

Reigate Model United Nations

My First Conference



About MUN

A Model United Nations (MUN) conference is an event in which students play the role of diplomats representing particular countries at the United Nations. An MUN is run by students for students and this gives it a unique and exciting atmosphere. Those who participate fully have tremendous fun.

The purpose of the United Nations is for the countries of the world to work together to find answers to some of the big problems in the world. The United Nations was set up after the Second World War to try to prevent war and the causes of war in the future. The United Nations also promote human rights and development around the world. The purpose of the United Nations is set out in the Preamble of the UN Charter. This is given below.

“We the Peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, And for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims. Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.”

An MUN conference will have a number of countries represented. Each country will be represented by a number of students (usually between three and six, depending on the conference). The students will represent their country in different forums, so that each country will have one representative per forum. (Teams are called ‘delegations’, and individual team members are called ‘delegates’.) Different conferences will have different forums, but some of the more common are these:

- Disarmament (discussing how to reduce the amount of weapons in the world)
- Political (discussing issues about government, territorial disputes, ongoing conflicts, etc)
- Human Rights (discussing issues of injustice, such as sexism, racism, political prisoners, etc)
- Environment (concerned with issues such as global warming, pollution, etc)
- Economic and Social, ECOSOC (discussing issues facing the world such as child labour, financial institutions, etc)

Many conferences will also have a Security Council. This is a smaller forum, consisting only of 15 countries, which makes decisions on serious and urgent issues in the world, especially around war and military action. Security Council delegates are usually more experienced, and debates in the SC take a different format from other forums.

Some conferences, especially the larger ones, will also have an International Court of Justice. This is also a smaller forum, consisting of 15 Judges and 4 Advocates, which judges a case between two countries facing the real-life ICJ. Like the Security Council, ICJ participants are usually very experienced, and debates in the ICJ take a different format.

Most conferences also have a General Assembly. In GA, all the delegates from every committee congregate in a large hall. One or more of the resolutions that has been passed in the forums will be debated more fully in GA.

Preparing for a Conference

Once you have applied for a conference, you will be allocated a country. You will normally be part of a team ('delegation'), with each team member ('delegate') representing the country on a different committee. You will need to start with a team meeting to decide which member of the team (or delegate) will take part in which particular committee.

The first stage is to find out about the issues on the agenda that you are debating. Gather information on the background to the issue, major countries and organisations involved and previous work that has been done to try to solve the issue. Useful websites for gathering information are [the BBC](#), [Global Issues](#), and [the Global Policy Forum](#). Newspapers' websites can also be useful, but bear in mind that they can show a strong bias. [Wikipedia](#) can also be helpful to get a good overview of the situation, although its quality is variable.

The next stage is to find out about the country the team (or delegation) is representing. Gather information on the type of government, economy, geography, history, language(s) and culture. You may find it useful to look up the website of the country's Embassy or High Commission. Information can also be found on [the CIA World Factbook](#), and on [the UN website](#), which lists the home pages of Member States' Permanent Missions.

Now put the first two stages together and work out your country's policy on each item on the agenda.

Having established the policy of your country on an issue, you should then convert this to a policy statement. This will help you to decide what to say in the debate and which resolutions to support. You should write a policy statement on each topic on the agenda. Some conferences will require you to read out one or more of your policy statements. You should therefore keep policy statements to under 150 words. A policy statement should contain the following:

- An outline of the particular issue
- A statement of the country's position on the issue
- Suggestions for a solution to the problem

Below are some example policy statements, so that you can get an idea of the kind of thing you might want to say.

Topic: Provision of universal primary education

Country: Sweden

Sweden believes strongly in education for all. Education is essential for citizens to develop the skills needed to be productive in adult life. Sweden has compulsory education for all children, and this has helped our country prosper. Sweden believes that all countries should make the provision of free primary education for all children a priority. Some countries struggle to provide free education, and Sweden believes that the richer countries in the world should be willing to provide financial support in order to enable this to happen. Countries with more educated people are more prosperous and able to trade more, so it is in the interests of richer countries to help poorer countries educate their citizens. Education is also the best way to prevent human rights abuses, to prevent the exploitation of children, and to promote the well-being of women and girls throughout the world.

Topic: Exploitation of women

Country: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic kingdom and follows the teachings of the Qur'an and the principles of Sharia law. Islam teaches the protection of women by their male relatives, to safeguard them against being exploited.

Saudi Arabia rejects the Western idea that women and men are the same. It is because we understand that men and women have different roles and obligations in life that we protect our women from having to fend for themselves in a man's world. Saudi Arabia condemns the exploitation of women practised in Western countries, which encourage women to excite men's sexual desires. Saudi Arabia calls for the honour and dignity of women to be preserved and defended in all countries.

Dress for conferences is always formal. Male delegates should wear suits with collar and tie, and female and non-binary delegates should also be formally dressed.

You should bring with you some note-paper with your country name on the top, which you can use to send notes during the conference (see 'Note-passing' below).

At the Conference

More experienced delegates will often bring resolutions to conference to get them debated. (For more information on this, see [Writing a Resolution](#).) Even if you do not have a resolution, lobbying time is still important to find out about other people's resolutions that they hope to submit.

After you have written your resolution, you need to try to get it debated. Many other people will have resolutions too, and there won't be time to debate them all. How do you make sure yours gets debated? That's what lobbying is for.

