



## Guide No. 5      Minutes and supporting papers

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This handout provides guidance on creating and storing minutes and supporting papers. It also provides advice on indexing minute books.

### Summary of guidance

- Minutes and supporting papers are archives and should be retained permanently.
- Minutes should be printed onto archival paper and printed by a laser printer or photocopier. Print onto 1 side of A4. Leave a good margin.
- Minutes ideally should eventually be bound with supporting papers and an index. In the interim, keep minutes and supporting papers in 'Springback' binders.
- Label volumes of minutes and supporting papers clearly with name of meeting or committee, nature of records and dates covered.
- Number minutes which suit the work of the meeting or committee. Where a supporting paper directly connects to a minute, put the date of the meeting and the minute number in the top-right hand corner.
- Index minutes.
- Sellotape™ or adhesive tape of any kind should never be used in keeping records, nor should staples or paperclips.

In most Area and Local Meetings, minutes are typed using a computer rather than being hand-written into a volume or typed using a typewriter. Many meetings now use loose-leaf binders as minute books. Ideally these should be no more than a short-term measure and eventually the loose-leaf minute book should be professionally bound, with an index to its contents.

It is most important that unbound minutes should not be parcelled up in plastic bags, brown paper or envelopes. They run the risk of disarrangement, loss and damage because they are not adequately protected or stored.

## **1. Printing minutes and supporting papers**

Minutes should be printed onto archival paper (see *Guide 12 Records equipment and suppliers*) and printed by a laser printer or photocopier. Minutes should be printed onto one side of A4 paper and have good margins (at least 30mm at the sides and 10mm top and bottom). Thin margins make binding difficult. It is less important for supporting papers to be printed onto acid-free paper.

## **2. Filing minutes and supporting papers**

### **a. Volumes**

Some meetings still write minutes into bound volumes or stick typed minutes into volumes with Sellotape™, glue, staples or paperclips. The latter is *strongly discouraged*; in these circumstances it is far preferable to close the bound volume and move over to a loose-leaf binder.

Documents pasted into a volume bulk it out so eventually it cannot be closed and the binding breaks. Also, Sellotape™ either dries out or becomes opaque and messy, and staples and paperclips rust and corrode. All cause irreparable damage to paper and thus the record (see also *Guide No. 7 Preservation and storage of records*).

### **b. Loose leaf binders**

Four-hole binders, two-hole binders and lever-arch files should *not* be used for storing minutes and supporting papers long-term. They do not keep papers secure so they tend to fall out and get easily damaged. Plastic folders also are not recommended for storing minutes and supporting papers. Plastic deteriorates over time and causes damage to the documents kept inside.

If minutes and supporting papers are unlikely to be bound for some years, then the meeting should consider using a good 'Springback' binder. There are no exposed metal clips which can rust and erode, damaging the contents inside; they hold papers securely; and are quite inexpensive. (See *Guide 12 Records equipment and suppliers*)

### c. Binding of minutes and supporting papers

Minutes ideally should eventually be bound. Like investing in a good binder, the expense of having minutes professionally bound ought to be seen as a long-term investment. Another advantage of having minutes bound is that the supporting papers can be bound in with them. As a guide, a bound volume should be about 200 pages, which is the equivalent of 10 to 15 years of minutes and supporting papers. Above all, minutes should not be bound until an **index** has been completed and can be included.

## 3. Labelling

See *Guide No. 4 Records creation*, Section 4 Labelling.

## 4. Numbering minutes and supporting papers

Meetings and committees should choose a method of numbering their minutes which suits their work. There are two popular approaches:

1. *Year/Minute Number* - Number each minute consecutively throughout a year, for example, 08/10 is minute 10 of 2008.
2. Number each minute at each meeting, for example, 01012008/1, 01012008/2, etc are minutes 1 and 2 of a meeting on 1 January 2008.

Where supporting papers are directly connected to a minute, put the date of the meeting and minute number clearly in the top-right hand corner. The existence of such a document should be noted in the minutes.

## 5. Indexing Minutes

‘An index groups together in a systematic arrangement of information scattered throughout a document...and is designed to enable users to identify and locate relevant information and to retrieve it quickly and efficiently’  
(*International Standards Organisation*, 999; 1996)

The importance of indexing minutes cannot be over-emphasised. An index makes the information in a minute book quickly and easily accessible. It is good practice to keep an interim index while a minute book is in use by a meeting or committee. It helps the committee to find a minute it requires quickly and it makes the task of producing a full index when the minute book is full less arduous.

It is not necessary to be a professional indexer (although the Society of Indexers does have a list of professional indexers should the meeting wish to hire one), but indexing does need to be done by someone methodical, accurate and who pays attention to detail.

