

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

WHY RESEARCH?

Proper research and preparation is essential to effectively participate in any Model United Nations conference. Without it, the educational experience offered by the conference is largely lost and the delegate's ability to participate successfully in the debate is greatly handicapped. When preparing for NHSMUN, the members of the delegation should ask themselves three questions:

- 1) Why should I research?
- 2) What should I research?
- 3) How should I go about researching?

While a Model United Nations conference should be an enjoyable experience for the delegate—especially a conference such as NHSMUN, where one may have an opportunity to meet people from all over the world—is also a great deal of hard work. NHSMUN prides itself on the integrity and accuracy of its simulations; the staff devotes a tremendous amount of time and energy to make the substantive side of the conference the best it can be. The conference, in turn, expects and requires a high degree of preparation and extensive research from its delegates. To ensure that every delegation does prepare to some degree, NHSMUN requires a position paper from each member state of each committee be submitted to the Director-General and the committee Director (see the Position Papers section of the delegate resources online). More than this, the performance of the delegate during the conference and their enjoyment of committee session depend greatly on the extent and quality of his or her research. The delegate who performed inadequate research is unable to participate fully in the simulation and is handicapped in his or her ability to formulate country policy. Not only does a lack of preparation detract from the quality of the simulation, but the delegates will not be able to enjoy some of the most exhilarating parts of the conference experience, namely the debate and negotiation that go into resolution writing. Simply, the largest part of the conference is the research and preparation leading up to NHSMUN, and the delegate who knows this will do well.

WHAT TO RESEARCH

In short, the delegate needs to research the United Nations itself, the country being represented, the committee topics, the country's position on the topics, and “world opinion” on these topics.

The United Nations

The delegate must be familiar with the history and organization of the UN and of his or her assigned committee. Most importantly, the delegate should be familiar with the past actions of the United Nations on the committee topics as well as the present status of those topics in the United Nations system.

Sources for these research areas are quite numerous. The most useful sources are actual UN documents and UN online sources. A good starting point is the UN website at www.un.org. There you will find links to all the committee homepages, histories, UN documents and resolutions, as well as lists of current topics being discussed in each forum. The online Dag Hammarskjöld Library is an excellent starting point for UN document research (<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/index.html>). The Peacekeeping Best Practices online library offers a range of indexed documents, many of which go well beyond the scope of peacekeeping operations (<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/>).

Specific Country Research

Concurrent with United Nations research, the delegate should be researching the specific country that they have been assigned. A delegate must know a great deal about the country in order to make informed decisions on the issues. Country research is best done in two steps:

- 1) **Background research** into the country's political, economic, and cultural systems and institutions.
- 2) **Assimilation** of this information so that the delegate can effectively act as an actual representative of the country.

Step One: Background Research

The first step is the most time-consuming, but it will provide the basis for both your later research and for your effectiveness as a delegate at the conference. The country research should encompass the economic and political systems of the country, the history and culture of the society, the demographics of the society, the geography of the country, the international and regional organizations the country belongs to, and the present influences the domestic situation has on the formulation of international policy.

Delegates should pay particular attention to the decision-making structure within the country. It is important to understand the actual, rather than the theoretical process of political decision-making. (Sources of this information are discussed later in this document.) The entire delegation should participate together in this research process. Please note for reference that NHSMUN requires that a summary statement be prepared by your delegation on the basic economic, political and social structures of your country, as well as on its history and the nature of its relations with other states. This document will be submitted for evaluation to the Director-General along with the position papers from your delegation (see the Position Paper guide in the online delegate resources.)

