

# Learning about Robert's Rules of Order

## Why do we use it? Who is Robert? Is there another way?



Have you ever wondered why we use Robert's Rules of Order? Is there another option? Who is Robert? Why do we need to follow parliamentary procedures at a meeting? These are questions I have, and I am sure many others have wondered too.

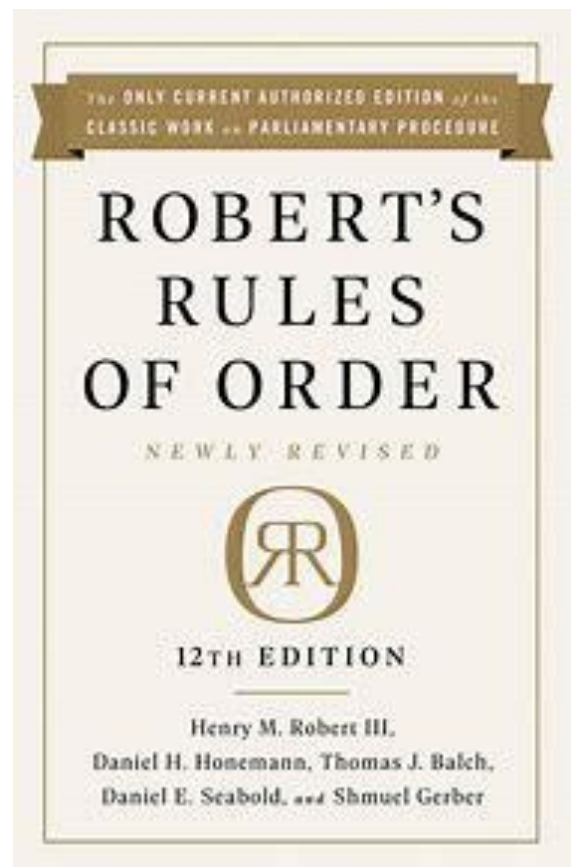
First, who was Robert? U.S. Army officer Henry Martyn Robert was born in South Carolina on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1837. He was raised in Ohio because his father was opposed to slavery. He attended West Point and graduated in 1857, 4<sup>th</sup> in his class as a military engineer.

Why did he create a book about parliamentary procedures? He attended a church meeting and there was a disagreement which led the meeting to get out of hand. He decided he would learn more about parliamentary procedure before attending another meeting. During his research, he created and published Robert's Rules of Order in 1876.

He researched many other publications including the Jefferson Manual. Thomas Jefferson created a procedural book in 1801 which was intended for the US House of Representatives use. His book has been adapted from this manual and recreated to have order within a meeting. An association has been formed to continue to update his publication. It is now in its 12<sup>th</sup> edition, which came out in September 2020.

What other options are there? The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure and Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure are other options to choose from. The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure was first published in 1950 by Alice Sturgis. Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure was first published in 1948 by George Demeter. Both books are still used but for specific types of organizations. Twenty years ago, a poll was given, and the results stated that 90% used Robert's Rules of Order, where the other two leading publications combined were 10%.

His grandson created a version for people to learn about parliamentary procedure who are new to meeting rules, In Brief Edition of Robert's Rules. They also have on their website



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“Official Interpretations and a Question and Answer Forum” if you have questions and need more info. Did you know that in June of 2020, they came out with rules specific to the pandemic? And then in the newest edition, there is a section on virtual meetings?

Why do we need parliamentary procedure? Without rules, we would have no order. Everyone has a different opinion and interpret things differently. That is what makes us unique. But there must be a set of rules that we follow to make our meetings and our clubs run smoothly. So, by coming together and agreeing, we can adapt rules from the Robert’s Rules of Order manual for our Bylaws and Standing Rules. By adhering to them, we can be in harmony.

Why do we use Robert’s Rules of Order? Since, the majority of organizations have chosen this manual, we did too. Just remember, if you have any questions please feel free to reach out to us.

*Beth Heiserman & Mele Spencer, 2020-2022 District Bylaws Committee Chairs*

