

COMMITTEE SESSIONS

A GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AT NHSMUN

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS AND TERMS

The Committee Staff

The committee staff consists of the Director, the Assistant Director, and in the main General Assembly committees, a Chairperson. The Director is the chief educator of the committee and is responsible for the substantive aspects of the committee session, the preparation of the Background Guide, and the general accuracy of the simulation. The Assistant Director assists the Director in his or her responsibilities and prepares the Update Papers, distributed at the beginning of committee session. The Chairperson handles debate facilitation and administrative matters. On most committees, the Director and Assistant Director alternate fulfilling the role of Chairperson. On the main General Assembly committees a separate staff member is responsible for chairing debate. Though each member of the committee staff has specific responsibilities, the simulation is a team effort -- each member of the committee staff is indeed an educator. For more detail on the roles of the rest of NHSMUN staff, please see Chapter 2, "About NHSMUN," in the online delegate resources.

Rules of Procedure

The committees at NHSMUN work within the rules of procedure formulated by the conference staff. Effective use of the rules is essential to a smooth-running and functional committee. A complete set of the NHSMUN rules of procedure is available online with other delegate preparation resources. These rules should be thoroughly reviewed by each delegate. Do not assume that your knowledge of the rules of other Model UN Conferences will apply equally at NHSMUN; no two Model UN conferences have the same rules. All delegates are encouraged to attend the rules session held before committees meet for the first time; first-time delegates are required to do so. Additionally, a separate rules session will be held for all committees with specialized rules before they convene (see the conference schedule for details).

Blocs

During the course of the conference, delegates may find themselves working in different blocs or groups of nations that vote and/or caucus together due to a set of similar interests and common views. The reasons for this unity can be historical, political, ideological, military, geographic, or economic in nature. These blocs unite on issues of importance to use their combined strength to press for opposition or support of resolutions, amendments, or concessions primary to their national interests. States acting together in blocs can accomplish things that as individual nations they could never hope to achieve. During caucus periods, blocs interact with one another and negotiate to further their goals--agreeing, for instance, to eliminate an unfavorable clause to gain support for their resolution, or promising to vote in favor of another bloc's position if that bloc agrees to defeat the proposal of another, opposing bloc.

Examples of regional blocs are the African or Latin American blocs; ideological blocs include the non-aligned and the Eastern blocs; a bloc formed for military (and political and strategic) reasons is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The breakdown of blocs will vary from committee to committee and from issue to issue depending on the nature of the topic under discussion and the blocs the delegates find most useful. The more political committees tend to split along regional lines (i.e. Western, African, Middle Eastern, Eastern, Asian, Latin American); however this is not universal -- the non-aligned bloc tends to draw many developing and under-developed states away from their geographical bloc. One must note that regional or ideological interests are not always paramount. For example, Israel (a Middle Eastern state) traditionally votes with the Western bloc.

Role-Playing

Delegates will be expected to effectively act out the role of their assigned country representatives throughout the duration of the conference. This must be demonstrated both through proper conduct as a UN official and by the delegate's aptitude in representing the interests of his or her country. Delegates will frequently be challenged to think on their feet and it is therefore important that all delegates be well versed in their national positions and in the reasons behind those positions.

It is absolutely critical that delegates be able to distinguish between their national policies and their fundamental national interests. A national position is the stance a country takes on an issue, the policy a delegate presents when negotiating with other delegates. A national interest is what a country deems vital to its existence. To illustrate this difference one need only consider the United States' relationship with the Philippines. The US supported both the Marcos regime and its usurper, the Aquino government. This course of action by the US was largely due to the fact that the US benefits strategically by having a military base on Philippine soil. Thus, the policy of the United States changed from supporting Marcos to Aquino but its strategic interests remained the same.

A national position can be compromised for the sake of a greater good (especially if it achieves long-range interest goals or if it can be translated into direct benefits for the nation). A national interest cannot be compromised. Delegates should not be preoccupied with following blindly the stated positions of their country that they have come across in their research. Rather, they should identify the reasons behind those positions and extrapolate from the facts at their disposal the genuine national interest of their country beyond which they cannot compromise in negotiations. By recognizing the difference between a national position and a national interest, delegates will be freer to actively participate in the negotiating process while accurately representing their country. Delegates can be creative in their approaches to problem solving and can thus get more out of their NHSMUN experience.

Delegate Objectives

It should be the objective of every delegate to be effective in committee. At NHSMUN, being effective means forwarding the goals and interests of one's country. To do this, a delegate must be knowledgeable about his or her own country, the topic areas, and the proceedings of the United Nations. In addition, a delegate must also be able to work well with others. Delegates cannot be effective in committee if he or she alienates large portions of all of the committee by mistaking assertiveness for obnoxious behavior and/or rude treatment of fellow delegates. It is the experienced and mature delegate who chooses to further his or her aims through shrewd and tactful diplomacy.

IN COMMITTEE SESSION

Setting the Agenda

The first matter to be considered in committee following the taking of the role (and an orientation speech by the committee staff) will be the setting of the agenda. Each committee has a provisional agenda prior to the session. The provisional agenda consists of the topics presented in the Background Guide. The committee must choose the order in which to address these topics. Traditionally, the time allotted for debate at NHSMUN provides committees with enough time to thoroughly address only one topic.

A Speaker's List will be established for the purpose of debate on the order of the agenda. Delegates may begin making motions proposing an agenda only after the Chairperson has deemed that sufficient debate has taken place. The motion must include all topics on the provisional agenda (ex. a motion to address Topic B first and Topic A second, or vice versa). If the Chairperson accepts the motion, it will be put to an

immediate vote. If a proposed order passes, debate on the agenda is over, and debate on the first topic begins. If the motion fails, debate on the agenda continues until another motion is made and passed.

General Debate on the Topic

Once a topic area has been opened, a new Speaker's List will be taken, and formal debate on the topic area will begin. Normally, debate will begin in a very general way, with delegates making policy statements and suggesting broad solutions. After the main issues have been outlined, (which delegates should have been aware of before the session opened) and individual country positions established, someone will call for a caucus. The formal session will recess and delegates will informally begin to discuss the issues and draft proposals. Normally, it takes the first two sessions to get the issues on the table and delegates adjusted to the committee format.

NHSMUN attempts to simulate as closely as possible the workings of the actual United Nations. The work of the United Nations is carried out within its committees and organizations, and these bodies formulate policy by way of debate. For this reason, each Director includes a section in his or her Background Guide on how the debate will be structured (the "Simulation" section). In a more general sense, however, a mastery and understanding of the three basic types of debate is a must for a delegate on any committee.

Formal Debate- This is traditional debate, carried out entirely within the Rules of Procedure. On substantive matters, it consists of speakers who speak in an order determined by the Speaker's List, and who may choose to answer questions on the substance of their speech. The Chairperson moderates this debate, and all motions concerning the debate must pass through him or her. Formal debate is the framework within which all voting and submission of formal resolutions must take place.

Informal Debate- Informal debate, sometimes called a moderated caucus, is a "suspension of the rules" which may be allowed by the Chairperson to facilitate discussion. A formal speaker's list is not drawn up; delegates are recognized to speak by the Chairperson at the conclusion of each speech. Generally, this kind of debate takes the form of a roundtable discussion. It allows a greater measure of give and take between delegates and enables issues to be addressed and clarified when formal rules may be too cumbersome. It can be an effective tool (especially in smaller committees) and its use is at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Caucusing- Caucusing, like informal debate, is a temporary recess of the committee meeting, when proposals are drawn up and consensus building, negotiation, and compromise take place. Caucusing provides the opportunity for written words to be put to the concepts and thoughts voiced in more formal debate. Caucusing is the primary "working mode" of the committee. Blocs use this opportunity to consolidate and discuss their positions, and to communicate between each other. Working papers and resolutions, discussed below, are usually drafted during these unmoderated caucuses.

Working Papers

Before composing a formal resolution to deal with the topic problems, delegates may wish to transfer their general ideas into a working paper, or rough draft. Working papers are usually formed by a group of nations from the same geographic bloc or of similar ideological persuasion. Working papers need not be written in formal resolution format; they can be as simple as few major points neatly jotted down on paper. The purpose of a working paper is to have something in writing to serve as a starting reference point during caucus and formal debate. Though not formally introduced to the committee, working papers may be copied (by NHSMUN administrative staff) and distributed in committee, with the Director's approval. Working papers serve to help delegates identify the different views of the countries in the committee and facilitate the negotiation process. Resolutions are usually formed by combining the content of several working papers.

Resolutions

At some point in the debate, usually well into the second or third session, a group of delegates (sponsors) who have been working on a proposal (perhaps in working paper form) will find they have enough support to formally bring their resolution before the committee. All this really means is that the resolution is assigned a number designator (e.g. 1.1 for the first resolution on Topic 1), typed, duplicated and distributed to the committee. Because document-processing facilities are always in high demand, initial distribution will be limited to one copy for every two or three delegations.