In general terms, the more you know and research about your country, the easier it will be for you to accurately formulate your country's positions relating to the topics under discussion. Items that are crucial to know include:

- 1) The **geography** of the state: size and description, location, natural resources, and neighboring states and regions
- 2) Statistics of the state's **demographics**: population, population density and growth rate, life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy rate
- 3) **Culture**: majority and minority components, religions and their influences, language(s), and customs and traditions
- 4) **Economy**: type of economy, gross national product (GNP) and strength of economy, debt owed, average per capita income, major imports and exports, and trading partners
- 5) **Government**: type of government, leaders, political parties and opposing political faction, allies and enemies, membership of political and economic organizations, role in international politics
- 6) **History** of state: general history and reasons and philosophy behind present-day foreign policies.

It is important to realize that these previous examples are by no means the only items necessary to formulate correct national positions. Each country has specific problems that only it deals with; these idiosyncrasies must also be accounted for during effective research on a country.

Additionally, your delegation should research your country's relationship and role in the United Nations. This should include when your country became a member, committees and organizations of which you are a member, and how much money you annually contribute to the UN. Flagship programs with the UN and any other collaborations or interactions of note (ex. peacekeeping operations, major World Bank or IMF loan

programs, public health campaigns, etc.) should also be addressed, especially if it pertains to individual committee topic research.

Step Two: Assimilation of Research

The assimilation step of research is often the hardest thing for a delegate to accomplish. Try to put yourself in the place of someone from the country you are representing. It may seem difficult, but the more you talk about the various topic areas with your delegation, the more you will be able to understand why other countries behave the way they do. By using the knowledge gained through the background research, the delegate should be able to extrapolate how their nation might form a policy on a specific topic (even if the state's actual policy on a topic is unknown). If this step is accomplished, a delegate, for instance, will be able to represent India and act as a representative of a developing, over-populated state desiring both stable international relations and economic growth. In this sense, an interdisciplinary approach to preparation is recommended. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women may be addressing female illiteracy; while the topic may not directly concern economic, political, or security issues, these aspects nonetheless inform how a state will approach the topic and possible solutions. A state with great political instability will bring this experience to the committee and advocate against solutions that relies too heavily on government support. If a delegate goes into the conference with concerns and attitudes of the country he or she is representing, then he or she will likely excel at the simulation.

Topic Research

With background and basic United Nations research accomplished, the delegate is in a position to begin formulating a policy for his/her country on the issues to be discussed at the NHSMUN conference. This process involves recognizing the various factors and processes that influence decision-making within the country, and applying this knowledge to the topics at hand. Often specific information on national policy is not available and it becomes necessary to display some educated creativity.

A delegate must first note the existing policy problem areas in order to formulate the country's policy. Although the problem will be explained in the committee Background Guide, the delegate must discover the importance of the issue in his or her own country. The delegate should understand the nature and the extent to which the topic affects his or her country. He or she should also be aware of the existing policies designed to meet the problem in his or her own country, the UN, and other international organizations. It is very important to note whether a conflict exists between those policies made in the UN and those within one's "home" countries.

If no national policy exists on the topic the delegate should look at the various groups in the country with stands on the issues. The delegate must determine the level of access and power these groups have over the government. By weighing the power and access of the different groups, a delegate can infer the probable policy decision in the country on the issue.

In some cases, if there is limited information about the country's decision-making process or of its interest groups, the delegate may only be able to determine some of the variables involved. If this occurs, he or she will have to rely on the ideology of government, power, and the role of the individual upheld by the country in order to make an educated and defensible guess about the country's policy on that particular issue.

Another possible approach to take when information is lacking is to look at the policies of countries with similar ideologies and regional interests. For example, many African states hold similar ideological and regional interests. For example, they may hold similar positions on many issues including the question of Namibia and South Africa. This manner of inferring policy should be used carefully, however, so that errors are not made. It would, for example, be a grave error to assume that Thailand and Vietnam are always in agreement with each other simply because they are both located in the same region of the globe.

By following this process as closely as possible, a delegate will be able to formulate policy for his or her country. The delegate will also discover the complex variables that affect policy formation throughout the world.

