NHSMUN 50

National High School Model United Nations

RULES OF PROCEDURE GUIDE

DELEGATE GUIDES

About IMUNA

Founded in 1979, IMUNA is an educational non-profit organization devoted to global issues education through simulation of international debate. To achieve this goal, we strive to build up the Model United Nations (MUN) community at all levels by leading premier MUN conferences, connecting students with the world of professional diplomacy, and creating resources that can put the power of MUN in every classroom.

Our flagship program, NHSMUN, is the largest MUN conference for secondary school students in the world. Every year, we welcome more than 5,000 participants from more than 70 countries to the United Nations Headquarters in New York City for four days of lively debate and critical thinking. NHSMUN is run by a diverse, all-volunteer staff of more than 150 university students from the top colleges and universities. Our talented staff have gone on to become prominent diplomats, academics, business leaders, and lawyers who shape global politics today.

IMUNA's impact is not just limited to NHSMUN. To foster the growth of quality MUN experiences everywhere, we publish the resources that drive NHSMUN's success online, free of charge. We also partner with organizations in numerous countries, including China, Italy, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates, to build high quality conferences in every region of the world. To support MUN in the classroom, we hold personalized training sessions for students and faculty to help them make the most of their MUN experience. We also partner with various UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide unique opportunities for students to experience first-hand the world of diplomacy and international relations.

What separates IMUNA from other MUN organizations is our belief that exceptional educational quality must be at the core of the MUN experience. Our staff prepares research materials for delegates that push them to develop critical thinking skills about complex global issues. For our faculty partners, we provide resources to expose students to new ways of thinking in clubs and classrooms around the world. At the conference, delegates learn from each other as they work to achieve consensus across diverse points of view. This passion for educational quality has earned IMUNA the reputation of being among the most academically rigorous conferences in the world.

IMUNA's goal is to shape next generation of globally-minded leaders through global issues education. Through MUN, we are able to prepare students for an increasingly interconnected future that will require cross-cultural understanding. If you are interested in working with us, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@imuna.org.

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Introduction

As with any form of debate, the rules of procedure are the structure in which a fair, orderly debate can occur. Without clear rules in place dictating who can speak and when, each MUN committee would devolve into chaos and arguments. Instead, the rules of procedure allow delegates to address their disagreements in a structured manner, allowing them to reach a compromise.

Model UN's rules of procedure are unique because they allow the delegates to take control of the kind of debate they will be using. Whereas other forms of debate prescribe in advance who can speak when, MUN truly allows the students to take charge of the committee.

Early on, we would like to note that this guide uses the **IMUNA Rules of Procedure**, also known as the North American Rules of Procedure. These rules are commonly used in conferences across the Americas with some variation, but there are other rulesets popular in other parts of the world. However, even among conferences in the Americas, there can still be small variations in these rules. While the overall flow of debate should be similar, delegates should always walk into committee ready to adapt to each conference's unique rules. Virtual conferences are also conducted in a different manner. For a guide on the rules of procedure for virtual conference, please visit [this link](#).

Who is the Chair?

Throughout this guide, we will frequently refer to the chair and the dais. **The chair is whoever is currently holding the gavel, regardless of any other title, and the dais includes the committee leaders that administer the debate.** The chair is also typically the person who is speaking from the dais, such as calling on speakers and asking for points or motions. For example, at NHSMUN, dais members either have the title of Director or Assistant Director, but the chair is whoever is currently holding the gavel. The chair may pass the gavel to another member of the dais, who then becomes the new chair. Because there is a lot of work to be done behind the dais, and because everyone needs a break sometimes, the gavel may change hands throughout the conference. Just because someone doesn't have the gavel doesn't mean that they do not help the committee. For example, when

creating the speakers list, one person usually calls on delegates while someone else writes the country names down.

Understanding the Rules

The best way to understand the rules of procedure isn't to read the text of the rules of procedure. In fact, we *discourage* delegates from doing that. Reading the formally written rules of procedure is like reading your entire textbook before doing any homework assignments for a class. Reading the entire textbook might provide you with tons of information, but not in a way that will make it easy to understand. Additionally, just as not every chapter in a textbook will apply to every homework assignment, not every rule will be relevant in every committee. Similarly, it's not important to know the number of each rule. If a reference to a specific rule is needed (e.g., for a point of order, which we will discuss later), there will usually be a printout of the rules available somewhere for you to reference.