If you have written a resolution, you are called the submitter. However, before it can be debated, you need to show that other people support it as well. The more people support the resolution, the more likely it is to be debated. During the lobbying process, you show your resolution to other delegates and encourage them to support it. If they agree, they add their name to the resolution as a co-submitter. You may also choose to co-submit other people's resolutions that you think are good. Please note the following points:

- Most conferences only allow you to co-submit one or two resolutions, so choose carefully.
- All conferences have a minimum number of co-submitters you will need for your resolution to be debated. The absolute minimum is three, but many conferences require at least 5. If you have more co-submitters, that is even better.
- If you co-submit a resolution, that means you agree to vote for it in its current form.
- Once you have all your co-submitters, you need to submit your resolution to the chairs.

Once the resolutions have been submitted, a resolution will be chosen to debate. It will be photocopied so all delegates can see it. The chair will invite the submitter to take the floor (i.e. come up to the front to speak). The submitter will read the operative clauses of the resolution (the bits of the resolution that say what the United Nations should do). They will then have some time to explain why it is a good resolution and why other countries should support it.

When the speaker has finished speaking, it is normal to invite points of information (questions about what they have said). The chair will then say, "The speaker has opened themselves to points of information. Are there any points from the floor? Please raise your placards." If you want to ask a question, you should raise your placard (the sign that says which country you are representing), which you will be given at the start of the conference.

If you are asking a question, please note the following points:

- This takes a bit of getting used to, but you should ask your question to the chair and ask about the speech that was made, rather than asking the person you spoke. So instead of saying, "Do you think that...?" You should say, "Does the delegate of Syria think that...?"
- Make sure that you ask a question, and make sure the question is about what has just been said. If you want to make a statement of your own about the resolution, you should wait until the speaker has sat down and ask to take the floor.
- You should stand up in your place to ask your question, and you should remain standing until they have answered it.
- If you want to ask a second question, or if you feel they haven't answered your question, you must ask the chair for a right of reply. To do this, say, "Right of reply?" If the chair agrees, then you may ask another question.

After the points of information are finished, the speaker will sit down. The chair will then invite another speaker to take the floor. If you wish to speak, you should raise your placard.

When you are speaking, please note the following points:

- You must refer to your country, not to yourself. So you should not say "I think that..." but "Sweden believes that..."
- Try to make sure that your comments are about the resolution specifically, and not just about the general issue. You might wish to support or oppose the resolution as a whole, or you might want to comment on just one bit of the resolution (the different bits are called clauses).
- Remember that you are trying to persuade other delegates to agree with you.

When you finish speaking, you may say one of three things:

“I open myself to points of information.” (This is normal, and means other delegates can ask you questions about what you have just said.)

“I yield the floor to the chair.” (This means that you don’t want to take any questions, and the chair will choose another delegate to speak.)

“I yield the floor to [another country]” (This means that you choose the next person to speak. It is most common for the person first submitting their resolution to yield to one of their co-submitters.)

Sometimes you may find that you agree with most of a resolution being debated, but there are a few bits that you want to change in order to make it better. If you wish to do this, you should send a note to the chair explaining how you want to amend the resolution. This will be in one of three ways.

- “Strike Clause 3” – this means that you want to remove Clause 3 from the resolution, but leave all the other clauses in.
- “Add new Clause 6: ...” – this means you want to add something extra to the resolution, while keeping the rest of it.
- “Amend Clause 2 to read: ...” – this means that you want to change the wording of Clause 2, which may include adding words, removing words, or changing the way it is expressed.

If the chair agrees to let your amendment be debated, you will be invited to take the floor to explain why the resolution is better if it is changed. Other speakers may oppose the change. After discussion about the amendment, it will be put to a vote. If the amendment passes, debate on the modified resolution will continue. If the amendment fails, debate will continue on the original resolution.

It is sometimes useful to pass notes to the chair or to other delegates during the debate. This is why you should bring some headed notepaper to the conference. The main things you may need to pass notes about are about amendments. This will obviously include telling the chair what your amendment is. However, you may want to get support for your amendment before you submit it, so you may wish to write to other delegates to see what they think about your amendment.

At the end of the debate, the resolution will be voted on. You may vote one of three ways:

- For (this means you agree with the resolution and want it to pass)
- Against (this means you disagree with the resolution and want it to fail)
- Abstain (this means you have no view on the resolution and choose not to vote.) For voting on amendments, you may only vote for or against and may not abstain.

As well as points of information, there are a number of other points that it is useful to be aware of, which are used less frequently. A full list can be found in the Delegate Preparation Guide. The most useful ones are listed below.

A **Point of Personal Privilege** refers to the well-being of a delegate. It may not refer to the resolution. It may only interrupt a speaker if the speech is inaudible. This is the only point that may interrupt a speaker.

A **Point of Order** is a question about procedure, or if the speaker says something offensive. It has to be addressed to the Chair. It can be made during a pause in a speech. To make a point of order, you say, “Point of Order” when the speaker pauses or finishes. When the chair invites you to make your point, you should stand and ask the chair, “Is it in order for...?”

A **Point of Parliamentary Enquiry** is a question to the Chair about the rules of procedure.

Move the Previous Question is a call to end debate time and to vote on the resolution. It should have a seconder. If anyone objects, it is put to a vote (without debate), a two-thirds majority being required.