted motion on holding a baked goods fundraiser in April by striking “April” and inserting “May.”
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to amend the previously adopted motion on holding a baked goods fundraiser in April by striking “April” and inserting “May.” If adopted, we will hold a baked goods fundraiser in May. Is there any discussion? There being no further discussion, the question is on amending the previously adopted motion on holding a baked goods fundraiser in April by striking “April” and inserting “May.” Notice of this motion was given and only a majority vote is required. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still trying to vote? There are 60 in favor of the motion to amend and 40 against. The motion to amend passes and we will hold a baked goods fundraiser in May.

Amending the agenda

Members can amend the agenda either before or after it has been adopted. Before adoption, amending the agenda requires only a simple majority vote. After the agenda has been adopted, it can be amended with a two-thirds vote, a vote of the majority of the entire membership, or unanimous consent.

Presiding Officer	The question is on adopting the agenda. Is there any discussion?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.

Member A	I move to amend the agenda by . . . [e.g., striking out the time limits, adding a motion to discuss]
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to amend the agenda by . . . If adopted the agenda will be amended by [summarize impact]. Is there any discussion?

Extending debate on a pending question

If the time for debate on a pending question has expired, the members can, with a two-thirds vote, extend the time for debate. This question is not debatable but can be amended.

Presiding Officer	The time for considering the main motion has expired and we will take a vote on whether to adopt the main motion.
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	For what purpose does the member seek recognition?
Member A	I want to move to extend the time for debate.
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized to make the motion to extend debate.
Member A	I move to extend debate another 10 minutes.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to extend debate another 10 minutes. If adopted, we will have another 10 minutes of debate. Although not debatable, this question is amendable. Are there any amendments? There being no amendments, the question is on extending debate another 10 minutes. If adopted, we will have another 10 minutes of debate. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still trying to vote? There are ___ in favor of the motion to extend debate and ___ against. There being two-thirds in favor, we will have another 10 minutes of debate. OR There being fewer than two-thirds in favor, the motion is lost. The current question is on . . . Time for debate has expired and we will now vote.

Previous question (closing debate)

If a pending question is pending and members are ready to vote, then, when the floor is open, a member can seek recognition and, once recognized, move the previous question and end debate on the pending question or (if moved for more than one pending question) on a series of pending questions. This question is not debatable, but because it affects the rights of members to speak in debate, it requires a two-thirds vote.

Presiding Officer	The question is on amending the main motion by . . . Is there any further discussion?
Member A	Mr./Madam president!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move the previous question to close debate on the motion to amend, the main motion, and any intervening motions.
Member B	Second
Presiding Officer	The previous question on the motion to amend, the main motion, and any intervening motions is moved and seconded. If adopted, then we will close debate vote on each of these motions, beginning with the pending motion to amend. The question is on ordering the previous question. Vote in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote? There are ____ in favor of ordering the previous question and ____ opposed to ordering the previous question. There are two thirds in the affirmative and the previous question is ordered on . . . The question is now on amending the main motion by . . . If adopted the main motion will read . . . Vote in the poll. OR There are fewer than two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion for the previous question is lost. The question is on amending the main motion by . . . Is there any further discussion?

Ordering a vote by counted vote, ballot, or roll call

Members can order that a vote be made more accurate (e.g., through a counted vote), anonymous (through a ballot vote), or public (through a roll call vote). The question on how to vote is not debatable but can be amended (e.g., if it is moved to order a ballot vote, an amendment to strike “ballot” and insert “roll call” is in order).

Presiding Officer	The question is on . . . All those in favor say <i>aye</i> . Those opposed say <i>no</i> .
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	The <i>ayes</i> have it and we will . . .
Member A	Mr./Madam President!
Presiding Officer	For what purpose does Member A seek recognition?
Member A	I want to move to order a roll call vote on the question.
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to order a roll call vote on the question just voted on.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<p>It is moved and seconded to order a roll call vote on the question of . . . The question of ordering a roll call vote is not amendable but not debatable.</p> <p>Are there any amendments?</p> <p>The question is on ordering a roll call vote on the question of . . . If ordered, we will take a roll call vote.</p> <p>All those in favor of ordering a roll call vote say <i>aye</i>. All opposed say <i>no</i>.</p> <p>The <i>ayes</i> have it and we will take a roll call vote.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>The <i>noes</i> have it and the motion is lost. With respect to the question on . . . The <i>ayes</i> have it and we will . . .</p>

Parliamentary inquiry

If members are unsure about what their rights are, they can seek an opinion from the chair. This may lead to a consultation with the parliamentarian, who may be asked to provide an explanation to the members. Responses to parliamentary inquiries are just opinions and they cannot be appealed.