A good way to approach indexing minutes is to ask the question 'If Friends wanted this information what word or subject would they look for in the index?' Indexing necessitates reading the minutes in full and writing down headings. Headings will often need breaking down into sub-headings. For example, just having 'Finance' as a subject heading with numerous pages of references is not helpful. The subject needs to be broken down:

Finance:

acceptance of accounts      09/28

It is essential that the rules adopted by the individual creating the index are used consistently and are passed on to future indexers. It should also be clear to a user of the index what method of minute referencing has been used. In the example above the method of referencing used is 'year/minute number', thus 09/01 is minute number 1 of 2009 because the meeting numbers each minute consecutively throughout the year. But other meetings may just number each minute at each meeting and start afresh each time, or simply number each page of the minutes. Stating the rules and methods clearly at the front of the index is useful. You can check previous practice by consulting indexes to previous volumes of Area Meeting minutes. .

For more information, see the appendix of this guide and the Society of Indexers website which has details of indexing software, <http://www.indexers.org.uk/>.

## 6. Rough Minutes

Once rough minutes have been transcribed and a fair copy signed by the Clerk of the meeting, the rough minutes do not need to be kept. However, it is best practice to retain them for one year after the meeting, in case a transcription needs checking and the rough minutes need to be referred to.

## 7. Transferring minutes and supporting papers to an appropriate repository

Current records only should be kept by meeting officers. All records, no longer in use, including minute books and supporting papers, should be deposited with an appropriate local repository. **As a general rule, records more than 10 years old should be deposited or even "the last-but-one minute book"**. For advice on how to transfer records to an appropriate repository, see *Guide No.9 Depositing archives with appropriate authorities*. For guidance on storing current records, and minutes and supporting papers before transfer to an appropriate repository, see *Guide No. 7 Preservation and storage of records and archives*.

## **8. Further advice**

For further advice on managing records and archives you can either write to the Friends House Library, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, telephone 020 7663 1135 or send an email to [library@quaker.org.uk](mailto:library@quaker.org.uk)

### **Guides in this series**

- Guide No. 1 The job of the Custodian of Records
- Guide No. 2 Meetings' records and their retention and disposal
- Guide No. 3 Legislation affecting records and record-keeping
- Guide No. 4 Creation to curation of records
- Guide No. 5 Minutes and supporting papers
- Guide No. 6 Electronic records
- Guide No. 7 Preservation and storage of records and archives
- Guide No. 8 Use and access to records and archives
- Guide No. 9 Depositing archives with appropriate repositories
- Guide No. 10 Disaster preparedness
- Guide No. 11 Creating exhibitions and displays
- Guide No. 12 Records equipment and suppliers
- Guide No. 13 Glossary
- Guide No. 14 Frequently Asked Questions

All guides can be downloaded from the Britain Yearly Meeting website [www.quaker.org.uk/Library](http://www.quaker.org.uk/Library) on the Support for Meetings page or requested from the Library.

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## **Appendix                    Indexing: the principles of one clerk**

### **Notes made by a Monthly Meeting clerk on compiling the index to minutes**

Admissions to membership; Certificates of transfer; Deaths; Resignations *are shown under individual names*

Marriages *are shown under: Marriages according to Friends usage or Marriages not according to Friends usage*

Major appointments (clerk; assistant clerk; treasurer; registering officer; representatives to Meeting for Sufferings; prison minister) *are shown under title of appointment and cross-referenced under names of Friends appointed*

Appointments to Councils and Committees *are shown under name of Council or Committee but individual names are not shown*

Speakers introducing general subjects and concerns *are shown under subject and also under name of speaker*

Conferences *are shown under name of sponsor and/or subject, but are not cross-referenced to names of Friends attending or reporting*

Reports of Children's work, Libraries, etc. *are shown under subject, but are not cross-referenced to names of Friends reporting*

### **Specimen page from a Monthly Meeting index to minutes (by page number)**

ACCOUNTS (see also under BANK ACCOUNT, FINANCE): presented 108, 130, 150, 157, 170

ACCOUNTS & ESTIMATES, CONFERENCE see under CONFERENCE ON  
ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES

ACKWORTH GENERAL MEETING: representatives 172 report 159, 179

ACKWORTH SCHOOL: proposed changes in rules 107

ADAMS, Adam: certificate in 147

ADDICTION COMMITTEE: writes to meetings 137 Eve Evans speaks 153

ADMISSIONS TO MEMBERSHIP see under surnames of individuals

ALLEN, Alan: certificate returned to [ABC] MM 168

accepted 190

ALLINSON, Joan:

applies for membership 116

admitted 148