Motions are, for the most part, *suggestions* from delegates about how they will debate next. That means that they are not immediately accepted. Instead, most motions are voted on by the committee. Most motions require a simple majority vote—approval from more than 50% of the countries in attendance. However, some motions require a supermajority, also known as a two-thirds majority, because it requires approval from more than two-thirds of the committee. This guide will note whenever a motion requires a supermajority, but you can otherwise assume that a motion only requires a simple majority.

Finally, this guide will also refer to **placards**. If you have ever been to a MUN conference, you likely already know what this is. If not, the placard is a card or piece of paper that has your country's name on it. Raising your placard into the air so that the chair can see it is how you indicate your vote on different issues, whether you are approving a motion or a resolution. It is also how you indicate to the chair that you would like to make a motion. Needless to say, it's pretty important to not lose your placard during a conference!

The Flow of Committee

In the following sections, we will take you through the flow of a standard committee using the IMUNA Rules of Procedure. As we go, we will be introducing the relevant rules that you need to know to navigate that part of the conference. Each section will begin with a brief table listing those rules so that if you need to reference them later, they will be easy to find.

Opening Debate

Relevant Rules, Points, and Motions
Motion to Open the Session
Adoption of the Agenda
Opening the Speakers List

The first thing committees must do is open debate. Among more experienced delegates that know the rules of procedure, there is often confusion about the different types of motions to open/close/adjourn the session/meeting/debate. In truth, there are only two that delegates need to know:

- **Opening and closing debate** signify the beginning and end of debate—in other words, the committee sessions. Debate should be opened at the start of committee. Closing debate moves the committee into voting procedure because the debate on the topic has ended, which we will address later on.

- **Recess the session** refers to the committee sessions in the conference program (e.g., Session I, II, III, IV, etc.). At most conferences, there are breaks during the day that mark the beginning and end of committee sessions. When the committee breaks for lunch, a motion to recess the session must be taken. Note that the session is opened at opening ceremonies and the time the committee is scheduled to resume.

The motion to open debate is quite simple.

"Albania moves to open debate"

The next step is to take attendance. **Attendance is very important because it lets the conference staff know who is present and how many countries are present**. This count is important for committee purposes, as it determines how many votes are needed to secure a majority in the committee. It's also a safety matter. If a teacher or chaperone can't find a student, the first-place conference staff will look is the attendance sheet to see if they showed up at all. While the chair takes attendance, all you need to do is listen for your country and say "present" when called.

At some conferences, some delegates may say that they are "present and voting." In theory, this is supposed to oblige them not to abstain when voting on resolutions and amendments (more on that later). These declarations often do not get tracked, though, as it is not in most rulesets and has no basis in UN procedure.

Once the formalities are out of the way, the first matter to be debated is the setting of the agenda. **Note that in committees with only one topic on the agenda, this step may be skipped**. For committees that have multiple topics, the committee needs to decide which topic to debate first. This can be important, as there may not be time to debate about every topic on the agenda at all conferences. At NHSMUN, for example, most committees have two topics to debate, but some committees only have time to debate one topic.

To begin debate on the agenda, the next step is a **motion to open the speakers list**. Some motions, including this one, require additional information from the delegate. To make this motion, a delegate could say, "Finland moves to open the speakers list with a speaking time of two minutes." This means that every delegate will only have two minutes to speak before the chair asks them to return to their seats. Typically, acceptable speaking times for speeches are between 1–2.5 minutes. Once the motion passes, the chair will ask anyone who would like to be added to the speakers list to raise their placards. We'll talk more about the mechanics of the speakers list in the next section. Finally, at many conferences, the chair may ask the delegate that made the motion if they would like to be added to the speakers list first. This is a widely-observed custom, but it is not part of the rules of procedure, and the chair does not have to do so.

Delegates will then give speeches *only* about the order that the topic should be debated, not the substance of the topics. Delegates may prefer one topic over another because they think it is more urgent or that one topic has a more immediate effect on their own country. It might also affect their allies.

Eventually, a consensus will form, and a delegate will move to **set the agenda.** This motion requires the delegate to specify the

order of the topics they prefer.

