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## What’s a Committee of the Whole?

Committees discuss; senates act. Thus during debate each Senator may speak no more than twice per motion. In committees there are few limits on discussion and debate.

Sometimes a senate may benefit from a more open and unstructured discussion. That’s the purpose of the motion to convene as a Committee of the Whole.

## How do you get into a Committee of the Whole?

Two ways:

* Agenda item
* Motion to convene as a Committee of the Whole
  + Requires a majority
  + The motion should specify:
    - What topic(s) to discuss
    - Who will chair the COW
      * Roberts suggests that the COW should be led by someone other than the senate chair. That’s usually an unnecessary complication.
    - Time or other limits to the discussion
    - Any other details to guide the COW’s operation.

## Can only senators be members of a COW?

Strictly speaking, yes. However, the rules exist to facilitate the body’s decision-making; never to impede it. In some situations, allowing non-senators to participate in discussion may be valuable. Such participation during debate on a motion would be problematic. Thus specifying that certain non-senators will be members of the COW in the motion convening the COW is a procedurally clean way of handling this situation.

What happens inside a COW?

The chair keeps a speakers list and recognizes members. Members may speak as many times as time permits.

How do you get out of a COW?

Very carefully. Sorry.

Only one motion is in order while in a COW: the motion to Rise (or Rise and Report, if the COW is going to return a recommendation to the Senate). \*

* There are fun other variations. The COW can move to rise for instructions. This returns to being the Senate, get additional instructions under regular order, and then return to the COW. The metaphysics of this are delightful.