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## Patterns of Formality for Members

Patterns of formality for members are designed to help keep the proceedings focused on the business at hand without breaking into multiple, simultaneous conversations, and especially during highly contested issues, these customs prevent heated discussion from getting out of hand. Members observe the following customs, DURING A MEETING:

1. With a few exceptions, Never speak while seated. Always rise and address the chair. This allows everyone to be clear on whose turn it is to speak, and it helps to prevent interruptions. This rule can be modified to fit the assembly; for example, in small assemblies, a custom of raising one's hand to gain recognition and speaking while seated may be perfectly acceptable.

2. Refer to the presiding officer as "Mr. President," "Madam President," or "the chair"; never address the presiding officer by name or by the pronoun "you." This helps to associate the chair with the position.

Example: Madam President, I'm unable to hear the chair from way back here.

3. Never speak directly to another member; always speak through the chair.

Example: Mr. President, does the member have an estimate of what this project will cost?

4. Avoid using other members' names, when they can be described in another way.

Example: I believe I have a better understanding of the material than the member who just spoke.  
[RONR (11th ed.), p. 22-24]

5. Never attack a member's motives in debate, and never use words like "lie," "liar," or "fraud" in reference to a member.

Acceptable Example: I believe there is strong evidence that the member is mistaken.

Out of Order Example: The member's last statement was a lie. [RONR (11th ed.), p. 392, ll. 12-25]

6. Always be seated when the chair rises to interrupt. Your rights to debate will still be intact, but you must yield to allow the chair to attend to his duties. [RONR (11th ed.), p. 394, ll. 1-10]