"Zambia moves to set the agenda at topic A and then topic B."

Depending on the size of the committee and the amount of disagreement, this may take anywhere from fifteen minutes to multiple hours. Once the motion is approved, that brings the committee into the next, main phase of debate.

Beginning of Debate

Relevant Rules, Points, and Motions
Motion to enter a moderated caucus
Motion to enter an unmoderated caucus
Yields

After the motion to set the agenda is approved, debate automatically moves to the first topic—no further motion is needed. At this point, any existing speakers list—either from setting the agenda or debate on another topic—is wiped clean, and another motion to open the speakers list is required. The chair will lead the process of establishing a new speakers list as before.

Once the chair creates a new speakers list, the committee has reached one of the most significant stages of debate. Here, we will describe the flow of debate between the speakers list, moderated caucuses, and unmoderated caucuses that will persist throughout the committee. The committee will be consistently switching between these forms of debate throughout the committee, so it is important to develop a strong understanding of how these forms of debate can be used.

Speakers List

By this point, the speakers list will have already been set up, and delegates will have had some experience with it, but we didn't describe the speakers list in detail before. The speakers list is the most democratic form of debate. On the speakers list, every country has the same amount of time to speak regardless of its population, culture, or proximity to the topic. Once each delegate's time has expired, the chair gavels them down so that the committee can recognize the next speaker. During the speech, delegates are welcome to speak about any aspect of the topic they wish, but the chair will stop them from straying outside the topic. For example, If the committee is debating topic A, then the delegate may not speak on topic B.

The speakers list itself is quite literally a list of countries that determines the order of these speeches. Delegates may only be on the speakers list once, but after they deliver their speech, they can be added back at the end of the speakers list. To be re-added, delegates should send up notes to the chair rather than interrupt the committee with a motion.

At the end of a speech, if there is time left over, delegates have the option to **yield** their remaining time. There are three types of yield:

- **Yield to the chair**. Yielding to the chair means that the chair absorbs the rest of the time that the delegate had to speak, effectively moving to the next speaker. If the delegates say nothing at the end of their speech, the chair will assume that the delegate yields to the chair.
- **Accept questions**. The delegate may use part of their time to take questions from delegates. The chair selects who asks the questions, not the speaker. The time taken to ask the question counts against the speaker's time, but the speaker may choose to interrupt the questioner if they take too long. Therefore, we typically discourage accepting questions unless there is a substantial amount of time left to allow questions to be asked.
- **Yield to another speaker**. The delegate may allow another speaker to use the remainder of their time. The speaker chooses which delegate will receive the time. Note that it is always assumed that the second speaker yields any remaining time to the chair, and they cannot take questions or yield to another speaker.

One final and important note about the speakers list: there is no motion to enter the speakers list. The speakers list is the "default form of debate," meaning that the committee returns to the speakers list when there are no other motions. If a delegate wishes to return to the speakers list, they simply need to vote down any other motions. Remember that the motion to open the speakers list is almost always only needed once at the beginning of debate, and if a speakers list is already open, there cannot be a motion to open it twice.

Moderated Caucuses

The next form of debate we'll discuss is the **moderated caucuses**. Moderated caucuses are useful when the committee wants to **focus on a specific issue** being debated or if the debate is particularly contentious about one idea. The motion to enter a moderated caucus has three parts: total time, speaking time, and topic.

> **"Norway moves to enter a moderated caucus with a total time of nine minutes and a speaking time of thirty seconds on the topic of education initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa."**

One particularly tricky point on moderated caucuses that it requires a bit of math. When moving to enter a moderated caucus, **the total time must be divisible by the speaking time**. The reason why is that when executing a moderated caucus, the chair does not track the total time. Instead, the chair calculates the number of speakers implied by the total time and speaking time,

and the caucus lasts as long as it takes for those speakers to take the floor. For example, a moderated caucus with a five-minute total time and a thirty-second speaking time would have ten speakers because thirty seconds goes into five minutes ten times. However, a moderated caucus with a five-minute total time and a 45-second speaking time would be out of order because 45 seconds goes into five minutes six times with a remainder of thirty seconds.

As with the motion to open the speakers list, the chair may invite the country that made the motion to speak first. After each speech, the chair will ask for the next speaker, at which point delegates will raise their placards if they want to be recognized to speak. Note that there are no yields in a moderated caucus. Once a delegate is finished speaking, the chair immediately looks for the next speaker.

