Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure is a sine qua non for district and national Congress contenders and beginning legislators alike. Such knowledge allows a delegate to:

* Maximize opportunities to demonstrate congressional skills.
* Accept positions of leadership on and off the floor.
* Effectively preside over chambers.
* Earn outstanding congressperson nominations.

Unfortunately the study of Parliamentary Procedure, usually done by rote memorization, is deadly dull and usually avoided, except for a few cursory glances at a parliamentary table of motions. (See the page facing this article.)

This article will demonstrate the "hands on" creation of a parliamentary procedure sourcebook. The construction of such a reference will:

* Create a user friendly reference for use in congressional chambers.
* Teach the precedence of motions.
* Provide useful knowledge about the motions.
* Serve as a handy guide for presiding officers or adult parliamentarians.
* Teach the fundamental principles of Parliamentary Procedure.

Construction and Labeling

Three implements are needed to construct the notebook: A "steno" notebook (6" X 9", with spiral wire top), a pair of scissors, a pen.

First, count 24 pages and on the bottom line of page 24 write "Main Motion" in large capital letters. Turn one page back, page 23, and on the second line from the bottom write "Postpone Indefinitely". Cut off the bottom line. On the next previous page, page 22, count 3 lines from the bottom and write "Amend" on that line. Cut off the bottom two lines. You will see the start of a ladder - the full page "main motion" is preceded by a page one line shorter "Postpone Indefinitely", and that page is preceded by a page two lines shorter "Amend". Continue cutting each previous page one line shorter than the one behind it and labeling the last line of each page with a motion name following the Parliamentary Chart (on the page facing this article). When you are finished cutting you will have 24 pages each one line shorter than the page behind which creates a list, in ladder format, of all the motions in order of precedence.

| Purpose: To introduce new business. |
| Category: Main                    |
| Interrupt: No                    |
| Second: Yes                      |
| Amend: Yes                       |
| Debate: Yes                      |
| Vote: Majority                   |

Main Motion

Remember that motions are in categories or "families" and each group has a general purpose. All main motions are substantive. That is, whether a bill or a resolution, the main motion presents substance -- an idea, a plan of action, a change in public policy, an opinion of the chamber about an idea, person, event, thing.

All other motions are procedural. That is, they provide alternative ways to handle the main motion or run the meeting. Some procedural motions are called subsidiary. Subsidiary motions provide ways to change or dispose of the main motion. The Amendment (and its Amendment) change the content of the main motion. Other subsidiary motions like the two to "Postpone" ("Indefinitely" and "to a Certain Time"), "Refer to Committee", and "Lay on the Table" attempt to remove the motion from the floor. "Reconsider", "Rescind", and "Take from the Table" wish to consider a previous motion. "Previous Question" (vote immediately) and "Limit or Extend Debate" govern floor discussion.

Incidental motions are procedural motions which protect the rights and privileges of members. Some are quite dramatic like "Object to Consideration" where subject matter is so repulsive that the body does not wish to even formally consider it; and "Point of Order" and "Appeal. . ." where a member challenges that the chair made a parliamentary error; or "Suspend the Rules"! Other incidental motions are tame. "Divide a Motion", "Withdraw or Modify a Motion", and "Call for a Roll Call Vote" are usually formalities.

Still other procedural motions, Privileged, are so important to the running of the assembly they have top priority: "Recess", "Adjourn", "Fix Time for Reassembling" are almost always in order. "A Question of Privilege" is usually personal. "Call for the Orders of the Day" demands a return to the agenda.

Examples of Motions

Several misunderstood motions will be handled with ease with a parliamentary notebook:
Senate. Mr. Copeland is a Certified Parliamentarian.

MUNA. His student was President of the 1966 NFL.

1957 in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. He also was elected Secretary General at the 1957 Hillside College Constitutional Convention held in the summer of 1957 in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. He also was elected Secretary General at the 1957 Hillside College MUNA. His student was President of the 1966 NFL Senate. Mr. Copeland is a Certified Parliamentarian.

(Mr. Copeland was one of 13 $8,000 Scholarship winners at the Alexander Hamilton Bi Centennial Constitutional Convention held in the summer of 1957 in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. He also was elected Secretary General at the 1957 Hillside College MUNA. His student was President of the 1966 NFL Senate. Mr. Copeland is a Certified Parliamentarian.)

Purpose: To end debate and vote immediately.
Category: Subsidiary Interrupt: No
Second: Yes Amend: No
Debate: No Vote: 2/3

"Previous Question", a motion to end debate, requires a second and a 2/3 vote. Why? Because it curtails members' right to debate. And it certainly makes no sense to debate a motion to end debate.

Purpose: To suppress action.
Category: Subsidiary Interrupt: No
Second: Yes and on motion  Vote: Majority

This motion is a stalking horse used by the opposition to the main motion. If it passes those opposed have rid themselves of the Main, if it does not then they need to seek more votes. By using "Postpone Indefinitely" as a test, they don't risk losing on the Main bill or resolution. "Postpone Indefinitely" is nothing like "Postpone to a Time Certain" which insures the return to the floor of a Bill or Resolution.

Purpose: To correct Parliamentary error.
Category: Incidental Interrupt: Yes
Second: No Amend: No
Debate: No Decision: Chair

Point of Order

Purpose: To reverse the chair's decision.
Category: Incidental Interrupt: Yes
Second: Yes Amend: No
Debate: No Vote: Majority

Appeal a Decision of the Chair

These two often abused motions allow a member to correct an ignorant P.O and control an arrogant one.

Conclusion

With a steno notebook, a scissors and a pen, you have created a most useful reference for congress sessions. Moreover, by filling in the pages in order of precedence you now know the order of motions. By adding to each page each motion's purpose and its key requirements, you understand what is required and why.

With the book and the thought used in its construction, memorization is unnecessary. You have a basic conceptual background and a handy guide to look up technicalities. You are prepared for Congress!

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