

Model United Nations

The purpose of this guide is to provide teachers with an overview of the committee and conference procedure. This can be used to enable mini-simulations in the classroom and also help in guiding students in their conference preparation.

What is Model United Nations?

Model United Nations is a simulation of the UN General Assembly and other multilateral bodies. In Model UN, students step into the shoes of ambassadors from UN member states to debate current issues on the organisation's agenda. While playing their roles as ambassadors, student "delegates" make speeches, prepare draft resolutions, negotiate with allies and adversaries, resolve conflicts, and navigate the Model UN conference rules of procedure - all in the interest of mobilising "international cooperation" to resolve problems that affect countries all over the world.

Before playing out their ambassadorial roles in a Model UN simulation, students research the issue that their committee will address. Model UN participants learn how the international community acts on its concerns about topics including peace and security, human rights, the environment, food and hunger, economic development and globalisation. Model UN delegates also look closely at the needs, goals and foreign policies of the countries they will represent at the event. The insights they gain from their exploration of history, geography, culture, economics and science contribute to the authenticity of the simulation when the role playing gets under way. The delegates' in-depth knowledge of their countries guarantees a lively and memorable experience.

Model United Nations is an effective tool for teaching Active Citizenship and developing essential skills in research, diplomacy, conflict resolution, public speaking and debate. It also provides an excellent way of students working cooperatively and collaboratively with students from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and capabilities.

Who participates in Model United Nations?

The popularity of Model UN continues to grow and more with more than 400,000 middle school, high school and college/university students worldwide participate every year in the United States. Here at Mulberry, we have run 5 Model United Nations conferences in the last 3 years. We have trained over 50 schools across London and have involved over 2000 students in our conferences.

As well as students taking part in Model United Nations, some influential figures have also benefitted from the experience.....

- US Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer
- Under-Secretary General for Public Information, Kiyotaka Akasaka
- UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon
- Actor Samuel L. Jackson

What types of topics are discussed in Model UN conferences?

The agenda items discussed in committee vary at each conference. Most conferences tend to focus on current affairs issues that are being discussed in the United Nations. These issues can highlight political, financial and/or social concerns. However, the task of some committees might be to address hypothetical concerns or issues from the past or future. For example, many conferences have "crisis" committees, in which delegates must

react to a hypothetical or actual crisis situation. Other conferences host historical or future Security Council simulations.

Mulberry Model United Nations conferences have included the following topics: Refugee Responsibility, Torture, Violence against Women, Landmines, HIV/AIDs crisis and The Elimination of Poverty. This year's conferences are Multi-national terrorist groups (Sixth form conference) and Climate Change.

What is a Model UN delegate?

A Model UN delegate is a student who assumes the role of an ambassador to the United Nations in a Model UN simulation. Prior to a conference or event, a Model UN delegate does not need extensive experience in international relations. Anyone can participate in Model UN, so long as they have the ambition to learn something new and to work with people to try and make a difference in the world. We have worked with students from year 8 right through to Year 13 and find the environment encourages students from different age ranges working together and learning from one another.

Why should I participate in Model UN?

Model UN promotes students' and teachers' interest in world around them and broadens a student's knowledge in a variety of subjects. Model UN also teaches vital skills in negotiation, public speaking, problem solving, conflict resolution, research and communication. Model UN also gives students and teachers the opportunity to meet interesting new people and make new friends.

Model United Nations also provides an active and engaging tool for teaching and learning about global issues.

What are some of the educational benefits of Model UN?

For almost 60 years, teachers and students have benefited from and enjoyed this interactive learning experience. It not only involves young people in the study and discussion of global issues, but also encourages the development of skills useful throughout their lives, such as negotiation, research, writing, public speaking, problem solving, consensus building, conflict resolution and compromise and cooperation. These are transferable across the curriculum and beyond.

How do I start a club at my school?

You can start a Model UN club or team at your school with a few simple steps. First, you should find an interested teacher if they would be interested in helping you start a Model UN club. You could also ask your principal or social studies chairperson if they know any teachers that would be interested. Next, you need to recruit members and pick a day and time to meet. Most groups meet about once a week. At your meetings you should choose which conferences to attend, organize your fundraising efforts, talk about any new information you may have received, prepare for your conference and hold practice simulations.

