

East's Guide for Aspiring Presiding Officers

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The complete all-in-one how-to guide for successfully presiding in Legislative Debate. Includes mock dialogue, reminders along the way, and footnotes for the advanced PO.

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Necessary Supplies

A digital timer, not a phone or iPod.

Amendment Forms (3)

Precedence Charts (10)

- One to keep track of speeches.
- One to keep track of questions.
- Two for your clerk.

Table of Motions (1)

Student Congress Manual (1), highlighted and/or flagged.

Extra dockets (2), in case someone doesn't have theirs

Extra pens (2), in case someone doesn't have theirs

Optional supplies

An extra gavel

Robert's Rules of Order (available at Tattered Cover, paperback)

US Constitution, pocket sized (available from most US History)

Between arrival and your election for PO

Make friends. Remember, this is Student Congress, and you are a politician.

Inquire into specific tournament rules. Ask questions to tournament officials, like:

- Will precedence carry over between sessions?
- Will presiding count for precedence?
- When will we vote on PM POs?
- What will the PO election look like: speeches, or trial period?

Before you run for PO

Make sure you have a clerk lined up.

Make sure someone will nominate you.

Make sure you are making a quality strategic decision.

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If there is a speech-based election...

Use good eye contact.
Brevity trumps excess.
Humor is always the best medicine.
Talk about how fast you will run the chamber.

If there is a trial period election...

Be sure you are nominated first. This way, you can set the ground rules for debate highest by showing your mastery of the hardest part of presiding: opening the session.

To begin as PO

Thank the chamber for electing you. Move around the room to get comfortable, write your name on the board, and make a space for your clerk. Here we go!

“As your presiding officer today, I would like to call this sessions to order”

Bang

“Before we begin I would like to go over my time signals. All speeches are three minutes long.”

“At one minute left, I will give you one tap.”

Bang

“At thirty seconds left, I will give you two taps.”

Bang Bang

“When your time reaches three minutes, I will give you three taps”

Bang Bang Bang

“I will start gaveling you down after the ten-second grace period. Do not abuse this grace period”

“As per the new NFL Congress Rules, the authorship or sponsorship speaker AND the first negative speaker must yield to a mandatory two minute questioning period.”

“Per NFL Rules, I will pick speakers based on precedence, than recency. Before recency is established, I will pick speakers based on the number of questions asked in cross-examination.

“Do you have any questions for me?”

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Preliminary Motions

“Seeing no questions, are there any motions on the floor at this time?”

A motion is made, seconded by someone, and then the PO must state the motion. Then you vote on it. *The vote can be voice vote!* This is more fun and people like it!

- **Suspension of the rules** requires a second and $2/3^{\text{rds}}$ vote of the total number of representatives. This motion includes:
 - Unlimited personal privilege/Open chamber
 - “It has been moved and seconded for unlimited personal privilege. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay.”
 - Letting the clerk only read the title of the bill
 - “It has been moved and seconded to suspend the rules to allow the clerk to only read the title of the bill. All in favor please say aye. All opposed say nay”
 - Letting the speakers pick the questions (advanced POs should frown on this).
 - “It has been moved and seconded to suspend the rules to allow the speakers to pick their own questioners. All in favor please say aye. All opposed say nay”
- **Motion to reorder docket/open docket** must be seconded and passed by $2/3^{\text{rds}}$ of the total number of representatives. If passed, congress goes into a grey zone (technically, a committee of the whole...)
 - “The first docket order will be the natural order” Write that option on the board.
 - “Are there any other proposed docket orders?” They need a second, and then get written on the board.
 - After you are done getting orders, you are required to vote. A majority is needed to pass an order.¹
 - Whichever docket order passes should be written on the board.

¹ If a plurality occurs (meaning no one option has a simple majority), then the lowest vote getter is eliminated.

In the case of a tie for lowest vote getter, the bottom two may be eliminated if and only if the sum of their votes is less than the next highest option.

If this is not the case, there needs to be a runoff between the bottom two vote getters. The loser is eliminated. In a tie vote, both are eliminated. (See new NFL Congress Manual, nflonline.org)

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Starting Speeches

"Seeing no more motions, we are in line for the main motion"

"Will the clerk please read the title of Bill/Resolution X" (your first legislation).

"Is there an author or one so designated?"

If not... "Seeing none, is there a sponsor?"

After you choose someone... "Representative (so-and-so), you have the floor"

Be sure to write down the name of the speaker and questioners on your precedence chart.

Give fair and confident time signals.

When the speech is over, say "Time on that speech was X minutes and X seconds. Questioners, please raise your placards." If your chamber allows it, call on questioners, in an equitable way.²

After questioning is done (2 minutes on the auth/spons and first neg!), say "Thank you very much Rep. so-and-so, you may take your seat"

"Seeing as that was a authorship/sponsorship speech, we are now in line for a speech in negation"

Now is the time of judgment. Using your system of precedence, recency, and questions, you must choose the next speaker. In other words, if precedence ties, go to recency. If recency ties, go to questions. When questions ties, go to geography.

"Rep. so-and-so, you have the floor"

² Note that time on questions is always two minute on the authorship/sponsorship and the first neg. After that time is one minute, unless the speaker does not yield, or unless a motion suspends time limits on that speech. This type of motion only works on a speech by speech basis, meaning that you cannot move to eliminate questioning for the rest of the session.

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Continuing Debate

Repeat basic format, and call for motions after negative speeches.³

“Are there any incidental or subsidiary motions at this time?”

A motion to **table** is almost always out of order.⁴

A motion to **suspend the rules** requires a 2/3^{rds} vote.

A motion to **previous question** also requires a 2/3^{rds} vote. After it passes,

“The previous question has been called. Will the clerk please read the title of Bill/Resolution X?”

“The question is on the adoption of Bill/Resolution X. All in favor please raise your placards”

Stand up to count their votes here.

“All opposed” “All abstain”

“By a vote of __ for, __ against, and __ abstaining, the bill/resolution passes/fails.”

Bang

“Are there any motions at this time?”

Ending a Session

A motion to adjourn will end the session correctly. A recess only temporarily halts debate, whereas adjourn is final.⁵

“The session will take a ten minute recess and reconvene promptly at...”

Bang

“The session will stand adjourned”

Bang

³ Motions are allowed whenever someone is not speaking, not just after negative speeches. See Tammie Peters, Most Commonly Misunderstood Parts of Parliamentary Procedure, *the Rostrum*, available at <<http://www.uvm.edu/~debate/NFL/rostrumlib/congresspeters0297.pdf>>.

⁴ It should only be used when congress has a pressing need to debate the bill later in the session, ie, the author is out of the room, or the PO is the author. 99% this motion is out of order

⁵ The more advanced motion in this situation is “call for the orders of the day,” which is an all-inclusive mandatory motion that includes previous question on current legislation, previous question on tabled legislation, and adjournment at a fixed time. It non-suspendable and often required by the tournament.

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# of votes	Majority	2/3 rd s	1/3 rd
15	8	10	5
16	9	11	6
17	9	12	6
18	10	12	6
19	10	13	7
20	11	14	7
21	11	14	7
22	12	15	8
23	12	16	8
24	13	16	8
25	13	17	9
26	14	18	9
27	14	18	9
28	15	19	10
29	15	20	10
30	16	20	10
31	16	21	11
32	17	22	11