Member A	Mr./Madam president! I have a parliamentary inquiry.
Presiding Officer	Member A will state her parliamentary inquiry.
Member A	How can we put the pending motion aside temporarily and bring it back up later in the meeting?
Presiding Officer	<p>A member can move to postpone the pending motion until a particular point in the meeting. This motion would be subject to limited debate on the merits of postponing the pending motion. We would then take the motion back up once we reach that point in the meeting.</p> <p>Alternatively, if there is interrupting business that the membership would like to take up, a motion can be made to lay the pending motion on the table. This is not a debatable motion although it requires a majority vote. After the interrupting business is disposed of, it would be in order to take the motion from the table. This is also an undebatable motion that requires a majority vote.</p>

Point of order

If the presiding officer is making *procedural* errors that effect the rights of the members, a point of order can be called. The presiding officer's ruling on the point of order is appealable, meaning that the members can overrule the ruling and substitute their own collective ruling.

Member A	I move the previous question.
Presiding Officer	The previous question has been called for and we will vote on the main motion. <i>NOTE: This is an erroneous response. Members generally cannot rely on outside intervention to ensure the rules of procedure are applied properly and should be prepared to enforce the rules.</i>
Member B	Point of order!
Presiding Officer	Member B will state his point of order.
Member B	The previous question must be seconded and approved by a two-thirds vote for it to be ordered.
Presiding Officer	The point of order is well taken. The previous question has been moved. Is there a second? <i>No one second the motion in this scenario.</i> There being no second, the previous question will not be ordered. The current question is on . . . Is there any discussion?

Appeal

If members disagree with the presiding officer's ruling on a point of order, the members can appeal the ruling. In some cases this motion is debatable, in which case every member is allowed to speak at most once to the appeal, except for the presiding officer who has the right to speak twice. If the motion is not debatable, then the presiding officer can give the reasons for the appealed ruling, but no other member is allowed to speak in debate. A majority vote *against* sustaining the decision of the presiding officer is required to overrule the presiding officer's ruling. Thus, a tie vote sustains the presiding officer's ruling.

Presiding Officer	The time for debate has expired and we will vote on the main question.
Member A	Mr./Madam President.
Presiding Officer	For what purpose does Member A seek recognition?
Member A	I want to move to extend debate.
Presiding Officer	The time for debate has expired and the member will not be recognized.
Member A	Point of order!
Presiding Officer	Member A will state his point of order.
Member A	When the time for debate has expired, a member can make a timely motion to extend debate. I sought recognition in a timely manner and should be recognized to make my motion.

Presiding Officer	The point of order is not well taken, and we will vote on the main question. <i>NOTE: This is an erroneous ruling. Members generally cannot rely on outside intervention to ensure the rules of procedure are applied properly and should be prepared to enforce the rules.</i>
Member A	I appeal from the decision of the chair!
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	The decision of the chair is appealed from. The question is “shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of the general membership?” Vote in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote? There are ____ in favor of sustaining the chair’s decision and ____ opposed to sustaining the chair’s decision. Those in favor of sustaining the chair’s decision have it and the chair’s decision is the decision of the general membership. The question is on Vote in the poll. OR There are a majority opposed to sustaining the chair’s decision and the chair’s decision is not sustained. Member A is recognized.

Putting the question on an improperly ignored motion

Under rare circumstances in which a chair improperly ignores a non-dilatory motion (rather than, for example, issuing an appealable ruling that the motion is out of order), a member can put the ignored motion to a vote without debate after having raised at least three points of order.

Presiding Officer	The time for debate has expired and we will now vote on the pending question.
Member A	Mr./Madam president.
Presiding Officer	<i>Ignoring the member.</i> The question is on . . .
Member A	Mr./Madam president, I rise to move to extend debate.
Presiding Officer	The time for debate has expired and we are voting.
Member A	Mr. Madam president, I rise to a point of order.
Presiding Officer	<i>Ignoring the member.</i> The question is on . . .
Member A	Point of order, a member has the right to move to extend debate when the time for debate has expired.
Presiding Officer	<i>Continuing to ignore the member.</i>
Member A	Point of order, a member has the right to move to extend debate when the time for debate has expired.

