



What's a Snippet? Glad you asked! A Snippet is short article about meetings or parliamentary procedure. New snippets are released on the first day of every month at www.agreatmeeting.com.



Snippet #110 Amending a Motion

Motions are words that describe an action or decision of the assembly. Amendments are simply proposals to change to those words by adding more words, striking words out, or replacing existing words with different ones. Once the motion is on the floor, it no longer belongs to the person who made it – it belongs to the assembly and cannot be withdrawn or changed without permission.

The two most important things to remember about amending are:

- Work from the words, not from the ideas. *Which words do you want to change?*
- Work in only one part of the motion at a time.

If you want to suggest a change to the motion, the assembly needs to know which words are to be added, struck or replaced. The example we use in *A Great Meeting Needs a Great Chair* and *A Great Meeting Needs Great Members* is this:

“That we hold a book fair and use the proceeds to buy library books and software for the school.”

If you want to make sure the project takes place during a specific month, you can move to amend by inserting the words “during April” after the words “book fair.” If adopted, the motion as amended will read “That we hold a book fair during April and use the proceeds to buy library books and software for the school.” If you only want to buy software, you move to strike “library books and.”

The decision is first made on the amendment – *if* there is a book fair, shall we set it for April? Discussion is limited to the words “in April” after which the vote is taken to add those words. If adopted, discussion resumes on the main motion, either as originally proposed or as amended. Taking a few moments to make sure an amendment is clear can save precious minutes – or hours – for the assembly. It’s a skill that takes just a few moments of discipline, and if you need a moment to compose the words, you can ask the chair to have the assembly “stand at ease” for a few moments while you work it out. Standing at ease simply means that everyone relaxes in place – it’s not a recess. It is also a great tool to use if two people agree in concept about an amendment but need to work out the exact words. It can save a great deal of time – and frustration.

An amendment might be proposed to make the motion more acceptable should it be adopted. However, if the amendment is adopted, it is still necessary to vote on the motion. And, even if someone proposes an amendment and it is adopted, he can still vote against the main motion.

The second thing to remember is that the assembly can only make one decision at a time, so an amendment must be limited to only one part of the motion. All of the words being affected by the amendment must be connected which, in some cases, might mean striking out connecting words and then reinserting the connecting words with the new words. Read the amendment carefully to be sure it makes sense.

An amendment that proposes to strike an entire paragraph or motion and replace it with alternate language is called a substitute, and it is subject to different rules – described in Snippet #107.