Model United Nations can be successfully implemented into the curriculum through Citizenship, Geography, Humanities and Social Science.

What is a Model UN conference?

Some Model UN exercises take place in the classroom and others are school-wide. Model UN events that are regional, national or international are called conferences. Conferences are much larger, with participants from many schools. More than one million people have participated in Model UN conferences around the world since they became popular over 50 years ago. Today there are more than 400 conferences that take place in 52 countries. Conference can have as few as 30 students or as many as 3,000.

Mulberry Model United Nations conferences involve between 250-350 students per conference. We normally welcome about 20 schools to each conference. The Winter Conferences are one day long and the Summer Conference is held over two days.

Position Papers

In an effort to expand upon the high quality of debate at the Global Classrooms: Model UN Conference, delegates are required to submit position papers prior to the conference. Position papers allow delegates to organise their ideas and aid in formatting and representing their country's policy. Their position paper will also aid delegates in creating their speeches. Each position paper should relate to a topic on the agenda, answer the "Questions to Consider" that are provided in the background guides and position paper writing frame, and define the topic's relationship to the country's national interests.

Length

Position papers should be approximately one page A4 typed (single-spaced 10/12 font).

Content

The paper should include a brief introduction and a comprehensive breakdown of the country's position on the topics being discussed in the committee. An excellent position paper includes:

- A brief introduction to the country and its history regarding the topic and/or UN body;
 - The country's background on the topic, including:
 - Political and/or foreign policy;
 - Action taken by the government in relation to the topic;
 - Resolutions, conventions and declarations that the country supports;
 - Quotes taken from speeches made by heads of government;
 - Statistics regarding the issue; and
- The country's recommendation for a resolution for the topic.

Rules of Procedure and Model UN terms

Model United Nations can be confusing to a beginner, not only because of the complexity of the issues and the pace of debate, but because of the strangeness of the language. At your first Model UN conference, you may not think that some of the delegates are speaking English, because of the weird terms they are using! This is Model UN terminology and delegates pick it up very fast and really thrive on using it to help them structure their debate!!

Look it over, and soon you'll be able to discuss quorums, perambulatory clauses, division of the question, and unmoderated caucuses with the best of them.

Abstain - During a vote on a substantive matter, delegates may abstain rather than vote yes or no. This generally signals that a state does not support the resolution being voted on, but does not oppose it enough to vote no.

Adjourn - All UN or Model UN sessions end with a vote to adjourn. This means that the debate is suspended until the next meeting. This can be a short time (e.g., overnight) or a long time (until next year's conference).

Agenda - The order in which the issues before a committee will be discussed. The first duty of a committee following the roll call is usually to set the agenda.

Amendment - A change to a draft resolution on the floor. Can be of two types: a "friendly amendment" is supported by the original draft resolution's sponsors, and is passed automatically, while an "unfriendly amendment" is not supported by the original sponsors and must be voted on by the committee as a whole.

Background guide - A guide to a topic being discussed in a Model UN committee usually written by conference organizers and distributed to delegates before the conference. The starting point for any research before a Model UN conference.

Binding - Having legal force in UN member states. Security Council resolutions are binding, as are decisions of the International Court of Justice; resolutions of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council are not.

Bloc - A group of countries in a similar geographical region or with a similar opinion on a particular topic.

Caucus - A break in formal debate in which countries can more easily and informally discuss a topic. There are two types: moderated caucus and unmoderated caucus.

Chair - A member of the dais that moderates debate, keeps time, rules on points and motions, and enforces the rules of procedure. Also known as a Moderator.

Dais - The group of people, usually high school or college students, in charge of a Model UN committee. It generally consists of a Chair, a Director, and a Rapporteur.

Decorum - The order and respect for others that all delegates at a Model UN conference must exhibit. The Chair will call for decorum when he or she feels that the committee is not being respectful of a speaker, of the dais, or of their roles as ambassadors.

Delegate - A student acting as a representative of a member state or observer in a Model UN committee for a weekend.

Delegation - The entire group of people representing a member state or observer in all committees at a particular Model UN conference.

Director - A member of the dais that oversees the creation of working papers and draft resolutions, acts as an expert on the topic, makes sure delegates accurately reflect the policy of their countries, and ensures that decorum is maintained during caucuses.

Division of the Question - During voting bloc, delegates may motion to vote on certain clauses of a resolution separately, so that only the clauses that are passed become part of the final resolution. This is known as division of the question.

Draft resolution - A document that seeks to fix the problems addressed by a Model UN committee. If passed by the committee, the draft resolution will become into a resolution.

Faculty Advisor - The faculty member in charge of a Model UN team, class or club.

Flow of debate - The order in which events proceed during a Model UN conference. See Flow of Debate chart.

Gavel - The tool, shaped like a small wooden hammer, that the Chair uses to keep order within a Model UN committee. Many conferences give the gavel used in a committee to the delegate recognized by the dais as the best in that committee; therefore, the term is frequently used to refer to the award given to the best delegate, even in cases where no actual gavel is given.

Formal debate - The "standard" type of debate at a Model UN conference, in which delegates speak for a certain time in an order based on a speakers' list.

Head Delegate - The student leader of a Model UN club or team.

Member State - A country that has ratified the Charter of the United Nations and whose application to join has been accepted by the General Assembly and Security Council. Currently, there are 191 member states. The only internationally recognized state that is not a member state is the Holy See.

Moderated Caucus - A type of caucus in which delegates remain seated and the Chair calls on them one at a time to speak for a short period of time, enabling a freer exchange of opinions than would be possible in formal debate.

Moderator - See Chair.

Motion - A request made by a delegate that the committee as a whole do something. Some motions might be to go into a caucus, to adjourn, to introduce a draft resolution, or to move into voting bloc. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

Observer - A state, national organization, regional organization, or non-governmental organization that is not a member of the UN but participates in its debates. Observers can vote on procedural matters but not substantive matters. An example is the Holy See.

On the floor - At a Model UN conference, when a working paper or draft resolution is first written, it may not be discussed in debate. After it is approved by the Director and introduced by the committee, it is put "on the floor" and may be discussed.

Operative clause - The part of a resolution which describes how the UN will address a problem. It begins with an action verb (decides, establishes, recommends, etc.).

Page - A delegate in a Model UN committee that has volunteered to pass notes from one delegate to another, or from a delegate to the dais, for a short period of time.

Placard - A piece of cardstock with a country's name on it that a delegate raises in the air to signal to the Chair that he or she wishes to speak.

Point - A request raised by a delegate for information or for an action relating to that delegate. Examples include a point of order, a point of inquiry, and a point of personal privilege. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

Position paper - A summary of a country's position on a topic, written by a delegate before a Model UN conference.

Preambulatory Clause - The part of a resolution that describes previous actions taken on the topic and reasons why the resolution is necessary. It begins with a participle or adjective (noting, concerned, regretting, aware of, recalling, etc.).

Procedural - Having to do with the way a committee is run, as opposed to the topic being discussed. All delegates present must vote on procedural matters and may not abstain.

Quorum - The minimum number of delegates needed to be present for a committee to meet. In the General Assembly, a quorum consists of one third of the members to begin debate, and a majority of members to pass a resolution. In the Security Council, no quorum exists for the body to debate, but nine members must be present to pass a resolution.

Rapporteur - A member of the dais whose duties include keeping the speakers' list and taking the roll call.

Resolution - A document that has been passed by an organ of the UN that aims to address a particular problem or issue. The UN equivalent of a law.

Right of Reply - A right to speak in reply to a previous speaker's comment, invoked when a delegate feels personally insulted by another's speech. Generally requires a written note to the Chair to be invoked.

Roll Call - The first order of business in a Model UN committee, during which the Rapporteur reads aloud the names of each member state in the committee. When a delegate's country's name is called, he or she may respond "present" or "present and voting." A delegate responding "present and voting" may not abstain on a substantive vote.