It is the Director who authorizes the copying and distribution of a resolution or working papers. To introduce a resolution to the full committee, a minimum number of signatures are needed to justify bringing it before the committee. It is important for delegates to take note that *signing* a resolution does not constitute *endorsing* it; by signing a resolution the delegate only indicates that he or she believes that the resolution deserves debate before the full committee. The writers of a resolution (who do endorse the content of the document) are the *sponsors* and delegates who only sign the resolution are *signatories*. To introduce a resolution, one-fifth of the committee body must be sponsors or signatories of the documents (there must be at least one sponsor per resolution).

Pre-written resolutions are not allowed at NHSMUN. A pre-written resolution is a document written before the conference, sometimes known as a “pre-write.” A delegate may, however, want to write down some major points that address the problem areas of the topics before the conference to serve as a reference. Pre-written resolutions go against basic NHSMUN philosophy. Debate should consist of the presentation of national policies upon which solutions can be based, not the presentation of pre-written resolutions upon which policies can be based. NHSMUN recognizes that the effectiveness and importance of the United Nations lies in its capacity for international discussion. Long-term solutions are mainly derived by altering world opinion, which is possible only through debate.

Generally, it becomes apparent that debate on a topic has reached some sort of conclusion, consensus, or final stage beyond which the arguments only repeat themselves. At this time the Director may allow a motion that debate be closed on the topic area. Should the committee pass such a motion, debate on the topic area closes and all resolutions before the committee are brought to an immediate vote. Such a step is not to be taken lightly, for it generally means that no further discussion on the topic is possible and that the committee moves on to the next agenda item--another type of debate entirely. (Debate may also be “tabled.” This means leaving the topic without voting on resolutions. The committee may then vote at some future point to take the debate up again. Tabling is useful when the debate becomes deadlocked, but is generally discouraged due to limited conference time.)

Amendments

After a resolution is debated in committee, it is common for changes both small and large to be made to the document. These changes most often come in the form of amendments to the resolution. Time and resource constraints often do not allow delegates to submit new resolutions late in committee debate, so when possible clauses and sub-clauses in existing resolutions are added, subtracted, or re-worded according to the committee’s preferences. Amendments are given consistent numbering; for example, Amendment 1.2.1 is the first amendment to Resolution 1.2 and Amendment 1.2.2 is the second amendment to Resolution 1.2. There is no limit to the amount of changes an amendment can make to a resolution. Amendments are often used to combine multiple resolutions into one cohesive document.

At NHSMUN, there are no “friendly amendments.” A friendly amendment is when all the sponsors of a resolution agree on an amendment. In such a situation, the amendment does not need to be voted on and it automatically applies to the resolution it pertains to. This is not acceptable at NHSMUN; all amendments must be voted on by the entire committee, just like all resolutions. An amendment needs Director approval and one-tenth of the committee body as sponsors or signatories to be introduced to the committee.

Amendments are voted on before resolutions, starting with the most destructive. (For example, if Amendment 1.1.1 deals with the wording of clause 3 and Amendment 1.1.2 calls to strike clause 3 all together, the latter will be voted on first, as it is the most destructive. Should Amendment 1.1.2 pass, it would thus render Amendment 1.1.1 irrelevant to the resolution.)

Voting

The committee takes two types of votes: procedural and substantive. Procedural votes pertain to logistical issues, for example the length of speaking time. During procedural votes all members of the committee must vote and there are no abstentions. Substantive votes pertain to all content-driven matters before the committee, like passing an amendment or resolution. During substantive votes abstentions are counted. During substantive voting procedure, the chamber, or committee room, is sealed and no one is permitted to leave or enter the room. Most voting procedures use a simple majority vote, meaning the item must pass by a majority of half the committee body plus one. Certain items must pass by a two-thirds majority, including reconsideration (Rule 49), important question status (Rule 48), and closer of debate (Rule 36).

USEFUL SKILLS

Developing the skills necessary to participate fully in committee is crucial to enjoying one's time at the Conference. These skills center on an ability to translate desired goals into concrete measures; they are **communication, negotiation, and writing (or drafting)**. Each of these skills must be practiced and polished until they become an integral part of each delegate. With these tools in hand, he or she will be able to participate fully and effectively in the simulation. Below, each skill is outlined and expanded upon with useful tips and techniques.

Communication

Communication is fundamental for the delegate. He or she must be able to verbalize ideas and support arguments clearly and concisely to a single person as well as to large groups. Delegates should learn to speak from prepared notes as well as extemporaneously.

