

# What Are the Duties of the Person Running the Meeting?

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Newly elected presidents, board chairs, or mayors are sometimes expected to start running their meetings with little or no training in meeting procedure. Instead, it is assumed that they have “picked it up” as they attended earlier meetings of the group. While experience teaches us much, a little study can make a large difference and produce far better meetings.

We recommend reviewing the duties given by parliamentary law to the presiding officer (person running the meeting), and keeping this list handy. It’s important to know what your responsibilities are—and what you are not responsible for. Above all, your role is to serve the group and assist it to make up its own mind. You are the facilitator, not the dictator.

*Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 11th edition, lists the following on pp. 449-450 as the principal duties of the presiding officer of an assembly (group):

1. To open the meeting at the appointed time by taking the chair and calling the meeting to order, having ascertained that a quorum is present.
2. To announce in proper sequence the business that comes before the assembly or becomes in order in accordance with the prescribed order of business, agenda, or program, and with existing orders of the day.
3. To recognize members who are entitled to the floor.
4. To state and to put to vote all questions that legitimately come before the assembly as motions or that otherwise arise in the course of proceedings (except questions that relate to the presiding officer himself in the manner noted below), and to announce the result of each vote; or, if a motion that is not in order is made, to rule it out of order.
5. To protect the assembly from obviously dilatory motions by refusing to recognize them.
6. To enforce the rules relating to debate and those relating to order and decorum within the



assembly.

7. To expedite business in every way compatible with the rights of members.
8. To decide all questions of order subject to appeal – unless, when in doubt, the presiding officer prefers initially to submit such a question to the assembly for decision.
9. To respond to inquiries of members relating to parliamentary procedure or factual information bearing on the business of the assembly.
10. To authenticate by his or her signature, when necessary, all acts, orders, and proceedings of the assembly.
11. To declare the meeting adjourned when the assembly so votes or —where applicable— at the time prescribed in the program, or at any time in the event of a sudden emergency affecting the safety of those present.

To learn more about Robert’s Rules of Order see our publications *What Are Robert’s Rules of Order and Why Should We Care about Them?* and *Which “Robert’s Rules” Should I Buy?*

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