

How do I prepare for my first conference?

Once you have signed up for a conference, you will receive your country assignment, your committee, and its topics. Most conferences provide a Background Guide or Topic Synopsis that introduces the topics — read that first.

There are typically three products to prepare before you walk into your first conference: the Position Paper (sometimes called a Policy Statement), your Opening Speech, and a Research Binder. Some novice conferences may also require a Country Profile. The other document to learn is how to write a Resolution since that is the primary goal of the committee sessions.

1. Position Paper (or Policy Statement)

The Position Paper is a one or two page document that is essentially a summary of your knowledge of the topic and the position your country plans to take when it enters committee. It typically contains three sections: Background of Topic, Past International Actions, and Country Policy & Possible Solutions. Position Papers are usually due before the conference.

The key starting points for researching each section are listed below. They will help you get started with participating in your first Model UN conference, but you will want to dig deeper as you develop more experience.

- **Background of topic:** Background guide of the topic provided by the conference, Google, the news, Wikipedia (to frame the topic)
- **Past international actions:** UN website, your committee's website, key treaties or resolutions mentioned in your background guide, UN or NGO reports
- **Country policy and possible solutions:** CIA World Factbook, your country's foreign ministry website, domestic programs within your country, your country's voting record on key treaties or resolutions, NGO or think tank policy recommendations, and your own creativity!

2. Opening Speech

The Opening Speech typically lasts about 1 minute or 1 minute and 30 seconds and is the first speech you give to the committee. It is the best opportunity for you to explain your country policy and the key sub-issues you would like the committee to focus on. Opening Speeches is a main way for countries to determine who they want to work with, so it's important to prepare a speech that conveys this. There are many tips and strategies on how to deliver an Opening Speech, but use your Position Paper as a guide when you are starting out. The most important action is to just be brave and make your first speech.

3. Research Binder

Research Binders are optional but highly recommended, especially since many conferences do not allow the use of technology in committee. An organized Research Binder will be your go-to

resource during the conference as new terms and acronyms, previous resolutions and treaties, and possible solutions are mentioned.

4. How to Write a Resolution

Delegates will be writing a document called a Resolution in committee along with other countries that they will be working with. It's important to know the resolution format and phrases, but most conferences do not allow pre-written resolutions since they want countries to collaborate together during the committee.

5. Country Profile

The Country Profile is a worksheet to help you understand your country and may not necessarily be required by your conference. Most of the information needed to fill out a Country Profile can be found in the CIA World Factbook. If required, Country Profiles are usually due at the same time as the Position Paper.

What will a typical day in committee look like?

Note: There are no standards in Model UN and different conferences may run their flow of debate and rules of procedure differently. The two most commonly used rules of procedure are UNA-USA procedure and THIMUN procedure; most conferences' rules of procedure are copied or modified from those two. Some crisis committees may operate with a customized set of rules and debate formats but you probably will not encounter this during your first conference. Almost all Model UN conferences use some form of parliamentary procedure which varies significantly from the consensus-building procedure used at the actual United Nations.

Nevertheless, there are similarities, and the goal of every committee (with the exception of crisis) is to produce and pass a document called a Resolution which outlines the problems that the countries want to solve within a topic and the proposed solutions to those problems.

UNA-USA Procedure

The flow of debate described below is a simplified version of the typical of North American high school conferences and many collegiate conferences around the world:

1. Each committee is led by a Chairperson who facilitates the discussion for the committee. The committee will start with the Chairperson taking roll call. Afterward, the committee will vote on which of the assigned topics to discuss first. After the topic is selected, the committee is ready to begin debate on the selected topic.
- 2a. There are three debate formats. The default debate format is called the Speakers List. This where delegates take turns making speeches in front of the room by the order that they are listed on the Speakers List as selected by the Chair. Speeches are typically around 1 minute or 1 minute and 30 seconds, but the speaking time can be changed by a majority vote from the delegates.

2b. After a certain number of speeches, the delegates may vote to change up the debate format to either Moderated Caucus or Unmoderated Caucus. Moderated Caucus is when the committee decides to focus on a sub-issue and get a back-and-forth debate going. Delegates will raise their placards to be called on to speak, and the Chairperson will call on speakers one-by-one until the Moderated Caucus time has expired.

2c. Unmoderated Caucus is when delegates are free to get up out of their seats and roam around the room to work with other countries with similar policies. The first one or two unmoderated caucuses will be spent finding allies, but afterward most of the unmoderated caucuses are spent writing draft resolutions with your caucus bloc (your group of allies). All delegates are encouraged to be a sponsor — an author — of a draft resolution.

Committee will switch between Speakers List, Moderated Caucus, and Unmoderated Caucus until draft resolutions are complete, merged, and ready to be presented.

3. Resolutions will be presented either as they are ready or all at once near the end of the conference (sometimes this is called Formal Caucus). Some conferences allow a question-and-answer period after the presentations, and some conferences will also allow time to make mergers or amendments to the resolution.

4. Finally, all the countries in the committee will vote on whether or not they want a resolution to be passed. Afterward, committee will repeat the same process again for the second topic, or if you do not have a second topic then you are done!