Presiding Officer	<i>Continuing to ignore the member.</i>
Member A	Point of order, a member has the right to move to extend debate when the time for debate has expired.
Presiding Officer	<i>Continuing to ignore the member.</i>
Member A	I move to extend debate by 10 minutes.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<i>Continuing to ignore the member.</i>
Member A	It is moved and seconded to extend debate by 10 minutes. This motion requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor raise your hands. Put your hands down. All those opposed raise your hands. Put your hands down. There being two-thirds in favor, those in the affirmative have it and debate is extended by 10 minutes. OR There being fewer than two-thirds in favor, the motion is lost.

Questioning quorum

If it is unclear that a quorum is present (i.e., that enough members are present to conduct business), then the absence of a quorum can be questioned.

Member A	Point of order!
Presiding Officer	Member A will state his point of order.
Member A	There may be an absence of a quorum.
Presiding Officer	The point of order is well taken. The secretary will have each attendee identify him or herself as a member or guest, and the secretary will provide a count of members and guests.
Secretary	<i>After verifying who in attendance are members and who are guests.</i> There are ___ members and ___ guests in attendance.
Presiding Officer	There are ___ members in attendance. There being at least ___ members in attendance we have a quorum. OR There being fewer than ___ members in attendance, we do not have a quorum. Any business transacted in the absence of a quorum is null and void. Even in the absence of a quorum, it is in order to set a time and date for continuing the meeting, to adjourn, to recess, or to take measures to obtain a quorum.

Suspend the rules

If rules of order are getting in the way of something the members would like to do or are being used as a cudgel rather than as a tool for expediting business, the rules can be suspended. Suspending the rules is not debatable, but it requires a two-thirds vote.

Presiding Officer	Is there any new business?
Member A	Mr./Madam president.
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to reconsider the question on adopting the budget taken earlier in this meeting.
Presiding Officer	Did you vote on the prevailing side when that vote was taken?
Member A	I did not.
Presiding Officer	Only a member who voted on the prevailing side can move for reconsideration. Thus, the motion to reconsider is out of order.
Presiding Officer	Is there any new business?
Member A	Mr./Madam President.
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to suspend the rules and reconsider the question on adopting the budget.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<p>It is moved and seconded to suspend the rules and reconsider the question on adopting the budget. If adopted, we will take up the question again on adopting the budget. This motion is not debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote?</p> <p>There are ____ in favor of suspending the rules and reconsidering the question on adopting the budget and ____ opposed.</p> <p>There are two thirds in the affirmative and we will reconsider the question on adopting the budget. The question is on adopting the budget. Is there any discussion?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>There are fewer than two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion is lost. Is there any new business?</p>

Question of privilege

Members can raise questions relating to privileges of the assembly as a whole, or questions of personal privilege. The presiding officer rules on whether the question is important enough to consider, although the ruling on a question' importance can be appealed. If admitted for consideration, the presiding officer can either seek to remedy the situation immediately or submit the matter to the members for a decision.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair! I rise to a question of privilege affecting the members.
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.

Member A	We should have full chat functionality enabled so that we can converse with each other or with the body as a whole through chat.
Presiding Officer	<p>This is an important question—one that should be decided on by the members. The question is on whether to enable full chat functionality. This is not a main motion and it is not debatable. The question is on enabling full chat functionality. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote?</p> <p>There are ____ in favor of enabling full chat functionality and ____ opposed.</p> <p>There are a majority in favor of enabling full chat functionality and the motion passes. We will enable full chat functionality.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Those opposed have it and the motion is lost.</p>

Recess

Members can seek to pause the meeting temporarily by calling for a recess. This motion is not debatable (although a brief explanation can be allowed) and it requires a majority.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move for a five minute recess so members can log out and log back into the meeting to ensure that chat is enabled for everyone.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<p>It is moved and seconded to recess for five minutes. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote?</p> <p>There are ____ in favor of taking a five minute recess and ____ opposed.</p> <p>There are a majority in favor of taking a five minute recess. It is currently 6:30 P.M., we will resume the meeting at 6:35 P.M.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Those opposed have it and the motion is lost.</p>