Speech Guidelines- All speeches, whether they are written weeks or minutes in advance, should be clear and concise. They should address the issue at hand, whether it is substantive or procedural, and remain germane throughout. Written speeches will help to ensure that delegates do not leave important points out.

Writing the Speech- Although most of the speeches that a delegate gives will be delivered extemporaneously (with little time for preparation), there are occasions when formal speeches can be given. These usually occur during general debate on a specific issue or during opening policy statements. Formal speeches should be well-written and well-practiced so that their delivery will be as effective as possible. Even these prepared statements, however, may need to be altered in the course of the general debate in order to respond to points made by other delegates.

Policy Speeches- General debate speeches state the country's policy on a wide range of issues. The first speech on a given topic should state a country's stances with respect to issues covered by that topic. That is, a general policy outline speech should include:

- Broad introduction to the country's goals on the specific issues
- Specific positions on various aspects of the issue at hand
- Supporting arguments
- A conclusion summarizing your case

Extemporaneous Speeches- These spur-of-the-moment speeches will be the primary vehicle for the delegate's communications of his or her ideas. A few minutes of planning will make the speech much more

effective; a rambling delegate will quickly lose the attention of the committee. The following tips on extemporaneous speeches should be helpful:

Substantive Extemporaneous Speeches- These speeches deal with issues related to the topics, and should use the following suggestions:

- Make notes on opposing viewpoints while they are being given
- Answer each point *directly*
- Keep notes on the speeches of your allies; bring out points which they have omitted, re-emphasize concepts which may be still unclear
- Highlight important sections of the resolutions and tell why they are important
- Use your notes so that you do not omit important points

Procedural Extemporaneous Speeches- These are speeches regarding the pros and cons of a motion before the committee, and should include the following suggestions:

- Speak only to the procedural matter at hand
- Explain your viewpoint as to what should or should not happen
- Be concise and complete

Delivering the Speech- Good speaking skills are necessary in the United Nations because both formal and informal meetings require that your words reach a large audience. Because most people have had a fair amount of practice in speaking to small groups, this section concentrates on the skills necessary in speaking to a large group. The points made, however, can easily be applied to a small group situation. The following tips may be helpful:

- Know what you are going to say before you say it; even extemporaneous speakers should have notes to refer to
- Speak loudly; take advantage of the public address systems in your meetings
- Speak slowly; allow your words to sink in. Do not, however, fill the spaces between your words with monosyllables like “um” and “and”
- Practice pre-written speeches in advance
- Try to add some interesting points about your country to the body of your speech. This will make your speech more interesting, causing more delegates to pay attention to it

Negotiating

Delegates must develop negotiating skills so that they may attain their country’s aims, whatever they may be. This includes adopting a strategy and using the proper tactics to accomplish the desired goal. To be an effective negotiator, delegates must be tactically as well as substantively prepared before the conference begins. In researching their country, committee and issues, they should -- *for each agenda item* -- formulate an objective, strategy, and tactics. Student’s objectives should address such questions as: does my country have a specific position on this issue; does it wish to see concrete action taken?

Once a delegate has thought through the objectives of his or her country in the debate, he or she should prepare a strategy and tactics for reaching that objective. Examples range from delaying debate through procedural means to utilizing speeches in order to persuade fellow delegates. Obviously, a delegate should develop a strategy that achieves as many of his or her country’s objectives as possible without losing sight of the overall goal in negotiating any one point.

A last note: To negotiate is to practice diplomacy. It is a careful balancing of the ideological against the practical, of the necessity of compromise against the policy and priorities of the nation one represents. This is not always easy, but in many ways it is one of the most rewarding aspects of the conference.

Writing

Writing is an essential skill used to transfer acquired research and the process of debate into a usable form. Drafting and writing may result in working papers, resolutions, news articles, or court decisions. It may also result in frustration. Every word counts when composing a negotiated document. In the end, all the actions of the United Nations appear in written form. If a delegate cannot write well, he or she is forced to rely on the ability of others to promote his or her ideas.

Drafting- Creating a written statement of aims, goals and a means of effective action is the ultimate goal of debate on any topic. The process that generates such a document is termed *drafting*. Drafting as a process is the written result of compromise and consensus built in debate and caucus. Drafting is a continual process of revision, and delegates should never view any “draft” as the finished product that the entire committee should accept.

Drafting involves building agreement through accommodating other delegate’s concerns. This accommodation takes place by changing the document. These changes are sometimes as extensive as altering the content, or sometimes as minute as substituting an alternate word choice. As said above, a draft goes through many revisions as it gains support. While certain countries may play the key roles in writing a resolution, many nations will want to have input. A bloc, for example, may designate certain countries to be part of the drafting group, but all countries expect to review the document before it comes up for a vote. Many will try to make changes at that time.

