

# Guru's Rules – Detailed Interpretation Guide

## The A to Z of Guru's Rules with Explanations

This document is meant to provide more guidance to Guru's Rules when there are questions of intent or purpose for the rule. These Rules have been developed to require little interpretation but still may require further clarification for some. This isn't parliamentary procedure, and it is not intended for a legislature. Rather it's a compilation of best practices and pragmatic approaches to making your board better. It is specifically geared towards small groups, groups of professionals, and groups working towards the same goal or set of goals. Very little if any time should be devoted to interpretation, this is much more about setting the right culture and expectations, rather than as an enforcement mechanism.

The rules are broken into three sections: before, during, and after the meeting.

### 1. BEFORE THE MEETING

Rule Letter	Full Rule	Interpretation / Practical Guidance
<b>a</b>	Incorporate these guidelines into a board policy or within the bylaws/constitution	Make these rules official by embedding them in a policy or bylaw so that expectations are clear and recognized as part of board governance.
<b>b</b>	A discussion on board culture, expectations, and these rules will be held at least once per year	Once a year, the board should revisit these rules as part of a broader conversation about how the board functions, treats one another, and conducts business. This is ideally done at the first meeting after an AGM when a new board has been constituted. This may be the most important rule of them all.
<b>c</b>	Meeting dates and times are ideally determined at the start of the board year or set far enough in advance to ensure universal attendance	Set your meeting calendar early. This helps ensure good attendance and avoids scrambling later as well as respecting the busy nature of staff or volunteers.
<b>d</b>	Meeting invitees will RSVP with their intentions to attend or not	Everyone must confirm whether they will attend, so the chair can ensure quorum and make adjustments if needed. Not making quorum for a meeting can be frustrating and genuinely detrimental.
<b>e</b>	A meeting package including a clear agenda as approved by the chair, as well as reports, previous minutes, and other essential information will be distributed at least five days prior to the meeting	Give board members must be given enough time to review materials and come prepared. The chair should approve the final agenda (if prepared by staff or secretary) as well as having feedback on package contents.
<b>f</b>	Participants will read the meeting package ahead of time and come to meetings prepared with questions and comments regarding the material	Proper preparation is expected. Board members must arrive having read all documents, ready to contribute, and with notes. It is painfully obvious when someone has not read the package.

<b>g</b>	Participants will arrive on time and ready to begin at the set start time for any meeting	Respect others by being punctual and ready to go at the start time. Late arrivals disrupt the flow.
<b>h</b>	New agenda items are only to be added at the last minute or during the meeting if they are urgent	Avoid adding items on the fly unless they truly can't wait. This protects preparation and avoids surprises.

## 2. DURING THE MEETING

Rule Letter	Full Rule	Interpretation / Practical Guidance
<b>i</b>	The meeting chair runs the meeting in accordance with these guidelines and has the authority to enforce them to achieve efficient meeting outcomes. The chair only presents their perspective on a discussion topic after allowing all others to speak	The chair's job is to guide process, not dominate discussion. Their role is to hold space for others before sharing their own views.
<b>j</b>	Meetings will follow the agreed-upon agenda and participants will speak to the specific agenda item under consideration and stay on topic	Keep comments relevant to the current item. Don't jump ahead or go sideways into other topics.
<b>k</b>	Participants are respectful of each other at all times and strive to give others the benefit of the doubt in disagreements	Assume others are acting in good faith. Disagree respectfully and do not take offense unless it is truly warranted.
<b>l</b>	Participants shall give the speaker their undivided attention, be open-minded to others' comments, and refrain from forming judgements prematurely	Active listening is key. Don't prepare your rebuttal while others are speaking, really listen first. Judgement should only come after proper consideration and having given the speaker the benefit of the doubt.
<b>m</b>	Only one person speaks at a time and there is no interrupting except as outlined in Appendix A	No side talk and everyone should be able to speak without interruption unless the situation meets the exceptions in Appendix A.
<b>n</b>	Participants wishing to speak shall raise their hand and await recognition by the chair prior to speaking	This avoids confusion and helps the chair keep track of who wants to speak. Keeps the process orderly and fair.
<b>o</b>	Universal participation at meetings is expected, though it is recognized that participation may look different from person to person	Everyone should contribute, but not everyone has to be vocal in the same way. Listening, asking a single clarifying question, or expressing support for an idea all count.
<b>p</b>	Each individual wanting to address a particular agenda item shall be granted an opportunity to do so before anyone speaks on the same issue for the second time. Participants will be mindful of their level of participation to ensure they are contributing to but not dominating a discussion	No one should speak twice before everyone has spoken once. The chair should keep track of this. Dominating a discussion discourages others and makes for a less effective board overall. If someone's speaking ability is limited, it may also push for more efficiency and consideration in discussions.
<b>q</b>	Every agenda item welcomes a fulsome discussion, but board members should strive for efficiency and avoid redundancy when deliberating	Discussion should be thoughtful but not repetitive. Once a point has been made, don't rehash it, move the discussion forward.

<b>r</b>	Criticisms and challenges may have their place in discussion but shall be directed at the problem or idea and not at the person	Keep criticism focused on the topic, not the person. Say something like “I disagree with the approach,” rather than “You’re wrong.”
<b>s</b>	Participants will acknowledge their biases and question their own assumptions	Self-awareness is important. Everyone brings biases, but good governance means recognizing and reflecting on that.
<b>t</b>	Distractions such as unrelated social media and email are to be avoided during meetings	Stay off phones and laptops unless needed for the meeting. It’s about respect and staying present. And others know when you are distracted.
<b>u</b>	Motions shall be read verbatim by the meeting chair or recording secretary prior to a vote	Everyone must clearly hear the exact wording of what they’re voting on to avoid confusion.
<b>v</b>	Regular motions as part of the presented agenda do not require a mover or seconder prior to voting on the motion but rather may be introduced by the chair and then voted on. A mover and seconder is only required for new business not on the agenda and shall precede any discussion on the topic	If it’s on the agenda, the chair can introduce the motion for a vote. Motioning and seconding are important in a legislature when all motions are brought up by individuals, whereas most board motions are part of a regular agenda, and most of the time could be including in an agenda. The vote is the important thing. Should there be a new issue, someone must move and second it prior to any discussion on the issue.
<b>w</b>	Participants shall actively pursue consensus on decisions, resorting to voting via a show of hands only when consensus cannot be reached or in accordance with the organization’s bylaws	The goal is agreement, not just majority rules. The process of seeking consensus will better engage board members and generate stronger discussions and usually, better decisions. Voting is the fallback when consensus isn’t possible and may be necessary if bylaws require.

### 3. AFTER THE MEETING

<b>Rule Letter</b>	<b>Full Rule</b>	<b>Interpretation / Practical Guidance</b>
<b>x</b>	Confidentiality of meeting discussions must be respected; specifics shared in a meeting should not be divulged beyond the participants	What’s said in the room stays in the room. Meeting minutes are an official record of the meeting but the specifics of conversations, questions that were asked, ideas that were broached, and commentary should not be shared beyond the meeting participants. A boardroom is a bit like Vegas; what happens there, stays there.
<b>y</b>	Board members shall uphold board decisions as determined according to the bylaws, even if they voted against such decisions at a meeting	Once a decision is made, all board members must support it publicly. Internal disagreement stays internal. If a board member cannot support a decision of the board, they should strongly consider whether or not to stay on that board.
<b>z</b>	Participants shall complete any tasks assigned to them by the set deadline	Follow-through matters. Take your commitments seriously and complete tasks on time.