Inviting a temporary presiding officer

If members believe that someone else should preside at the meeting, including, for example, a professional presiding officer (who does not have to be a member), the members can do so with a majority vote if the president and vice presidents do not object. If there is an objection from the president or a vice president, then the members can suspend the rules and authorize a temporary appointment, potentially for the entire meeting, of a temporary presiding officer, even over the objection of the president or a vice president.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to invite _____ to serve as temporary presiding officer.
Member B	Second!
Vice President	I object!
Presiding Officer	The motion to invite _____ to serve as temporary presiding officer is objected to by a vice president, and therefore the motion will not be considered.
Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to suspend the rules and appoint _____ to serve as temporary presiding officer for the duration of this meeting.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<p>It is moved and seconded to appoint _____ to serve as temporary presiding officer for the duration of this meeting. This is not a debatable motion and it requires a two-thirds vote. Vote now in the poll. Is there anyone still seeking to vote?</p> <p>There are ____ in favor of suspending the rules and appointing _____ to serve as temporary presiding officer for the duration of this meeting and ____ opposed.</p> <p>There are two-thirds in the affirmative and _____ will serve as temporary presiding officer for the duration of this meeting. [Hands control of the meeting to the temporary presiding officer.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>There are fewer than two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion is lost.</p>

Censuring leaders

Members seeking to express strong disapproval of actions or decisions of elected or appointed leaders can move to censure such leaders. This motion is debatable and requires a majority vote. Other than being documented in the minutes, adoption of this motion does not have any substantive effect. That is, it does not result in the censured leader(s) being removed from office or change any actions taken or decisions made.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to censure that chair of the International Student Services Committee for failing to hold the International Music Festival last month.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	It is moved and seconded to censure the chair of the International Student Services Committee for failing to hold the International Music Festival last month.

	Is there any discussion?
Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	The International Music Festival is a long-standing tradition at our school. We held it 12 years in a row before this year. To fail to hold it this year is outrageous.
Presiding Officer	Is there any further discussion?
Chair of International Student Services Committee	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	The chair of the International Student Services Committee is recognized.
Chair of International Student Services Committee	Participation in the International Music Festival declined significantly during the last three years. We only had two students interested in performing this year. Moreover, the budget that was allocated to the International Student Services Committee was significantly smaller than it was last year. The cost of hosting another International Music Festival could not have been recouped through ticket sales, which would have harmed other services we provide. Therefore, I oppose this motion.
Presiding Officer	<p>Is there any further discussion?</p> <p>There being no further discussion, the question is on censuring the chair of the International Student Services Committee for failing to hold the International Music Festival last month.</p> <p>All those in favor of the motion to censure say <i>aye</i>.</p> <p>All those opposed say <i>no</i>.</p> <p>The <i>ayes</i> have it and the chair of the International Student Services Committee is censured.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>The <i>noes</i> have it and the motion is lost.</p>

Removing officers

Because Virginia PTA/PTSA local unit bylaws state that “Officers shall serve for a term of either one (1) or two (2) year(s) *or until their successors are elected*” (Virginia PTA/PTSA local unit bylaws, Art. 5, Sec. 5 (emphasis added), members have the right to remove officers with or without cause.¹ This motion requires a two-thirds vote, a majority vote if previous notice had been given, or a majority of the entire

¹ The executive board also has the authority to remove an officer on the executive board, but only if the individual ceases “to meet the qualifications or fulfill the duties of the position.” Virginia PTA/PTSA local unit bylaws, Art. 8, Sec. 5. This authority does not detract from the broader authority of the general membership to remove an officer with or without cause.

membership. Notice is particularly desirable if the members would like to immediately elect a replacement to fill the position if the position is vacated as notice is generally a requirement when holding an election to fill an office (such notice should indicate the intent to both remove an officer and hold an election to fill the vacancy). If the motion is directed to removing the presiding officer, then the presiding officer should hand control of the meeting to someone else during the debate and vote as the presiding officer cannot be expected to preside impartially with respect to a question directed at him or herself.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I move to vacate the office of _____.
Member B	Second!
Presiding Officer	<p>It is moved and seconded to vacate the office of _____. No notice was given that the motion was going to be made and there are not enough members present for a majority of the membership to pass this motion. Thus, this motion requires a two-thirds vote.</p> <p>Is there any discussion?</p> <p>There being no discussion, the question is on vacating the office of _____. Vote now in the poll.</p> <p>There are ___ in favor of vacating the office of _____ and ___ opposed.</p> <p>There are two thirds in the affirmative and the office of _____ is vacated. We will hold an election at the next meeting to fill the office of _____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>There are fewer than two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion is lost.</p>

Giving notice

For some motions, such as removing an officer and holding an election or amending something previously adopted, the vote required when notice is given differs from the vote required when no notice is given. Members can give notice orally at the preceding meeting.

Member A	Mr./Madam Chair!
Presiding Officer	Member A is recognized.
Member A	I give notice that at the next meeting I will move to amend the budget by . . .
Presiding Officer	Notice has been given that at the next meeting a motion will be made to amend the budget by . . .

This guidance document is not a replacement for Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures.