

*FRIENDS MEETING OF
WASHINGTON*

**Guidelines for Minutes
of Monthly Meeting for
Business**

JANUARY 1999

The following guidelines were written and approved by the Records and Handbook Committee of the Friends Meeting of Washington as an aid for Meeting Recording Clerks. Their aim is not to enmesh the writer in a maze of arbitrary rules and habits, but to lay out conveniently the various parts that are necessary for complete minutes and to suggest certain ways of writing and formatting the document that will ensure that Meeting minutes are understandable and useable by Friends from all areas and times. The aim here is to give the purpose or rationale of each point so that the long-suffering Recording Clerk is helped to make consistent decisions when new situations arise, rather than to simply list rules from earlier times. Neither do we intend to outlaw personal style in Meeting minutes as long as the style serves the intent of good record-keeping, for it is after all an individual who does the writing, and that personality has a right to shine through in this very important Meeting work.

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While these guidelines were written for Monthly Meeting minutes, committees are urged to produce their minutes in a format reasonably consistent with these guidelines.

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GOALS OF MEETING MINUTES

The **purposes** of keeping minutes of the Meeting for Business are:

- to keep a clear and accurate record of Meeting decisions
- to record the questions and issues that have occupied the Meeting's attention
- to give some idea of the many activities of the Meeting's life over the years

It is important that **all actual decisions** of the Meeting (including holding over a matter) **be recorded**.

Discussions, reports and announcements need only be summarized to the satisfaction of the Clerks and other Friends.

Meeting minutes are **not a substitute** for the monthly Meeting Newsletter and weekly announcements, or for committee minutes and other documentation.

A minute should express clearly the decision reached by the Meeting and should cite relevant information explaining the Meeting's judgment, but it need not detail or even summarize the views expressed in arriving at unity. The final judgment of the Meeting is of greater importance than any tentative or interim judgments

— *Faith and Practice
of Baltimore Yearly
Meeting, III, A, 6*

RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY FOR MINUTES

The Friends Meeting of Washington gives **responsibility and authority** for Meeting for Business minutes to **the Recording Clerk and the Presiding Clerk**. Only the Recording Clerk and Presiding Clerk can make changes to minutes which bear their signatures unless Friends gathered approve change by another person (as, for example, if a Recording Clerk is no longer at the Meeting and an error is discovered).

If the regular Recording Clerk and Alternate Clerk are absent from a Monthly Meeting for Business, Friends can approve an **acting Recording Clerk**, who then is responsible for the minutes of that meeting.

When entering minutes in the Meeting computer, the Meeting's office staff will make standard typographic, spelling and formatting corrections but editing changes to the minutes must be approved by the Recording and Presiding Clerk.

Part of the decision making process in the Society of Friends is the recording in the minutes of those decisions made by the Monthly Meeting. This is the responsibility of the Recording Clerk. . . . The Recording Clerk is responsible for the preparation of an accurate final copy of the minutes, which becomes a permanent record of the Monthly Meeting.

— *Faith and Practice
of Baltimore Yearly
Meeting*, III, B 2, b

The Clerk and Recording Clerk may be given authority to edit the minutes already approved if, being re-read, they seem in need of clarification. Any change so made should, however, be reported to the members of the Meeting through publication or by reading at the next business session

— *Faith and Practice
of Baltimore Yearly
Meeting*, III, A, 6

GENERAL GUIDES FOR STYLE

The following rules apply to all parts of the Meeting for Business minutes.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations that are well known at one time or in one area are not necessarily known to all readers, and so it is best to **avoid all abbreviations** when possible. If a lengthy name or title will appear regularly in a minute, it can be written out in full followed by the abbreviation at its first appearance and the abbreviation used thereafter (e.g., “American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)”).

Capitalization

Generally speaking, words are capitalized when they are used as **substitutes for a person's name** (e.g., “The Clerk reported . . .”) or when they refer to a **specific committee or other group** (e.g., “The Committee has requested . . .” or “. . . has asked if this Meeting would want. . .”). Such words referring to the position or group in the **generic sense**, however, are not capitalized (e.g., “No committee has yet acted upon this request.”).

The Baltimore Yearly Meeting *Style Manual* contains a **list of recommended capitalizations** of common Quaker terms, attached to these guidelines for reference.

Identification of Persons and Positions

Friends believe that all true messages given in any gathered meeting originate from God, and so minutes should only **refer to individuals** when that person could be considered a source of further information on a matter, is the subject of discussion (as in a request for membership), or when the person is presenting a report in some official capacity. Otherwise, remarks or leadings are attributed only to “a Friend” (“A Friend said . . . Several Friends felt that. . .”) or some other vague identification.

An individual identified by name is also **identified by a position** if that position is relevant to the matter under discussion (e.g., “Maria Sanchez, Clerk of the House Committee, . . .”).

Personal Names

Use the **full name** of a person (including maiden name, if applicable) when minuting a birth, membership matter, marriage or commitment, death or memorial minute. In other minutes the given name commonly used by the person plus the family name is enough. Such minutes always initially state the actual given name of a person, and if the person uses a **nickname**, it should be given in quotation marks after the given name if it is not obviously derived from the given name (e.g., Edward “Tip” Haley). **Honorifics** such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Professor or Doctor are not ordinarily used, in accordance with Quaker custom. Friends can be referred to as “Friend” and their family name (e.g., “Friend Robini”), however. If a person has **commonly used a different name**, as in the case of a woman changing her family name upon marriage or someone recently begun using a middle rather than first given name, the previously used name should be shown in parentheses (e.g., Tiwana (Brown) Madigan) for some time until the new name will be widely recognized.

Special Words

Accepted and Approved: The Meeting “accepts” a committee resignation, membership resignation or transfer in of membership. This shows that an action by the individual or another Meeting is acknowledged and in good order (that the person was in fact a member, for example). The Meeting “approves” matters in which it actively makes a decision — committee appointment, unions of marriage and commitment under its care, membership application and transfer out, termination of membership, memorial minute, and any other sort of decision that results in action by or on behalf of the Meeting as a whole. These are recognized actions of the Meeting, and the words “approved” and “accepted” are printed in CAPITALS in the minutes as a visual aid. **Other words** occasionally used to describe Meeting actions, such as “agreed,” “affirmed,” and “laid over,” are also printed in CAPITALS.

“Receiving reports” and other spurious actions: There has sometimes been a tendency to minute that a report was “received.” This is not a meaningful statement, since it involves no particular action on the part of the Meeting, and simply hearing the information does not imply approval or even understanding

on the part of Friends. Friends often “refer” matters to a committee or other group, but this word is not printed in capitals.

Held over and **Laid over:** Matters that were scheduled to be brought up but were not are “held over” to a later time; if a matter is brought up but a decision postponed until a later meeting, it is “laid over.”

Friends: It is appropriate to refer to everyone present at the Meeting for Business, both Meeting members and attenders, as “Friends,” and to refer to the gathering altogether as “Friends” (e.g., “Friends APPROVED . . .”).

Writing of Some Specific Words

A list of writing forms for various **words peculiar to Quaker minutes**, also from BYM's *Style Manual*, is also appended.

SOME SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS

These rules apply to specific cases in Meeting for Business minutes.

Approval of Minutes

Be sure to include toward the end of the minutes a specific minute saying that the **minutes were read and approved**.

Deaths and Memorial Minutes

Announcements of deaths should be **minuted separately** for each Friend. The same is true of memorial minutes approved by the Meeting. The actual memorial minute is attached to the Meeting for Business minutes; be sure that the full name of the Friend, always including a woman's maiden name, and the dates of birth and death appear at the top, and that a note that it was “approved by the Monthly Meeting on (date)” appears at the bottom.

Identification of Children

In all minutes relating to membership of children, **identify** the child by **full name, birth date and names of the parents** and whether or not the parents are members.

Identification of Other Monthly Meetings

The first mention of a Monthly Meeting outside the immediate Washington area should include in parentheses **the state** in which it is located (e.g., “Monrovia (California) Monthly Meeting”). A Monthly Meeting outside the United States should be identified by the country.

Marriage or Commitment Under the Care of the Meeting

Remember that applications for marriages and commitments brought to the Meeting for Business are specifically “under the care of the Meeting” and be sure to **include those words** in the minutes. Ceremonies that simply are held in the building are handled routinely by the House Committee and not brought to Meeting for Business.

When several such requests are on the agenda, **use a separate paragraph** for each couple being considered.

Membership Minutes

Each separate individual or family group membership application and decision **receives its own minute**. The only exception to this is the case of youthful siblings applying for associate membership, who can be listed in one minute.

Scheduled Reports or Matters Held Over

If a report or matter of business has been scheduled (as in the Meeting *Handbook* schedule of annual oral reports, or by an earlier decision of Meeting for Business) **but must be held over** to a later meeting, that fact **should be**

minuted so that anyone searching the minutes for that particular subject will understand why it does not appear.

Terms of Appointments

Be sure to **include the specific term** (period) of all committee and other appointments.

Visitors to Business Meeting

Visitors to Business Meeting from other Friends Meetings are identified by **name and home Meeting**. Other visitors are identified by name and home city and state or country.

