

HMDC Presents... How to Perform as a Delegate

HMDC Presents... How to Perform as a Delegate at Harvard MUN Online

This guide shows how we speak, caucus, write and behave as a team of delegates at Harvard Model United Nations Online on December 5-6, 2026. We use it to practise every part of committee before the conference, so that on the day each of us knows what to do and when to do it.

WHAT KIND OF CONFERENCE THIS IS

Harvard MUN Online runs in "the same exact format as the in-person committee sessions," with smaller committees and more personal contact with the chair (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). Delegates are judged on the same criteria and can win the same awards, and every delegate must submit a position paper for the assigned country before the conference (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). That means we follow the Harvard rules of procedure exactly, even though we meet on Zoom.

GIVING OUR SPEECHES

Speeches are where the chair first hears our country's voice. We keep every speech short, clear and in policy, because a short speech that sounds like our government is stronger than a long speech that sounds like a student.

1. **Joining the Speakers' List early:** The committee keeps an open Speakers' List for the topic, and the default speaking time is one minute unless the committee votes to change it (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We raise our placard, or the Zoom hand, the first time the chair asks, because early speakers set the direction of debate.
2. **Building the opening speech:** We open with our country's name and one sentence on why the topic matters to our people. Then we give our position in one sentence and two solutions we want the committee to adopt, and we close by inviting allies to work with us.
3. **Giving substantive speeches:** Later speeches move the room forward instead of repeating our opening. We name a specific idea, explain how it would work, and say which countries already agree with it.
4. **Using yields correctly:** After a substantive speech, we may yield our remaining time to another delegate, to questions, or to the chair, but only once per speech and never during a moderated caucus (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). When we are unsure, we yield to the chair.
5. **Replying to other delegates:** Harvard does not recognise points of information (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026), so we answer other countries inside our own next speech. We name the idea, not the person, say politely why it is incorrect or incomplete for our country, and offer our better idea in its place.

6. **Saving the Right of Reply for real insults:** The chair may grant a thirty-second Right of Reply only when a delegate's personal integrity has been attacked (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We never use it to argue about policy.

SPEAKING IN DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE

Diplomats disagree all the time, but they disagree with respect. Our words show the chair that we can lead the room without making enemies.

1. **Speaking for our country:** We say "the delegation of Kenya believes" rather than "I think," because we represent a government, not ourselves.
2. **Disagreeing softly:** We say "our delegation has concerns about this approach" or "we respectfully propose a different path," never "that idea is terrible."
3. **Thanking and naming others:** We thank the chair and name other delegates who made helpful points, because people remember who gave them credit and are more likely to join our bloc.
4. **Following the conduct rule:** Delegates must show courtesy and respect to the committee staff and to other delegates (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We stay calm and polite, even when another delegate is not.

WORKING IN CAUCUSES ON ZOOM

Caucuses are where most of the real work happens. A moderated caucus is a focused discussion led by the chair, while an unmoderated caucus is free time to talk in groups and write papers.

1. **Proposing a moderated caucus:** A motion for a moderated caucus must state a topic, a speaking time and a total time (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We practise saying it clearly, for example: "Motion for a nine-minute moderated caucus, forty-five-second speaking time, on funding for clean water."
2. **Proposing an unmoderated caucus:** This motion needs only a time limit, and the moderator may end it early if it stops being productive (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We propose one when our bloc is ready to write.
3. **Moving between Zoom rooms:** During an unmoderated caucus, the committee usually splits into breakout rooms. We join our bloc's room quickly, keep our camera on, and return to the main room the moment the chair calls time.
4. **Speaking up when we cannot hear:** A point of personal privilege may interrupt a speaker only when delegates cannot hear (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). On Zoom, this is the right tool for a frozen or silent speaker.

BUILDING A BLOC

A bloc is a group of countries that agree on the main ideas and write a paper together. The country report we already wrote tells us who our likely allies are.

