

POSITION PAPERS MODEL UN PREPARATION GUIDE

Many conferences require that each delegation submit a position paper —an essay detailing your country’s policies on the topics being discussed in your committee. Writing a position paper will help you organize your ideas so that you can share your country’s position with the rest of the committee. If you conduct extensive research, a position paper should be easy to write.

Most conferences that require position papers ask for them about one month before the conference so that staff members can read them and get a feel for the direction debate will take. If the conference you are attending does not require a position paper, you should still consider writing one to help you organize your research and prepare your speeches. Many delegates use their position papers as their opening remarks.

HOW TO WRITE A POSITION PAPER

Writing a position paper might appear to be a daunting task, especially for new delegates. But with enough research, you will find that writing a position paper will be easy and useful.

Position papers are usually one to one-and-a-half pages in length. Your position paper should include a brief introduction followed by a comprehensive breakdown of your country's position on the topics that are being discussed by the committee. A good position paper will not only provide facts but also make proposals for resolutions.

Many conferences will ask for specific details in a position paper, so be sure to include all the required information. Most conferences will provide delegates a background guide to the issue. Usually, the background guide will contain questions to consider. Make sure that your position paper answers these questions.

A GOOD POSITION PAPER WILL INCLUDE:

- A brief introduction to your country and its history concerning the topic and committee;
- How the issue affects your country;
- Your country’s policies with respect to the issue and your country’s justification for these policies;
- Quotes from your country’s leaders about the issue;
- Statistics to back up your country’s position on the issue;
- Actions taken by your government with regard to the issue;
- Conventions and resolutions that your country has signed or ratified;

- UN actions that your country supported or opposed;
- What your country believes should be done to address the issue;
- What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution; and
- How the positions of other countries affect your country's position.

POSITION PAPER TIPS

- **Keep it simple.** To communicate strongly and effectively, avoid flowery wording and stick to uncomplicated language and sentence structure.
- **Make it official.** Try to use the seal of your country or create an "official" letterhead for your position paper. The more realistic it looks, the more others will want to read it.
- **Get organized.** Give each separate idea or proposal its own paragraph. Make sure each paragraph starts with a topic sentence.
- **Cite your sources.** Use footnotes or endnotes to show where you found your facts and statistics. If you are unfamiliar with bibliographic form, look up the Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines at your school's library.
- **Read and reread.** Leave time to edit your position paper. Ask yourself if the organization of the paper makes sense and double-check your spelling and grammar.
- **Speech! Speech!** Do you plan to make an opening statement at your conference? A good position paper makes a great introductory speech. During debate, a good position paper will also help you to stick to your country's policies.
- **Let the bullets fly.** Try not to let your proposals become lost in a sea of information. For speechmaking, create a bulleted list of your proposals along with your most important facts and statistics so that you will not lose time looking for them during debate.