Welcomes Accomplished

Announcements of welcomes accomplished can be **grouped together in one minute**, but be sure to refer to the earlier membership minute of each person named. It is not necessary to repeat the names of the welcomers if they appear in the original minute.

EDITORIAL QUESTIONS

The following matters are questions of editing rather than substance. They are commonly added after the text of the minutes has been approved by Friends, and so are primarily a mechanical duty of the Recording Clerk rather than matters for approval by other Friends.

Attachments

Generally, matters are **discussed entirely within the relevant minute**, and not left to an appended document. Give important information in the minute, remembering that committee minutes and other documents contain pertinent details for those who need them. The **following documents are normally appended** to the end of the Meeting for Business minutes and the attachment noted (“attached”) in the relevant summary minute:

- Committee of Clerks minutes
- Junior Meeting for Business minutes

- Approved Meeting budget
- Memorial minutes
- Annual Spiritual State of the Meeting report
- Annual list of appointments recommended by the Nominating Committee
- Annual written reports.

Most **other reports can be briefly summarized** in the minutes, but with the approval of the Meeting some documents can be summarized and the details left to an attached document.

Corrections to Minutes

Errors of simple fact (spelling of names, dates of committee appointments, organization names and titles, and such specific questions) can be corrected after the Meeting for Business by the Recording Clerk without reference to the larger Meeting. In some cases, the Meeting will agree to allow the Recording Clerk and some knowledgeable Friend to **work out the exact wording** of a technical minute **at a later time** within the approved sense of the Meeting; in these cases, there is no need to return to the Meeting for approval.

Very rarely a matter that was not minuted at the appropriate Meeting for Business or an important correction to the sense (rather than specifics) of an earlier minute **must be added to the earlier document** rather than simply entered as a new minute at the current meeting. In this case the new or corrected minute must be approved and minuted by Friends and additions or corrections to the earlier document made and fore-referenced within square brackets [] to the later minute approving the change (e.g., “[revised per 9/94-20]”).

Footers

At the **bottom of each page of the minutes** and of each attachment **should be printed:** FMW Meeting for Business, date (ex: 13 Sept 98). Number pages of minutes and attachments for each month at bottom right. The office staff will do this when preparing the final copies.

Minute Headings

Short headings are added at the beginning of each separate minute and underlined for the ease of people using the minutes and as an aid in indexing. Because titles are editorial rather than substantive aspects of the minutes, they are **not subject to the strictures of style** that the actual minute must meet. At the same time, remember that only the text is considered the actual minute, and so **information given in the heading** (e.g., the name of a Friend recently deceased) **must be repeated** in the text of the minute.

Generally, the heading alone is sufficient to distinguish the topic of a particular minute, but if it is felt necessary to **identify sub-elements** within a minute, this can be done with underlining.

Headings clearly should be as short as necessary, and need simply **indicate the nature of the matter discussed** in the minute (e.g., “Death of William Boyd O’Hara,” or “Annual Oral Report of the Nominating Committee”).

Numbering

Each separate minute is numbered **in sequence** by date and topic number (e.g., 12/91-3, 12/91-4) in **boldface**.

Preparation, Printing, and Signatures

Two copies of **Meeting for Business minutes**, printed by the Meeting staff on acid-free paper, are signed by the Presiding Clerk and the Recording Clerk. **Annual written reports** are signed by the committee clerk or person preparing the report. Both signed copies are then deposited in annual volumes in the Meeting vault.

References to Earlier Minutes

Many times Friends need to refer to earlier minutes regarding a question or action of the Meeting. Whenever a minute refers to **a matter that was dealt with in an earlier Meeting for Business**, the reference number of the most

recent minute relating to that question is given in **parentheses and boldface** in some logical place in the new minute (e.g., “the application for membership of Christian Ralph Doe, brought to Friends at the May Meeting for Business (5/88-15)”). **Examples** of matters that commonly require such references include membership applications on their second presentation and subsequent welcomes, marriages or commitments on second presentation, reading of memorial minutes (referring back to the report of the Friend's death), discussions resulting from earlier reports, and matters laid over from earlier meetings.

Occasionally references may also be made to **other sources** such as Baltimore Yearly Meeting minutes.

Sequence and Division of Minutes

Each separate minute deals with a **separate matter of business**, even though two questions might have been brought up by the same Friend, and even under the same agenda item. Some closely related matters, such as several committee appointments, can be grouped together in one minute. At the same time, an individual minute is not limited to one paragraph if more paragraphs are necessary.

Once the minutes are approved by Friends, their **sequence** in the final document is **left to the discretion of the Recording Clerk**. The separate minutes can be rearranged from their original sequence if the new order seems more logical, or when information on related or similar business was presented at different points in the meeting.

Summary of The Minutes for the Newsletter

The minutes are summarized for the subsequent Meeting Newsletter. The **purpose** of printing a summary rather than the full text is to save space and money, and to give Friends the most important information from Meeting for Business without unnecessary details and verbiage. The **responsibility and authority** for this summary lies only with the Recording Clerk. It is not a matter for Meeting approval, and the summary is not considered a formal Meeting record as are the full minutes.

PERTINENT PARTS OF THE STYLE MANUAL OF BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING (January 1997)

Capitalization

The following terms are to be capitalized, whether referring to a specific Meeting or to them generally:

Monthly Meeting
Preparative Meeting
Indulged Meeting
Worship Group

Quarterly Meeting
Half-Yearly Meeting
Half-Year's Meeting
Representative Meeting
Yearly Meeting

Meeting for Business

Minute of Concern
Memorial Minute
Minute of Appreciation

The following are to be capitalized as indicated:

Meeting for Worship, as specific occurrence only: “Adelphi Friends gathered at 11:00 for Meeting for Worship.” “The Committee meeting opened with a brief meeting for worship.”

Meeting, when referring to above types of Meeting: “He visited several Meetings during the year.” It is not capitalized for other groups or mixtures of groups: “The committees held several meetings.”

Named Committee, or reference to this Committee: “After the Publications Committee was formed, the Committee met frequently.” It is not capitalized for a committee in general: “Many committees meet on Yearly Meeting Day.”

First Day School (not First-Day or Firstday)

Meeting House (not Meetinghouse)

Clerk, Secretary, Treasurer. General Secretary, Religious Education Coordinator, and other officers and employees as formal titles, but not a committee clerk, Meeting treasurer, staff member, etc., in general: *e.g.*, the Presiding Clerk of BYM, the Treasurer of Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting, the Clerk of the Ministry and Oversight Committee of Reston Monthly Meeting, but Meeting clerks and committee clerks

Inner Light

Light Within

Spirit when referring to a specific Higher Power, but not “the spirit of the Meeting.”

Worship Sharing, when a session title, but not when stated as a format: “The Committee will lead Worship Sharing beginning at 10:00 a.m.” “Many Friends have felt moved by participating in worship sharing.”

Query, Queries, Advices from formal lists, but query, queries, advices not having “official” status: “The third Query from *Faith and Practice* was read.” “The Meeting responded to the queries from the Peace Committee.”

Specific BYM projects: “Simple Meal”

“Friends” as a term for Quakers. Do not capitalize the terms “members” or “attenders.” All first letters of entries in Tables of Contents and Index: “Names, recording of,”

Commas

For a sentence containing three or more words in a series, use the comma before the final coordinating conjunction.

The comma should be used sparingly.

Contractions

Use contractions only in a direct quote. Minutes should not contain contractions.

Dates

Dates are to be as supplied by Recording Clerks and Committee clerks, whether First Day, Sunday, Second Day, August 8, 8 August or Eighth Month 8.

Dates are to be capitalized as shown, and Firstday, First-Day, etc., are to be changed to the previously described practice.

Italics

The following are to be italicized:

- Names of periodicals and books
- Signatures
- Foreign language phrases, except those that have been adopted into English and appear in the main A-Z Vocabulary of a standard American English dictionary, e.g. “ad hoc,” “ex officio.”

Paragraphs

A line is to be skipped between paragraphs.

The beginnings of new paragraphs are not to be indented.

Quotations

Long quoted passages and Minutes are to be indented right and left without quotation marks. Short quotations are to be in “quotation marks” as in normal usage.

Spelling Out or Abbreviating

Place names are not to be abbreviated in the minutes: “Baltimore, Maryland”

Normally, numbers ten or below are to be written out. Digits are to be used for 11 or above, except when numbers are used at the beginning of a sentence, or when mixing is confusing: “Thirty members attended, and 15 sent regrets.” “The package contained six apples, seventeen oranges, and five pears.”

Monthly Meeting affiliation is to be spelled out when used to identify a person for the first time in a given minute or session; no such identification is needed later except when the gap between usages is wide enough: “Mary Smith, Sandy Spring, presented the report.” “Mary Smith asked whether . . .”

The Monthly Meeting name is not to be abbreviated when it is part of the discussion, but it should generally be abbreviated when used as identification in committee listings. The abbreviation code should be readily available.

Use of Names

The Recording Clerks should use given names wherever possible and consider the following when using a nickname:

- a) Clearly identify each individual with a unique name. If a nickname will help, place it in quotation marks.
- b) For each individual, be consistent throughout the minutes.
- c) Respect the personal preference of each individual.

Use of Standard Editing Procedures

When in doubt, standard editing procedures should be followed — refer to *Elements of Style* [by William Strunk and E. B. White].