1. **Finding allies first:** In our first unmoderated caucus, we message the three countries from our country report that usually agree with us and invite them to a breakout room.
2. **Agreeing on the big idea:** Before anyone writes, we agree on two or three main solutions in plain words, so that the paper has one clear direction.
3. **Keeping our red lines:** We know the one thing our country will never accept and the one thing it can trade, and we use the trade to bring new countries into the bloc.

WRITING AND MERGING WORKING PAPERS

A working paper is our bloc's written plan. When the chair approves it as a draft resolution, the whole committee can debate and vote on it.

1. **Writing in committee only:** Harvard expects all writing to take place during committee sessions, and pre-written work can lead to losing awards or worse (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We prepare ideas and research at home, but we write every clause live, in the room, with our bloc.
2. **Keeping everything our own:** All materials given to the committee staff must be the delegates' own work (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We use our own words and never copy text from a website or another paper.
3. **Understanding sponsors and signatories:** Sponsors are the delegates who contributed substantially to the paper, while signatories only show that it deserves debate and do not have to support it (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We ask many countries to sign, even countries outside our bloc.
4. **Meeting the chair's standard:** A draft resolution needs the chair's approval and the required number of sponsors and signatories, and it should be well written, concise, substantive and different from drafts already approved (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We cut any clause that does not add something new.
5. **Merging with another bloc:** Working papers are often "revised, combined, and reformatted as draft resolutions" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). When two papers share ideas, we offer to merge, keep our strongest clauses, and accept the other bloc's strongest clauses in return.

CONTRIBUTING WITHOUT DOMINATING

The chair rewards a willingness to compromise and skill in caucusing, not only speaking (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). A delegate who controls every word of the paper often loses allies.

1. **Giving each member a job:** We share the work, so one delegate writes clauses, one checks facts, and one talks to other blocs.
2. **Inviting quiet delegates:** We ask countries that have not spoken, "What would your delegation like to add?" and we write their idea into the paper.
3. **Sharing the spotlight:** We let other sponsors present parts of the paper, because the chair notices the delegate who makes others stronger.

ACTING IN A CRISIS COMMITTEE

Harvard MUN Online includes crisis committees and specialised bodies, which are an introduction to crisis (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). In crisis, each of us often plays a real person with real powers, and events change quickly.

1. **Knowing our powers:** In a crisis committee, delegates may portray actual individuals with concrete executive power and personal goals (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). Before committee, we list exactly what our character can order and control.
2. **Writing directives:** Directives are the committee's actions, and they follow the same structure as working papers but may be shorter and less formal (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We keep each directive short, specific and quick to pass.
3. **Writing crisis notes:** A crisis note is a letter to a specific person that moves our character's own plan forward (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We write a brief introduction, a numbered list of requests with a reason for each, and a closing line that states our goal.
4. **Reacting calmly to updates:** When the crisis staff announce a new event, we read it twice, ask what it means for our character, and act in the next note instead of panicking.

KEEPING ZOOM ETIQUETTE ACROSS TIME ZONES

Some of us join from California and some from Beijing, which is many hours ahead, so a morning session for one of us can be a late night for another. We plan our sleep, our food and our space before the conference begins.

1. **Checking the schedule in our own time zone:** We open the official conference schedule, convert every session to our local time, and write the times on paper beside our computer.
2. **Setting up our space:** We use a quiet room, a plain background, bright light on our face, and headphones with a microphone.
3. **Using our real delegate name:** We rename ourselves on Zoom with our country or character, exactly as the chair instructs, so the chair can call on us.
4. **Staying muted and visible:** We stay muted unless we are speaking, keep our camera on, and look at the camera when we speak.
5. **Arriving early to every session:** We join ten minutes before each session, because attendance at all committee sessions is part of how awards are decided (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026).
6. **Keeping a backup ready:** We keep a phone charged with Zoom installed, and if our connection drops, we rejoin at once and message the chair privately.

SOURCES

1. Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online: <https://www.harvardmun.org/hmun-online>

2. Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation:

<https://www.harvardmun.org/s/HMUN-2027-Guide-to-Delegate-Preparation.pdf>

HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026

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