

HMDC Presents... In-Depth Training: Points, Motions and Voting

HMDC Presents... In-Depth Training: Points, Motions and Voting at Harvard MUN

This guide teaches the rules of procedure we will use at Harvard Model United Nations Online on December 5-6, 2026, from the first roll call to the final vote. When we know these rules well, we spend our energy on ideas and allies instead of worrying about what to say when the chair calls on us.

WHERE THESE RULES COME FROM

Harvard publishes its rules in the Guide to Delegate Preparation, dated September 14, 2026. The online conference runs in the same format as in-person committee sessions, and delegates are judged on the same criteria (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). Every rule below comes from Harvard's own pages, and the rule number is given so we can check it ourselves.

1. **Trusting the dais first:** The Moderator directs discussion, rules on points of order and enforces the rules, and the Director has complete control of each meeting (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 6, Last Accessed: October 2026). If our dais explains a rule differently on day one, we follow the dais.
2. **Remembering the rules have a purpose:** Harvard says the rules exist mainly so a committee runs smoothly (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Committee Dynamics, Last Accessed: October 2026). We use procedure to move the committee forward, never to show off.

OPENING THE SESSION

1. **Answering roll call:** At the start of each session, the Moderator takes attendance by roll call, and each delegation says "present" or "present and voting" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 31, Last Accessed: October 2026). "Present" keeps our right to abstain on resolutions; "present and voting" gives that right away, and we cannot take it back later in that session.
2. **Choosing our answer before we log in:** We decide as a team before the session which answer our country gives. Most of the time we say "present," because it keeps our choices open when a resolution is close to our country's red lines.
3. **Understanding quorum:** Debate may begin when at least one-fourth of the voting members are present, and voting needs a simple majority of members present (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 32, Last Accessed: October 2026). This is why we stay in the session and keep our camera ready during votes.

4. **Following the topic order:** Harvard's published rules do not include a motion to set the agenda. When a committee has more than one topic area, we follow the order our dais announces in the first session, and we prepare both topics fully so either order works for us.

THE SPEAKERS LIST

1. **Joining the list early:** The committee keeps one open speakers list for the topic, and the Moderator calls on delegations who want to be added (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rules 9 and 15, Last Accessed: October 2026). We raise our placard the first time the Moderator asks, because a long list can mean an hour of waiting.
2. **Planning for one minute:** When any speakers list opens, the speaking time is automatically one minute, and a delegate may move to change it, which needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 17, Last Accessed: October 2026). We practise our opening speech so it fits inside sixty seconds with a clear ending.
3. **Yielding our time:** After a speech from the speakers list, we may yield to another delegate, to questions, or to the chair (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 18, Last Accessed: October 2026). Yields are not allowed in a moderated caucus, and a delegate who receives our time cannot pass it to a third delegate.

POINTS WE MAY RAISE

1. **Raising a point of personal privilege:** We use this when something stops us from taking part, such as not being able to hear the speaker (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 20, Last Accessed: October 2026). It is the only point that may interrupt a speaker, so we use it with great care. Online, a frozen screen or lost sound is the most common reason.
2. **Raising a point of order:** We use this to question an improper use of procedure, and the Moderator rules on it at once (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 21, Last Accessed: October 2026). It may never interrupt a speaker, and the Moderator has the final word.
3. **Raising a point of parliamentary inquiry:** When the floor is open, we may ask the Moderator a question about the rules (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 22, Last Accessed: October 2026). It may never interrupt a speaker, and questions about the topic itself go to the committee staff at a quiet moment instead.
4. **Remembering there are no points of information:** Harvard does not recognise points of information, for the sake of collaboration and efficiency (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 23, Last Accessed: October 2026). If we want to question a speaker, we wait for that speaker to yield to questions.
5. **Requesting a right of reply:** If another delegate insults our personal integrity, we may ask for a thirty-second right of reply, and the Moderator's decision cannot be appealed (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 19, Last Accessed: October 2026).

