



March 12, 2025

---

# Types of Motions

---

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website ([ctas.tennessee.edu](http://ctas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee  
County Technical Assistance Service  
226 Anne Dallas Dudley Boulevard, Suite 400  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
615.532.3555 phone  
615.532.3699 fax  
[www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu)

Table of Contents

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Types of Motions .....</b> | <b>3</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------|

# Types of Motions

Reference Number: CTAS-2192

Review the following chart to learn about the different types of motions. Motions that are not debatable are immediately put to a vote.

| Motion  | Second Debate or Needed? | Discussion?   | Amendable?   | Majority or Two-Thirds Vote?  |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| Main Motion-Present business to the body. Only one main motion can be considered at a time.   | Yes                      | Yes   | Yes  | Majority, except when two-thirds is required by law.  |
| Subsidiary Motions-These motions are not questions before the body by themselves but relate to a main motion (or resolution) that is before the body. They may be made after the main motion and must be dealt with before voting on the main motion to which it relates. Yields to privileged and incidental motions. Listed in order of rank (meaning a motion of higher rank can always be entertained while a lower rank motion is pending, but not vice versa; there can be more than one subsidiary motion at a time - for example, a motion to amend a main motion, or an amendment, may be "tabled"). |                          |   |  |   |
| Table (Is immediately put to a vote; if not taken from the table in the same meeting, the motion is dead; generally used as an attempt to kill a motion.)   | Yes                      | No  | No   | Majority  |
| Previous question call for a vote, close debate (This motion is to cut off debate and force a vote on the issue.)   | Yes                      | No  | No   | Two-thirds (Remember, this is under <i>Robert's Rules</i> ; local rules may only require a majority.) |
| Limit or extend debate (Limit discussion to a certain time.)  | Yes                      | No  | No   | Two-thirds (Remember, this is under <i>Robert's Rules</i> ; local rules may only require a majority.) |
| Postpone to a certain time  | Yes                      | Yes   | Yes  | Majority  |
| Amend a main motion (If adopted, the chairman should restate the main motion, as amended before the vote.)  | Yes                      | Yes, but debate should be confined to the amendment | Yes, but only once (Amendments to a main motion can be amended, but an amendment to an amendment cannot be amended.) | Majority  |
| Postpone indefinitely   | Yes                      | Yes   | Yes  | Majority  |
| Incidental Motions-These motions are of no special rank, but yield to privileged motions meaning that if one of these motions is before the body and one of the privileged motions listed below is made, the privileged motion will have to be voted on or withdrawn before the body can proceed to consider these incidental motions. Otherwise, these motions are dealt with as they arise and take precedence over subsidiary motions.   |                          |   |  |   |
| Point of order (A member may interrupt the speaker who has the floor for this motion.); the chair deals with this motion.   |                          |   |  |   |
| Withdraw a motion   | No                       | No  | No   | Majority (However no vote is taken unless there is an objection to the withdrawal.)                   |

|  |     |    |    |   |
|--|-----|----|----|---|
| Suspend the rules (To allow the county commission to violate its own rules; the rules should provide the method for "suspending the rules".) | Yes | No | No | Two-thirds (Remember, this is under <i>Robert's Rules</i> ; local rules may only require a majority.) |
|--|-----|----|----|---|

|                  |     |    |     |          |
|------------------|-----|----|-----|----------|
| Method of voting | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
|------------------|-----|----|-----|----------|

Request for information; the chair deals with this motion.

Question of quorum; the chair deals with this motion.

Privileged Motions-These motions take precedence over other motions and are allowed to interrupt the considerations of other business. When privileged motions are not interrupting other business, they are main motions.

|                     |     |    |     |          |
|---------------------|-----|----|-----|----------|
| Fix time to adjourn | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
|---------------------|-----|----|-----|----------|

|         |     |    |    |          |
|---------|-----|----|----|----------|
| Adjourn | Yes | No | No | Majority |
|---------|-----|----|----|----------|

|        |     |    |     |          |
|--------|-----|----|-----|----------|
| Recess | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
|--------|-----|----|-----|----------|

Raise question of privilege (To bring up an urgent matter such as noise, discomfort, etc.); the chair deals with this motion.

Call for orders of the day (Keep the meeting to the order of business or agenda that is adopted); the chair deals with this motion.

Unclassified Motions-These are main motions that are often used to take up business again. They are not ranked.

|  |     |     |    |          |
|--|-----|-----|----|----------|
| Take from table (This is to bring up for consideration a motion or resolution that was tabled previously in the meeting) | Yes | Yes | No | Majority |
|--|-----|-----|----|----------|

|  |     |     |    |          |
|--|-----|-----|----|----------|
| Reconsider (A person on the prevailing side, a person who will change his or her vote, is supposed to make this motion.) | Yes | Yes | No | Majority |
|--|-----|-----|----|----------|

|         |     |     |     |  |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|--|
| Rescind | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority (A motion to rescind may require a two-thirds vote if the action required a two-thirds vote for passage.) |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|--|

|        |     |     |     |   |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Ratify | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority (Private acts and many local option laws require two-thirds vote.) |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|---|

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/types-motions>