Wording- Negotiations over revisions usually take the form of disputes over wording. At times, an argument over semantics (the meaning of a word in relation to others) will be one that is essential to the meaning of the document. Consider, for example, the difference between calling the Hamas a “terrorist organization” or “a collection of freedom fighters” in your resolution. The tone of the documents would be very different. Thus, delegates need to be aware of the implications of using certain crucial words.

Precision of Meaning- Most seasoned diplomats argue for more precision and clarity. They reason that a hard-fought agreement deserves to be written so that it means just what the parties have verbally accepted. In this way, misunderstandings and false interpretations can be avoided. Once an issue is settled verbally, it should not be re-opened in a dispute over language.

Intentional Ambiguity- The ideal of clarity cannot always be achieved. On occasion, particularly controversial or petty points are written in ways that leave room for several interpretations. Usually this is done to allow progress on the more important aspects of the issue. A classic case of this “constructive ambiguity” is found in Security Council Resolution 242 that established a framework for peace after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It called for “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.” The text leaves unclear whether Israel should withdraw from *all* or *some* territories (and if not all, then which ones?) The principal sponsors maintained that the ambiguity was unavoidable and necessary in order to pass a resolution that would help to reduce tensions in the Middle East.

Unavoidable Ambiguity- Another reason resolutions are often vague is that details of implementation cannot always be spelled out. Later work almost always remains to be done, subject to further negotiations. It is important when leaving language vague to make the intent of a resolution clear; questions over the implementation of a resolution are better than ones over the main purpose or goal.

Draft Style- The draft document, as well as being correct in content, must also be free of grammatical errors and precise in its usage of the punctuation. To prepare for drafting documents, delegates should carefully read the resolutions, reports, and other texts relevant to their topics. This approach will help develop a feel for the style to be used. Reading summary records and speeches, comparing draft resolutions with final ones and examining the portions of resolutions voted on separately are all good ways to focus on language.

THE RESOLUTION FORMAT

A resolution is one (very long) sentence. It begins with the committee or subject (“The World Health Organization” for example), which is indented by five spaces, underlined, and followed by a comma.

After the subject, come the *preambulatory clauses*. Formally, these are participle or adjectival phrases modifying the subject. Informally, they describe the committee’s intent, motivation, and frame of mind in writing the resolution. Preambulatory clauses are followed by a comma and begin with an *underlined participle or adjective, which is capitalized*. Examples of these “first words” include:

Affirming	Gravely concerned
Alarmed by	Having adopted
Approving	Having considered
Aware of	Having considered further
Believing	Having devoted attention
Bearing in mind	Having examined
Confident	Having studied
Considering also	Having heard
Contemplating	Having received
Convinced	Keeping in mind
Declaring	Noting further
Deeply concerned	Noting with approval
Deeply conscious	Noting with deep concern
Deeply convinced	Noting with regret
Deeply disturbed	Noting with satisfaction
Deeply regretting	Noting with zest
Desiring	Observing
Emphasizing	Reaffirming
Expecting	Recalling
Expressing its satisfaction	Recognizing
Expressing its wish	Referring
Fulfilling	Reiterating
Fully aware	Seeking
Fully alarmed	Taking into account
Fully believing	Taking into consideration
Further deploring	Taking note
Further recalling	Viewing with appreciation
Guided by	Welcoming

The 2010 National High School Model United Nations
Delegate Preparation Guide

The *operative clauses*, which follow the perambulatory clauses, formally make the *predicate* of the sentence. More informatively, they contain the action of the resolution. Each operative clause begins with a *capitalized present tense verb in the third person singular*. Each “paragraph” formed by a new operative verb is *indented five spaces, numbered, indented to the tenth space, and finally ended with a semicolon*. *The last paragraph ends with a period*. The following are representatives of operative verbs:

Accepts	Further endorses
Affirms	Further invites
Appeals	Further proclaims
Approves	Further reminds
Authorizes	Further recommends
Calls	Further resolves
Calls upon	Further requests
Commends	Has resolved
Condemns	Notes
Congratulates	Offers
Confirms	Proclaims
Considers	Reaffirms
Decides	Recommends
Declares accordingly	Reminds
Demands(*)	Renews
Deplores	Requests
Designates	Solemnly affirms
Draws the attention	Strongly condemns
Emphasizes	Supports
Encourages	Trusts
Endorses	Takes note of
Expresses its appreciation	Transmits
Expresses its hope	Urges

(*) *only the Security Council may “demand”*