Unmoderated Caucuses

Unmoderated caucuses are useful when the committee needs to work towards creating resolutions. During unmoderated caucuses, delegates find their allies throughout the room and begin negotiating the specific solutions they want to pass. Generally, unmoderated caucuses should be less frequent early in the conference and more frequent towards the end of the conference. The motion to make an unmoderated caucus is simple and only requires the total time of the caucus.

"Haiti moves to enter a 10-minute unmoderated caucus."

During an unmoderated caucus, which is also sometimes known as a "suspension of the rules," delegates are free to get up and move around the room and form what are called **blocs**—groups of like-minded delegates. These blocs are welcome to discuss any aspect of the topic that they choose, but the chair will steer any off-topic conversation back to the topic. As mentioned, delegates will eventually begin writing their draft resolutions in their caucus blocs (more on that in the next section).

Flow of Debate

Debate will essentially move back and forth between these three forms of debate for the duration of the committee. Delegates should try to develop a sense for what they need to progress debate and make motions appropriately. If the committee needs to work on resolutions, then a delegate should make a motion for an unmoderated caucus. If the committee is getting into heated debate about a particular issue within the topic, then a motion for a moderated caucus would be helpful. If the committee needs to hear from delegates about the topic as a whole, then it would make the most sense to return to the speakers list.

Points

Separate from motions, there are also similar actions called points. While motions are proposals for the committee to change the way in which it is debating, points tend to be more similar to questions or clarifications from the chair. They are short and transactional, and they never require a vote from the committee. To offer a point, delegates should simply raise their placard in the same way as if they were making a motion. There are four types of points:

- **Point of Inquiry**: Used for specific questions about the substance of the topic. This point is not technically in the rules of procedure, but because MUN is an educational activity, it is important that delegates be able to learn from the chair about aspects of the topic they may not be familiar with. Note that this is **not** used to ask questions to other delegates, only to the chair.
- **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry**: Used when a delegate has a question about the rules of procedure. Sometimes, we all get confused!
- **Point of Order**: Used if a delegate thinks the chair has misapplied the rules of procedure. Chairs should hear the complaint, and if the complaint is valid, the chair should fix the mistake. There is a lot to manage in committee, so sometimes the chair can simply overlook something.
- **Point of Personal Privilege**: Used for complaints and questions, such as "the room is too hot" or "where is the bathroom?"

Middle of Debate / Paper Flow

Relevant Rules, Points, and Motions
Resolutions and Amendments
Withdrawal of Resolutions

Working Papers

In terms of speeches and caucuses, the middle of debate will look largely the same as the beginning of the debate, although with more unmoderated caucuses over time. As the debate progresses, however, there will be questions about **paper flow**, which is the informal term for the development of the committee's draft resolutions. In this section, we'll focus on the process of writing resolutions while acknowledging that debate will continue as described in the previous section.

The writing process begins when delegates begin jotting down ideas for solutions from their caucus bloc. At this point, the document is called a **working paper**. Think of working papers as a brainstorming document to help advertise your ideas to the rest of the committee. The formatting will come eventually, but you need to convince everyone else of your ideas before you worry about that. The delegates who are writing or supporting the resolution are called **sponsors**. Some conferences may require work-

ing papers to have a minimum number of sponsors (e.g., 10% of the committee).

The chair does not *formally* recognize working papers. However, most conferences will have a process for either copying or projecting working papers so that the entire committee can review the documents. This almost always happens by delegates submitting working papers to the chair. Your chair should explain how the process will work at the start of the committee, but you can also use a point of parliamentary inquiry to clarify this process.

Once the working paper copies are returned, some chairs will allow for an informal question and answer session where the sponsors of the working paper present it to the rest of the committee. This session is also not formally specified in the rules of procedure, but it is a polite gesture used at many conferences.

Draft Resolutions

After some more work is done on the working paper and it is near a final draft state, the sponsors of the working paper may at this point submit the paper to be *formally* recognized by the dais. At this point, it becomes a **draft resolution**. The most important difference is that once debate ends (see the next section), all draft resolutions recognized by the chair are voted on, but **not** the working papers. There is no motion to submit a working paper—the sponsors may simply hand the document to a dais member at an appropriate time (i.e., not during a delegate's speech). The chair then gives the draft resolution a formal designation in the format "A/1." Here, A (or B, C, etc.) refers to the topic, and 1 (or 2, 3, 4, etc.) refers to the order in which it was submitted.

