

A well crafted motion is one which is clear in its aim, uses plain English, is properly punctuated and is directed to the appropriate body (BMA council, Health Departments, etc). Poorly drafted motions are very unlikely to be debated even when they cover important areas of principle. A quick read through this guide and reference back to it will save time for all involved.

1. *What does the ARM agenda committee look for when selecting a motion for debate at the ARM?*

In order to increase its chances of selection, a motion must be easy to understand, logically argued and well presented. If the agenda committee finds it difficult to understand the purpose of a motion or to follow the case it argues, then it is likely that the representative body will also have problems.

2. *What features will reduce the chances of a motion being chosen?*

Any motion that is unnecessarily long (i.e. a long shopping list of detailed points), uses too many words to convey its message, is incoherent or unclear in parts or seems to be making a speech (try reading it aloud) will reduce its chance of selection. Similarly if the motion says nothing new, restates existing policy or is on an area of policy which has recently been fully debated by the RB then its chances of selection are reduced. Attacking individuals is rarely helpful as it often detracts from the issues and could be defamatory.

3. *How should we go about deciding what our motion should be about and what it should say?*

It is useful for anyone drafting a motion to bear in mind the three Ps as these provide an outline structure for the motion:

- the Problem(s) which need to be solved
- the Principle(s) which underlie the solution
- the Proposals which must be the heart of the motion. A good motion will contain a call for action. It is not very useful if it does not call upon someone or somebody to fix the problem set out. The agenda committee will usually prioritise motions which call for action.

One further P is plausibility – is what is being called for in the motion plausible? Remember that a representative of your constituency will have to propose the motion at the ARM so please ensure that the matter for debate is relevant and the argument plausible. Be specific, but realistic. Action can be difficult to enforce, so consider:

- Is the organisation you want to lobby accountable to the BMA or are they likely to listen to us?
- Is the issue important enough to get the support of the RB?

4. *Useful words*

Relatively few words provide the introduction and links in a motion. The preamble or introduction (which defines the problem) expresses increasing degrees of concern, ranging from “welcomes”, “notes”, “regrets”, “deplores”, “abhors”, “condemns”, and “denounces” to “rejects”. Some are linked with a “failure”, usually of the Government or the Health Departments, but sometimes of the BMA.

The motion can then “reaffirm”, “recognise”, “declare” or just list the principles that apply.

Proposals are usually introduced by “affirms”, “believes”, “calls for”, “recommends”, “proposes”, “urges”, “demands” or “insists”.

### 5. *Keep the motion short and snappy*

Think of the core thrust of the argument that you want to convey in your motion and leave it at that. Statistics and examples should go into the speech proposing the motion.

### 6. *Other hints*

- Please begin your motions with 'That this Meeting...' as this is correct etiquette.
- Try to avoid submitting multi-part motions. Where a number of motions, from several constituencies, on one topic cover different aspects of the issue, the agenda committee can bring them together in a composite motion. However, if you do submit multi-part motions, please try to keep them short. As a general rule, a multi-part motion with more than six parts is probably too long. Do also remember that each part of the motion has to be able to make sense with the stem on its own, and can't rely on another part of the motion for its meaning as the other part may not be passed. Motions with a complex hierarchy of parts and sub-parts, or where the stem continues after the parts of the motion, can be confusing and are less likely to be selected for debate.
- Please do not repeat existing policy (which is available on the BMA's website). If you think that a resolution made by the ARM in the past has not been acted upon sufficiently then say so, rather than just restating the policy again.

#### Avoid adding ambiguity to the debate

- Avoid imprecise wording like 'where possible'. This causes problems when trying to decide the BMA's stance.
- Another classic mistake is to say 'should' when 'shall' is more appropriate.

#### Beware of defamation

- Steer away from libel and slander and stick to proposing reasonable actions.
- If your motion is factually incorrect or based on hearsay the agenda committee / BMA Legal Department will reject it.

#### Media interest

- The ARM attracts considerable media interest. Be aware that if your motion is considered newsworthy, journalists may want to interview you before or at the ARM. The more evidence you have to support your motion, the easier it will be to explain your arguments to a public audience.

#### Quality assurance

Quality is better than quantity. It is far better to submit 4 motions of high quality that will promote good debate than 10 mediocre motions. This will reduce the workload of the secretariat and agenda committee as well as helping other representatives make sense of the agenda.

Finally, please check spelling, punctuation and grammar - remember that the agenda committee and secretariat will have to sift through all of this and fix it - try and get someone objective to read through it before you submit.