

Position Papers

Position Papers are short summary statements of a country's policy, usually written and turned into the secretariat before a conference as a way to demonstrate that delegates have adequately researched and prepared for the debate. Some conferences will require position papers, while for others they are optional or suggested. Some may have a due date before the conference begins, and others will simply collect them from delegates at committee.

Regardless of the requirements of any conference you plan on attending, or even whether you will attend a conference at all, position papers are a great way to synthesize and summarize the research delegates have been doing. For teachers, it is often the easiest way to get concrete written work from students showing their progress in research and critical thinking.

A position paper usually focuses on a single issue to be addressed in committee, however some conferences require just one position paper regardless of how many topics may be discussed. A position paper is about 500 words (or one page single spaced) and should be written in a clear, concise, and focused manner.

The skills used to write a position paper for Model UN are very similar to other ELA writing activities:

- Research skills
- Organization in a beginning, middle, and end format
- Use of brief and concise language
- Drawing inferences and making reasoned assumptions

The basic structure of a position paper consists of **three parts**:

1. Introduction, including:
 - Background on your country and its history concerning the topic and committee

- How the issue affects your country
2. Background, including:
- National and foreign policy
 - Specific actions taken by the government
 - Conventions, resolutions, and other UN actions supported or opposed
 - Quotes from government officials and statistical data to support your position
3. Conclusion, including:
- Your country's recommendations to the committee on how best to resolve the issue
 - How the position of other countries affects your country's position
 - What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution

Students should include formal citations of credible sources in order to support quotes, facts, and statistics they include in the paper. For many middle and high school students, a position paper can be an excellent introduction in how to write a formal research paper because it is shorter and generally covers less material than other assignments. It can be an effective way not only to introduce important academic skills that students will need throughout school and into college, but also to help them synthesize their thoughts into a concrete base for the position of the country they are studying on a single issue