

Parliamentary Pointers

Use of Postpone to a Certain Time vs Table of Motion/Issue

Lay on the Table

The term “**table**” is often used to allow the motion/issue to be brought up at a later time. “**Lay on the Table**”, in parliamentary terms, is defined as a subsidiary motion which, if adopted, interrupts the pending business and permits the group/association to do something else immediately. The motion to “Lay on the Table” must be seconded and adopted by a majority vote; this motion cannot be debated or amended.

Example: this motion is used when an invited speaker arrives and is asked to speak immediately. The motion/issue “on the floor” is “**laid on the table**” until after the speaker has completed any remarks and then the motion/issue is “**taken from the table**” and discussion/debate continues to the vote.

It is advised that a motion/issue not be “laid on the table” until the next meeting! The main reason for this is that there is no item on the agenda under which it would be taken up at the next meeting.

Postpone to a Certain Time/Postpone Definitely

If the desire is to discontinue action on a motion/issue until a later meeting, it is advised that someone make the following motion: “**I move to postpone this motion until the next monthly meeting.**” (or until a later meeting). **This motion is the motion to Postpone to a Certain Time; the motion can include the statement “and made a Special Order”.**

The motion to “Postpone to a Certain Time” is defined simply as ‘to put off to a later time’; it must be seconded, can be debated and amended, and is adopted by a majority vote. A more detailed definition of this subsidiary motion is ‘a motion by which action on a pending question can be put off, within limits, to a definite day, meeting, or hour, or until a certain event’.

If such a motion/issue is made a **Special Order**, it is taken up before Unfinished Business and General Orders. If the motion/issue is not made a Special Order, it is a General Order and is taken up under Unfinished Business and General Orders at the next meeting.

If the next meeting is not within the next three months (within the quarter), it is advised that the motion/issue not be postponed, but referred to a committee; the committee can be directed to report with information. In this way, some work will have been carried out on the issue before the next meeting. The committee may be directed to report with an amendment to the motion or a substitute motion (new wording).

Adapted from *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 11th Edition, (RONR)
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