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HOW TO RESEARCH FOR AN UN COMMITTEE

Researching for a UN committee in Model United Nations (MUN) involves more than just gathering facts, it requires developing a deep understanding that allows you to think and speak like a real diplomat. A strong research process builds the foundation for confident speeches, persuasive drafts, and effective negotiations in committee.

Start with the background guide. Always begin with the committee's background or study guide. This document outlines the perspective the conference expects you to use when considering the topic. Read it carefully at least twice: first to grasp the main story and then to highlight key terms, timelines, stakeholders, and questions raised by the chairs. Use the guide's bibliography or footnotes to guide your research, following those references to delve deeper into essential documents and reports.

As you read, create a structured note document divided into sections like "Key concepts," "Past UN actions," "Important dates," and "Potential solutions." This structure will keep your research organized and help you draft your position paper and working papers more efficiently.

Understand your committee's mandate. Each UN committee has a specific mandate, powers, and limitations. Serious delegates research these before considering solutions. Start with the official UN website and your committee's page to learn what it is legally allowed to do, what areas it typically focuses on, and how it has dealt with similar issues in the past. For instance, a General Assembly committee can recommend and coordinate, while the Security Council can authorize sanctions or peacekeeping operations.



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Make a short profile of your committee that includes its founding resolution or charter basis, typical funding methods, decision-making rules (like consensus, simple majority, and vetoes where applicable), and significant past resolutions on related topics. Understanding this institutional background will help you create realistic solutions and impress both chairs and fellow delegates.

Research your country in context. Once you grasp the committee framework, turn to your assigned country and how it relates to the topic. Start with basic information, political system, economic profile, regional alliances, security issues and then focus on aspects that directly affect the agenda item, like relevant ministries, national strategies, or significant domestic debates. Government websites, foreign ministry statements, and your country's mission page to the UN are especially valuable for authentic positions.

Next, find out how your country has responded to similar issues in the UN system by examining voting records, co-sponsorship of resolutions, participation in UN programs, and public statements in debates. This information will help you construct a position that is consistent and credible, rather than simply reflecting your personal views or what appears "popular" in the room.

Map past UN actions and international law. Good MUN research goes beyond news headlines to explore the legal and institutional history surrounding the topic. Locate and skim through key UN resolutions, conventions, treaties, and reports related to your agenda item. Pay attention to what has already been attempted, what mandates exist, and where gaps in implementation lie. The UN's document databases and research portals give you access to resolutions, voting data, and official reports.





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Create a concise list of key instruments: major treaties, important resolutions, UN agencies involved, and significant global initiatives. In committee, you will use this toolkit to anchor your proposals in precedent, cite legal obligations, and show that your solutions build on existing frameworks rather than starting from scratch.

Use credible data and diverse sources. To shift from vague discussion to concrete policy, your research should include current statistics and specific information. Look for data from UN agencies, the World Bank, major think tanks, and reputable news sources on indicators such as GDP, conflict levels, human development, climate risks, or demographic trends, depending on your topic. Including a few well-chosen statistics in your speeches can boost your credibility.

Balance global overviews with regional or local perspectives to understand how the issue plays out on the ground. Reports from specialized agencies, regional organizations, NGOs, and academic articles can provide insights into practical challenges and innovative solutions that may not appear in high-level resolutions but are essential for crafting realistic MUN proposals.

Identify allies, opponents, and blocs. Your research for a UN committee is incomplete without considering the political landscape you will negotiate in.

After understanding your country's interests, review the list of committee members to see which states are likely allies, competitors, or flexible partners on the topic. Consider regional affiliations, economic interests, security concerns, ideology, and past voting patterns in similar discussions.



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From this, outline informal blocs or groupings you might collaborate with and identify potential fault lines. Knowing in advance which delegations to approach in unmoderated caucuses and which boundaries to respect allows you to lobby more effectively and propose coalitions that make diplomatic sense.

Organize notes into a usable format. Even excellent research is useless if you cannot find it quickly during sessions. Many experienced delegates create a research binder or digital folder with clear sections such as "Country profile," "Committee mandate," "Topic background," "Statistics," "Allies and blocs," and "Draft policy ideas." Keep information in bullet points and short phrases to make it easy to scan and quote during debates.

Use this organizational step to start drafting possible clauses and policy packages instead of waiting until you are in committee. Turn facts into actions: for every major issue you identify in your notes, write one or two potential solutions that align with your committee's powers and your country's interests. This practice helps bridge the gap between passive research and active resolution writing.

Shift from research to strategy. The final stage of preparing for a UN committee involves deciding what to focus on during the debate. Review your material and choose a few key themes or solution areas where your country can lead or compromise effectively, such as funding methods, capacity building, monitoring frameworks, or specific regional initiatives. Aim for depth in these areas instead of trying to superficially cover everything.



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Turn these priorities into a clear internal plan: angles for your opening speech, potential moderated caucus topics, key statistics to highlight, and red lines you cannot cross during negotiations. When your research translates smoothly into a strategy, you enter committee as a prepared diplomat rather than a student with scattered notes. This difference sets apart memorable delegates at any MUN conference.