The chair has sole authority over whether or not a working paper is accepted. For example, suppose the chair receives a draft resolution that is virtually identical to another resolution. In that case, the chair may decide to send back to the delegates to merge the two even if the working papers meet all the formal requirements of becoming a draft resolution. However, per the rules of procedure and the basic concept of fairness, the committee may not enter voting procedure until all draft resolutions have been distributed throughout the committee or projected for all to see. Delegates have a right to know what they are voting on.

Amendments

Towards the end of committee, the delegates may begin discussing **amendments** to draft resolutions. Amendments are essentially documents that suggest changes to draft resolutions. Usually, draft amendments come from non-sponsors because if a

sponsor wants to change the draft resolution, they can simply withdraw, edit, and resubmit their draft resolutions. However, you can see draft amendments from sponsors if only a minority of sponsors want to change the draft resolution.

Like resolutions, amendments progress from working paper to draft amendment in committee and may be submitted to the dais at any time. Draft amendments should be labeled according to the resolution they amend in the format "A/1/a," with the trailing "a" referring to the order in which the draft amendment was submitted. Therefore, the first amendment submitted to resolution B/3 would be labeled B/3/a. Finally, just like with draft resolutions, the chair may reject a draft amendment if it does not meet basic expectations of quality or style or if it should be merged with another working paper on the floor.

Closing Debate

Relevant Rules, Points, and Motions
Closing Debate
Method of Voting
Amendments

Once the draft resolutions have been thoroughly discussed and the committee has exhausted debate on the topic (or if the conference is coming to a close), the committee may enter voting procedure. This is accomplished by the approval of a **motion to close debate**. Note that this is **not** the same as the motion to recess the session mentioned before. There is no motion to "enter voting procedure." Instead, the motion to close debate looks like this

"Croatia moves to close debate."

The motion to close debate is unique because it requires two delegates to speak *against* the motion (usually thirty seconds apiece) and requires a two-thirds majority to pass. If no two people want to speak against the motion, it automatically passes.

From this point on, the committee enters a form of lockdown. Nobody is allowed in or out of the room, and delegates may not confer with each other. While this may seem excessive, it's actually very important to the voting process. Just like when someone enters a voting booth, the stoppage of notes and debate allows each delegate to vote their conscience without fear of external

pressure.

At this point, the dais runs the show by guiding the committee through a straightforward step by step process.

1. **Read the first resolution** (most likely A/1) in its entirety, so the committee knows what's being voted on.

    (skip steps 2-5 if there are no amendments)

2. **Read the <u>most disruptive</u> amendment** to the resolution. This is at the chair's discretion.

3. **Vote on the amendment**. This is only a vote on whether or not to include the amendment with the resolution.

4. **Repeat steps 2 and 3** for all other amendments.

5. **Read the resolution as amended.**

6. **Vote** on the resolution.

7. **Repeat steps 1-6** for all further resolutions.

Applause is customary if a resolution passes (not for amendments). Applause is extremely disrespectful if it fails. The committee is free to pass as many resolutions as they want, even if they are explicitly contradictory (although this is discouraged for obvious reasons).

Congratulations! You have successfully navigated a MUN conference!

Conclusion

Ideally, the rules of procedure are never the highlight of a Model UN conference, just as you don't want the referee to be the highlight of a football game. However, the chair and the referee play important roles in their respective activities. If some of the rules discussed here seem confusing to you, don't worry! Most MUN veterans will tell you that there is a steep learning curve and that the best way to understand MUN is to experience a conference in person. However, if you simply know the terms discussed in this guide, you will already have a head start over many delegates new to MUN. As we said before, don't try to memorize every aspect of the rules of procedure—much of that knowledge will come over time. Just learn enough to ensure that you will have a great time at your next MUN conference!

The National High School Model United Nations Conference (NHSMUN) is a project of IMUNA, a non-profit organization formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications (UN-DGC). IMUNA is dedicated to promoting global issues education through simulation.

Prepared by IMUNA