

Options for Decision Making

Robert's Rules of Order - was written in 1876 by a US Military Engineer to govern meetings at his church. The Rules are written in a book that is available at bookstores. The rules can be quite complicated and the meeting procedure is very formal, and sometimes people who know the rules better have an advantage in meetings over those that don't. Only one proposal can be considered at a time. The group can specify what proportion of the membership is needed to approve a decision - usually 51%, 67%, or 75% of members.

Roberta's Rules of Order - is a book published in 2004 to provide an alternative to Robert's Rules that is less formal, more simple, and more adapted to modern life. As in Robert's Rule, the group specifies what proportion of the membership is needed to approve a decision.

Consensus - Consensus decision making was outlined in a book by CT Butler, who was a member of Food Not Bombs. It was used by many political groups in the US in the peace and anti-nuclear movements in the 1970s and 80s, and today is still used by many political activist groups. To practice consensus, the group must first agree on their mission and values. Decisions require 100% of members, and the group meets and gathers and shares information until a proposal is reached that 100% of the members can live with. One member can 'block' the decision if they believe it violates the group's agreed mission and values.

Modified Consensus - Many groups decide that 100% agreement is not always possible or practical. They use a "consensus seeking" process where they try to reach 100% consensus. But if they can't do that, a proposal can still be approved with "Consensus minus one" (or "consensus minus two or three").