World Opinion

Once the delegates have completed the research on the United Nations, their own country, and the topics to be discussed, they must turn to the allies of their country and the various blocs. The delegate should know which countries will be supporting their position and what the position of the other *blocs* (groups of nations with similar interests) will be on the various problems to be discussed. He or she should also know which of these countries will be represented in the committee. It would also help to know where the different blocs will form on the issues in your committee. On questions of development and economics, two broader blocs are likely to form: the North (developed) bloc and the South (lesser-developed) bloc. A list of bloc organizations is included for your reference in the appendices of this guide.

HOW TO RESEARCH

With the questions of what and why to research answered we turn to the more difficult question of how to research (or perhaps more importantly -- "where"). The enormous amount of information available may seem a bit overwhelming. The following section contains an outline of a variety of the best sources available and the locations where they can be found. There are other sources, but these are what we believe to be the best.

Basic Preparation Materials

Devising practical recommendations and country policies for a committee require that delegates begin with a broad research base. The following preparatory materials serve well as a quick introduction to the UN system and to a historical overview of the topic areas. The United Nation's Cyber School Bus website provides excellent Model United Nations resources, especially for new clubs (<http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/modelun/index.asp>). Another good starting point is the Model United Nations online resources provided by the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) (<http://www.unausa.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKRI8MPJpF&b=457131>). These materials have very good bibliographies that may aid in further research.

Other General Sources

- United Nations Chronicle (UN Magazine)

Covers the current events of the UN including excerpts from the speeches of the member states. Published Quarterly.

- Yearbook of the United Nations (UN publication)

This publication focuses on yearly developments within particular international issues. It is the most detailed, chronological narrative of United Nations activities. The only problem with this resource is that it is behind by a couple of years. It is not known if and when the United Nations will correct this problem.

Newspapers provide some of the best sources of current information on international affairs. The New York Times is an especially good source for up-to-date information about United Nations happenings. Other newspapers that are helpful include the Washington Post, the Times Of London, and the Christian Science Monitor.

News Magazines, including Time, Newsweek, and US News and World Report, are another good source of current international news. One of the most thorough and useful magazines is The Economist, a British news weekly. In addition, the World Press Review contains articles from news media from around the world.

Professional Journals also provide a wide variety of information on specific topics. Some of the more useful ones include:

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists
Current History
Foreign Affairs
Foreign Policy
World Affairs
World Policy
Journal of Palestinian Studies
Middle East Journal

Many of the organs, agencies, and even individual committees of the UN publish their own magazines (notably UNESCO Courier, World Health: The Magazine of the World Health Organization, Choices: The Human Development Magazine (UNDP publications), Refugees (UNHCR publications), etc). Look for these at your nearest UN Depository Library, or online.

Research on the Internet

The main thing to keep in mind when conducting research on the Internet is the source from which information is being drawn. You can be certain of the reliability of information obtained from the United Nations home page or the home pages of its committees, commissions, etc., but use caution when searching for information from potentially biased sources. When in doubt, stick with peer-reviewed sources that you know are reliable. Internet databases, to which most colleges and universities subscribe, are excellent and reputable sources of research. Your high school or local librarian can most likely point you in the direction of some useful databases. (**Wikipedia** and its subsidiary sites are under no circumstances considered reliable academic sources of information. Wikipedia is great for a general overview of a concept, but **it is not an acceptable source to cite in a position paper.**)

If you have any questions about the reliability of a source on the Internet, or any other Internet-related research questions, please feel free to contact your individual committee director or the Director-General.

Computerized Indices and Encyclopedias

Nearly all college libraries as well as major city and regional libraries have computerized indices to periodicals. By simply sitting down at the terminal and specifying the topic or key word desired, the user can obtain a very complete listing of all relative articles published within the last several years. This is an invaluable timesaving device and all delegates who have access to such an index should use it during the research process. (Contact your local college or regional library to inquire about this.)