Rules of Procedure - The rules by which a Model UN committee is run. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

Second - To agree with a motion being proposed. Many motions must be seconded before they can be brought to a vote.

Secretariat - The most senior staff of a Model UN conference.

Secretary General - The leader of a Model UN conference.

Signatory - A country that wishes a draft resolution to be put on the floor and signs the draft resolution to accomplish this. A signatory need not support a resolution; it only wants it to be discussed. Usually, Model UN conferences require some minimum number of sponsors and signatories for a draft resolution to be approved.

Simple majority - 50% plus one of the number of delegates in a committee. The amount needed to pass most votes.

Speakers' List - A list that determines the order in which delegates will speak. Whenever a new topic is opened for discussion, the Chair will create a speakers' list by asking all delegates wishing to speak to raise their placards and calling on them one at a time. During debate, a delegate may indicate that he or she wishes to be added to the speakers' list by sending a note to the dais.

Sponsor - One of the writers of a draft resolution. A friendly amendment can only be created if all sponsors agree.

Substantive - Having to do with the topic being discussed. A substantive vote is a vote on a draft resolution or amendment already on the floor during voting bloc. Only member states (not observer states or non-governmental organizations) may vote on substantive issues.

Unmoderated Caucus - A type of caucus in which delegates leave their seats to mingle and speak freely. Enables the free sharing of ideas to an extent not possible in formal debate or even a moderated caucus. Frequently used to sort countries into blocs and to write working papers and draft resolutions.

Working Paper - A document in which the ideas of some delegates on how to resolve an issue are proposed. Frequently the precursor to a draft resolution.

Veto - The ability, held by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States to prevent any draft resolution in the Security Council from passing by voting no.

Vote - A time at which delegates indicate whether they do or do not support a proposed action for the committee. There are two types: procedural and substantive.

Voting bloc - The period at the end of a committee session during which delegates vote on proposed amendments and draft resolutions. Nobody may enter or leave the room during voting bloc.

Flow of debate

It is sometimes helpful to think of a Model UN conference as if it were a play in which delegates are the actors and Secretariat members are the directors. The storyline of a stage show is similar to what Model UNers call the "flow of debate" – the order in which events proceed during a Model UN conference. The chart below shows the various stages of debate that take place during a Model UN simulation.

Resolutions

The final results of discussion, writing and negotiation are resolutions—written suggestions for addressing a specific problem or issue. Resolutions, which are drafted by delegates and voted on by the committee, normally require a simple majority to pass (except in the Security Council). Only Security Council resolutions can compel nations to take action. All other UN bodies use resolutions to make recommendations or suggestions for future action.

Draft Resolutions

Draft resolutions are all resolutions that have not yet been voted on. Delegates write draft resolutions alone or with other countries. There are three main parts to a draft resolution: the heading, the preamble and the operative section. The heading shows the committee and topic along with the resolution number. It also lists the draft resolution's sponsors and signatories (see below). Each draft resolution is one long sentence with sections separated by commas and semicolons. The subject of the sentence is the body making the statement (e.g., the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, or Security Council). The preamble and operative sections then describe the current situation and actions that the committee will take.

Bringing a Resolution to the Floor for Debate

A draft resolution must always gain the support of a certain number of member states in the committee before the sponsors (the delegates who created the resolution) may submit it to the committee staff.

Tips for Resolution Writing

- Create a **detailed resolution**. For example, if your resolution calls for a new program, think about how it will be funded and what body will manage it.
- Try to **cite facts** whenever possible.
- **Be realistic**. Do not create objectives for your resolution that cannot be met. Make sure your body can take the action suggested. For example, the General Assembly can't sanction another country – only the Security Council can do so.
- Try to find **multiple sponsors**. Your committee will be more likely to approve the resolutions if many delegates contribute ideas.
- **Preambulatory clauses** are historic justifications for action. Use them to cite past resolutions, precedents and statements about the purpose of action.
- **Operative clauses** are policies that the resolution is designed to create. Use them to explain what the committee will do to address the issue.

For further information about conference preparation and Model United Nations programmes around the world, please visit www.unausa.org.