



When to Make a Resolution

A *resolution* is a written motion that expresses an academic governance body's sentiment or action. Many motions do not need to be resolutions (e.g., a motion to adjourn). But when a motion is complicated, should be memorialized, or is intended for wide distribution, it is often best to write a resolution.

Benefits of Following Best Practices for Writings Resolutions

When resolutions don't conform to the best practices listed below, it can be hard for your academic governance colleagues to understand what you're trying to do, and it can be difficult for administrators to implement what you suggest. By sticking to the tips in this guide, you can make your resolutions more likely to pass when you introduce them, more likely to be acted upon by those with the power to do so, and more likely to be accurately characterized by the media or others discussing them.

Best Practices for Writing Resolutions

1. Be extremely clear about what the effect of your resolution would be if it passes. What action do you want taken, and who do you want to take it?

If you want University Council to formally express an opinion, the resolution could look something like, "It is the position of University Council that bees are pretty neat" or "University Council condemns anti-bee sentiments." If you want University Council to advocate that someone else to do something, try something more like, "University Council calls on the administration to build an apiary in the center of campus."

2. Generally speaking, keep your resolutions short, simple, and clean. "Green tea is the official drink of the Faculty Senate" is a perfectly good resolution (in form, if not in taste, that is).

The inclusion of factual assertions supporting a resolution in the resolution itself can be tricky. As *Robert's Rules of Order* puts it, "It is usually inadvisable to attempt to include reasons for a motion's adoption within the motion itself. ... In general, the use of a preamble [or "whereas" clause] should be limited to cases where it provides little-known information without which the point or the merits of a resolution are likely to be poorly understood [or] where unusual importance is attached to making certain reasons for an action a matter of record."¹

If you believe you have a motion that warrants supporting facts, there are two ways of including them. One option is to use "whereas/resolved" clauses:

Whereas, Green tea is very refreshing; and

Whereas, Green tea is cheaper per ounce than coffee; and

¹ RONR (12th ed.) 10:16.



<i>Whereas,</i>	Faculty Senate does not currently have an official drink; now therefore be it
<i>Resolved,</i>	That Faculty Senate adopts green tea as its official drink; and
<i>Resolved,</i>	That Faculty Senate calls on the Office of Beverage Affairs to hold a public forum on the impacts of coffee and green tea on the community.

Another option is to include a preamble:

Preamble

Green tea is very refreshing, and it is cheaper per ounce than coffee. Furthermore, Faculty Senate does not currently have an official drink.

Resolved

Faculty Senate adopts green tea as its official drink.

Though it depends on the circumstances, it is often a good idea to reserve facts for the debate on the resolution and only include actions in the resolution itself. Imagine a member who agrees that green tea should be Faculty Senate's official drink but disputes that it is actually cheaper than coffee. If the member disagrees with the factual assertion, they may vote "no," despite agreeing with the goal of the resolution.

3. In parliamentary procedure, "motion" is a noun, not a verb. Always say, "I *move* that Faculty Senate adopt a resolution . . ." rather than "I *motion* that Faculty Senate adopt a resolution . . ."

Templates

Who doesn't love consistent branding? Feel free to use the .docx templates available on [the academic governance website](#) for your next motion.

If you misplace this document, it can be found on acadgov.msu.edu under Resources > Writing Resolutions.