Online article and bibliography databases that might prove helpful include:

ABI/INFORM (Proquest)
OVID online
JSTOR
LEXUS/NEXUS
Project MUSE

Indices

Aside from the computerized databases discussed above, a wide selection of indices exist that can be useful in accumulating more specific or detailed information on your topics. Some of the best are listed below:

- Index to the Proceedings of the General Assembly (UN publications)
- Index to the Proceedings of the Economic and Social Council (UN publications)
- Index to the Proceedings of the Security Council (UN Publication)
- New York Times Index (A guide to the articles in the Times. The Times covers the UN very thoroughly.)
- Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (An index to articles published in popular journals and magazines.)
- United Nations Document Index ("UNDOC"- UN publication, 1973-Present) The listings are arranged by series:
 - Series A: Subject Index
 - Series B: Country Index (This is especially useful if you are researching your country's stand on a particular issue. It lists all the statements made by your country by topic areas in a given year. It also includes the general policy statements.)
 - Series C: List of Documents Issued

ESTABLISHING THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS LIBRARY

The ideal situation for any Model UN club is to have its own UN materials library at its disposal. If traveling to a UN Depository is a major problem, a school can make arrangements to obtain the materials listed above for their school's library or their own collection. There are a number of other United Nations publications that a club should try to obtain for their library. Many of these publications are available online through the organizations' websites.

General

- Permanent Missions to the United Nations (UN Document-ordered per issue or per year)
 - *This book is published every six months with the names of the ambassadors and specific representatives to the various UN committees from each member state. These names are invaluable in attempting to contact a mission for information on a specific topic area.*
- United Nations Security Council (free on request from the Public Inquiries Unit)
- The International Court of Justice (UN publications)
- Within Our Reach (Public Inquiries Unit-free on request)
- UN Chronicle (DPI quarterly publication. Annual subscription available)
- Resolutions of the General Assembly (Available in February on request from the UN Centre in Washington, DC. It must be requested on school letterhead.)
- UN Handbook (UN publications)
 - *Provides a detailed overview of all of the UN agencies. (Only one copy per school.)*
- Change: Threat or Opportunity vol I-V (UN Publications)
 - *A five volume compilation of the recent changes in the fields of political, economic, market, social, political, and ecological issues that the international community faces as the new century approaches.*
- Agenda for Peace, Kofi Annan (UN publications)

Political

- Annual Editions: Global Issues 07/08. Jackson, Robert M. California State University Press, California 2007.
 - *This annual publication identifies the key issues and declines arising from the changes in world politics each year.*

The 2010 National High School Model United Nations
Delegate Preparation Guide

- The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World, Second Edition. Edited by Joel Krieger. Oxford University Press. New York 2001.
 - *A comprehensive guide to recent contemporary politics from an international perspective.*

Human Rights

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN publications)
- The United Nations and Human Rights (UN publications)
- World Human Rights Guide Charles Hunanar. Oxford University Press
 - *Provides the most comprehensive and up to date information on human rights records in over 100 countries.*

Decolonization/Peacekeeping

- The United Nations and Decolonization (UN publication)
- Blue Helmets: a review of United Nations peacekeeping (UN publications)

Development/Environment

- Development Forum UN Department of Public Information (DPI)

Single copies are available to school libraries free of charge if requests are made on school letterhead.

Write to: Development Forum
 DESI/DPI, Room DC1-559
 United Nations
 New York, NY 10017

- Human Development Report 2009 (UNDP publications) annual publication
 - *The 2009 report becomes available 5 October 2009.*
- World Development Report 2010 (World Bank publications) annual publication
 - *World Development Reports past are equally insightful and can be found on the World Bank website.*
- POPLINE: World Population News Service
 - *Published bi-monthly by the Population Institute. This newspaper explores, analyzes and evaluates facts and public policies relating to the problems of world overpopulation.*

Write to: POPLINE: World Population News Service
 107 Second Street, N.E.
 Washington, D.C. 20002

- Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 2009. The International Journal of Public Health, Vol. 87, No. 9. WHO Publications, Geneva, September 2009. Pp. 645-732.
 - *Looks at the developmental strategies in a number of sectors and their impact on health and the environment. It then discusses policies and approaches at solving them.*

Refugees

- The State of the World's Refugees. UNHCR. Penguin Books, New York.
 - *This book describes current problems and their causes with informed analyses, charts and discussions of policy alternatives.*

Disarmament

- The United Nations and Disarmament 1945-85: A Fortieth Anniversary Review (UN publication)
 - *An excellent general source on the topic.*
- Disarmament Yearbook.
 - *Additionally, the Department of Disarmament publishes a series of fact sheets that may be obtained free of charge.*

Economic

- World Economic Survey (UN publication-annual)
- The Role and Function of the International Monetary Fund (Available from the UN External Relations Department, Attn.: Publications, International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C. 20431)
- Annual reports from World Bank
 - Contact: 1818 H Street NW/Washington DC 20433/(202)477-1234 202-477-6391(fax)
- IMF Publications
 - Contact: Publication Services/Box S-99/IMF/Washington DC 2043
 - (202)623-7430; (202)623-7201 (fax)

WHERE TO LOCATE RESOURCES

Conference Provided Resources

NHSMUN sends Background Guides to participants, which inform the delegates of their agenda, committee history, and a description of the topics to be discussed. The papers also provide research sources pertinent to the topics. Again, **these guides are meant only as a starting point for the delegates.** Delegates who use these guides as their only means of preparation will not be prepared at the conference. The learning experience offered by the conference will be missed. If students still need help after reading the Background Guide, they should contact the committee Director. Names and addresses are provided in the papers themselves; always feel free to contact the staff; they welcome delegate questions and inquiries.

To further aid in delegate preparation, Directors have contributed resources to the online **NHSMUN Research Archive** (NRA). The NRA is organized by committee and general topics and provides links to online articles and resources. Please take advantage of this resource, as it will surely aid in delegate preparation and enhance performance in committee. The NRA can be accessed through the “preparation” section of the NHSMUN website.

During the conference, NHSMUN has its own library of UN and related resources: **the Delegate Resource Center.** Once at the conference, delegates can use this service to research a novel idea or a crisis issue that has come up in committee. The center is manned by the NHSMUN staff and contains a copy of all the position papers sent to the conference and all committee Background Guides. The Delegate Resource Center is an excellent way to research the policy of possible allies or opponents on a particular issue. All delegates are encouraged to take advantage of the center. We caution the delegates, however, that they must do their preparatory research before the conference in order to succeed. The Delegate Resource Center should only be used to supplement the research done outside of the conference.

United Nations Depository Libraries

United Nations Depository Libraries are superb sources of primary UN materials. These libraries are where most delegates turn to locate UN documents. Worldwide, the UN has designated one archive in each country to house, free of charge, all UN documents. These reference centers are called UN Depositories. In the United States, the Library of Congress is the designated depository. Any institution, however, with storage facilities, may become a Depository by paying for the documents it receives. A list of UN Depositories can be found at <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/deplib/countries/index.html>>.

Many contributing Depositories do not purchase all UN documents. You should check with your local libraries, university and public, for their status and hours. Always call ahead and talk to the documents librarian to get information on the hours of operation and to arrange for a librarian's help.

Missions and Embassies

A delegation can receive current information on its country by contacting the Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the country's Information Center, or its embassy in Washington, DC. With your request, it is best to include an explanation of what your group is involved in, a list of agenda items, and a request for information about your country's stands on these issues. The delegation also needs to request a copy of the opening policy statement given during the most current session of the General Assembly, as well as relevant speeches given in committee.

Not all countries will be able to honor your requests; many of the smaller nations do not have the staff to handle a detailed inquiry. If they cannot supply you with this information there are other sources. You can access much of this information through UNDOC that lists the speeches of every member state by specific topics. Although they cannot give you the exact position of member nations, the information in the official records should be a big help. Having the exact document number when making your request will greatly speed the process.

