

Position Paper Writing Guide

Overview

A position paper is a diplomatic statement of your country's position on the issues under consideration by a committee. For example, if you are the delegate representing Romania in the General Assembly Third Committee, you will write a paper detailing Romania's position on the topics before the GA3. Other delegates from your country will write on the topics before their committees.

Position papers help delegates prepare for the conference. Position papers clarify a country's position, provide ideas for negotiation, and practice written diplomacy. Writing a position paper involves researching your country, the UN, and the topics, and using this knowledge to articulate your country's position on the topics.

Format

A position paper must meet the following format requirements:

- No more than two pages in length
- Printed double-sided
- 11 point font
- Single spaced within paragraphs and double spaced between paragraphs
- Heading with the official country name, the name of the school representing the country, and the name of the individual serving as a delegate for that committee
- Short introductory paragraph, followed by three paragraphs on each topic
- Topic sections divided by topic headings. Topics should appear in the order they appear on the topic list and in the committee background guides. Each topic heading should be bold and centered.

Please look at the sample position paper provided. You will need to follow that format.

How to Write a Position Paper

A position paper should be written in diplomatic language. That is, it should express your country's position on the issues in the most favorable and respectful light possible.

A position paper consists of a short introductory paragraph, followed by three body paragraphs on each topic (nine body paragraphs total).

Introductory Paragraph

This paragraph lists the topics your committee will discuss and summarizes the country's basic approach to the topics by referring to the relevant international organizations to which the country belongs and the relevant treaties it has signed.

Body Paragraphs

For each topic your committee will discuss, you will need to write three paragraphs. Below is a description of each paragraph.

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First Paragraph -- *History*

- a. This paragraph should provide a short introduction to the topic, the previous work of the UN on the topic, and current issues that need to be addressed, from your country's point of view.
- b. It should refer to important treaties or past resolutions that your country has supported. (At the conference, you can refer to these documents in your speeches and in your resolutions to provide other delegates with insight into your country's position.)

Second Paragraph -- *Position*

- a. This paragraph should state your country's position on the topic.
- b. It should refer to your country's work on the issue within its borders, with allies, with regional partners, and/or within the world community.
- c. It should explain why your country is a shining example, or needs assistance, or has made progress, or can help other countries on this topic.

Third Paragraph -- *Proposal*

- a. This paragraph should summarize your country's proposal for addressing the issues related to this topic.
- b. It should assess the progress that has been made on this issue, describe areas for improvement, and suggest specific measures.
- c. Conclude with a strong, forward-thinking sentence. (At the conference, these statements can be used in resolutions.)

Resources

You should plan on using AT LEAST three different sources for your position paper, but you will probably need to use more. The following are excellent resources:

- the Topic Background Guides you received for your topics – be sure to carefully examine the questions at the end of each guide as well as the “recommended reading” list; you may get some great ideas/resources
- the website of your country's foreign ministry (search for “Russia foreign ministry,” for example)
- the website of your country's permanent mission at the United Nations in New York; to find this go to <http://www.un.int/index-en/webs.html> and click on Member States.
- the UN Bibliographic Information System; this provides an index to speeches (which is where you can pick by topic, country and committee) OR you can go to voting record; the website is <http://unbisnet.un.org/>
- www.cyberschoolbus.un.org → model UN headquarters → preparation → research tips OR you can go to ask an expert
- UNA-USA resources on Model UN; go to <http://www.unausa.org/modelun> and look on the right side for links to MUN preparation
- Reuters.com -- a general news site where you can search for topics like "Turkey climate change UN" and potentially find interesting and relevant articles

Citations and Works Cited

You must include in-text citations in your position paper and prepare a Works Cited page. Both must be in proper MLA format. For guidance, use your *Pocket Style Manual* or refer to <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc>.