In addition to the Permanent Missions to the UN and the Washington embassies, many countries also have consulates located throughout the United States and may be able to aid your needs and provide a resource close to home.

PREPARATION

Developing a Calendar

There are many ways in which a delegation can further prepare for the NHSMUN experience. A useful tool for organizing your schedule is a computer calendar that is easily changed and updated. The first thing that should be done is to establish a time line for the completion of the various aspects of research. This is especially important in order to insure that the delegation will not be delayed by potential problems. Arranging an appointment with the nearest UN Depository or Contributing Depository is also a very important early task.

Activities

Assignments

In order to keep the delegation up-to-date, it is a good idea to assign weekly news summaries from different media (include newspapers, news-magazines, and television). Another possible activity is the creation of a UN scrapbook. The focus of this scrapbook should be developments in the assigned country and in the UN

Substantive Exercises

Later on in the research schedule there are numerous ways to test and broaden the delegation's knowledge. One way is to hold a panel discussion on one of the topics to be discussed at the Conference that has a particular importance to your country. It may also be a good idea to administer a test on the general policies of the country or countries you are representing at NHSMUN. It is very important that delegates are not only prepared for their specific topics but that they also are familiar with their country's policies on related and other issues.

Mock Sessions

Holding a mock committee session is very helpful, especially for organizations with inexperienced delegates. This activity gives the students an opportunity to practice committee simulation and will make them feel more comfortable when they participate in the Conference. A mock session also provides an excellent way to acquaint the delegation with the rules and familiarize them with other countries' positions on the topics that have been selected. You may wish to contact a local college Model UN or talk to your local UNA to see if they might be of assistance. NHSMUN staff can also be of assistance; please contact the Director-General to arrange use of the **NHSMUN Visiting Director's Program**.

Rules Training

Another important step in the preparation process is developing knowledge of the rules. Before a delegate can learn to effectively negotiate his or her desires and national aims, a full understanding of committee procedures and rules is vital. NHSMUN conducts two rules sessions at the Conference but it would be beneficial if delegates had a chance to practice using the rules before the Conference.

First, a faculty advisor should review a set of the rules with their students (a complete set of NHSMUN Rules of Procedure is available online with the other delegate preparation resources). A fun and equally worthwhile activity is a **rules session**. The rules session is intended to introduce newer delegates to the intricacies of Model UN. Although inexperienced students are the main beneficiaries, more experienced delegates also gain skills and can be called upon to help in preparation by explaining difficult situations or aiding in running these simulations.

When running a rules session, a fictional committee is simulated. Topics are chosen so that no research is necessary and that all students are able to participate. For example, you could simulate the Committee on Global Entertainment with the topics: 1) High School Movies, 2) Pop Stars, and 3) The Importance of YouTube. Topics such as these ensure that the simulation is enjoyable and they allow students to focus on the procedural rules of committee rather than research or country positions.

The chairperson should be experienced in the rules of procedure and feel comfortable leading a committee session. Resolutions can be prepared ahead of time or the delegates can draft them. Either way, make sure that they are not distributed until the proper motions are made. Another effective learning tool is to write up different motions and statements and distribute them to the students. The students then have to determine when a motion is appropriate. If they make mistakes, the chairperson should make corrections and explain the proper course of action.

These mock rules sessions have been run by our staff to train our Assistant Directors and Directors. Several high schools have chosen to run similar sessions and have also found them to be effective in training students about the rules of procedure.

Speeches

Writing policy speeches is also an important step in preparation. The speeches need to be well organized and offer solutions. However, most of the speeches that are made during committee sessions will be more spontaneous, so it is a good idea to practice unprepared speeches as well. They not only will improve their speech delivery but they will also feel more comfortable responding to questions and participating in caucuses.

Position Papers

Position Papers are a critical aspect of the NHSMUN conference preparation process. See the guide on Position Papers in the online delegate preparation resources for detailed information.