MOTIONS THAT SHAPE DEBATE

6. **Moving for a moderated caucus:** We state a topic, a speaking time and a total time, and the motion needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 10, Last Accessed: October 2026). If several motions are raised, they are voted on from most to least disruptive. A strong motion sounds like this: "Motion for a ten-minute moderated caucus, forty-five-second speaking time, on funding for clean water."
7. **Moving for an unmoderated caucus:** We state only a total time, because an unmoderated caucus has no set purpose, and it needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 11, Last Accessed: October 2026). This is when we find allies, build blocs and write papers together.
8. **Extending a caucus:** A caucus may be extended by up to half of its original length with a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 12, Last Accessed: October 2026). We ask for an extension when our bloc is close to finishing a paper.
9. **Introducing a draft resolution:** A resolution may be introduced once the Director approves it and it has the minimum sponsors and signatories; the motion to introduce needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rules 26 and 27, Last Accessed: October 2026). An authors' panel of sponsors then presents it and answers questions (Rule 28).
10. **Knowing sponsors from signatories:** Sponsors wrote a large part of the paper, while signatories only think it deserves debate and need not support it (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 24, Last Accessed: October 2026). We sign other blocs' papers freely when asked, because a signature is not a promise to vote yes.
11. **Introducing an amendment:** An amendment needs the minimum signatories the Director sets, a motion to introduce it passes by simple majority, and amendments to amendments are out of order (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 29, Last Accessed: October 2026). If every sponsor agrees, it is friendly and adopted at once; if any sponsor disagrees, it is unfriendly and needs a two-thirds substantive vote. Another section of the same guide says Harvard has no friendly or unfriendly amendments, so we raise a point of parliamentary inquiry if our dais has not said which applies.
12. **Moving to close debate:** At Harvard, we close debate with a motion to enter voting procedure; if it passes, the Moderator declares debate closed and the resolutions go to an immediate vote (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 13, Last Accessed: October 2026). The Moderator may rule it dilatory if resolutions have not been introduced and debated yet.

HOW VOTING WORKS

1. **Telling the two kinds of vote apart:** In a procedural vote, everyone votes yes or no; in a substantive vote, abstaining is allowed (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 30, Last Accessed: October 2026). Votes on resolutions and amendments are substantive, and every other vote is procedural.
2. **Counting a simple majority:** A simple majority means more yes votes than no votes, and abstentions are not counted (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 35, Last Accessed: October 2026). A two-thirds majority means at least twice as many yes votes as no votes.

3. **Staying silent during voting:** Once voting begins, no one interrupts except with a point of personal privilege or a point of order about the voting itself (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 35, Last Accessed: October 2026). Votes are taken by placard unless the committee holds a roll call vote.
4. **Dividing the question:** After debate closes, we may move to vote on chosen operative clauses separately; preambulatory clauses cannot be removed this way (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 33, Last Accessed: October 2026). The motion to divide needs a simple majority, then proposals for how to divide are voted on from most to least disruptive, and each part kept needs a simple majority.
5. **Reordering the resolutions:** Resolutions are voted on in the order they were introduced, but after debate closes we may move to change that order, which needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 34, Last Accessed: October 2026).
6. **Requesting a roll call vote:** If passed, the Moderator calls each country in alphabetical order; in round one we vote yes, no, abstain or pass, and in round two anyone who passed must vote yes or no (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, The Art of Communication, Last Accessed: October 2026). Harvard's guide does not print the number of seconds this motion needs, so we listen for our dais to state it.
7. **Remembering the newest resolution wins:** Resolutions pass with a simple majority, and if two passed resolutions disagree, the most recently passed one decides the matter (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 26, Last Accessed: October 2026). We read every resolution on the floor before we vote.

THE ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

1. **Ranking points and motions:** When more than one is on the floor, Harvard takes them in this order: points first (personal privilege, then order and parliamentary inquiry), then procedural motions such as adjournment, suspension, extensions, caucuses and introductions, and last the motions about voting (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 36, Last Accessed: October 2026). We keep the quick-reference table below beside our screen.

QUICK-REFERENCE TABLE

Point or motion	When it is in order	May interrupt a speaker?	Vote needed
Point of personal privilege	Any time we cannot take part	Yes	None
Point of order	Floor open	No	None (Moderator rules)
Point of parliamentary inquiry	Floor open	No	None
Point of information	Not recognised at Harvard	Not allowed	Not allowed
Change speaking time	Formal debate, floor open	No	Simple majority
Moderated caucus (topic, speaking time, total time)	Floor open, before debate closes	No	Simple majority
Unmoderated caucus (total time only)	Floor open, before debate closes	No	Simple majority

Extend a caucus (up to half the original)	Floor open, before debate closes	No	Simple majority
Suspend or adjourn the meeting	Floor open	No	Simple majority
Introduce draft resolution	Director approval plus sponsors and signatories	No	Simple majority
Introduce amendment	After resolutions are introduced	No	Simple majority to introduce
Adopt unfriendly amendment	Substantive vote	No	Two-thirds
Enter voting procedure (closes debate)	Floor open	No	Moderator puts it to the committee
Divide the question	After debate closes	No	Simple majority, then simple majority per part
Reorder resolutions	After debate closes	No	Simple majority
Roll call vote	Voting procedure	No	Seconds set by the dais
Pass a resolution	Voting procedure	No	Simple majority

SOURCES

1. **Reading the rules in full:** Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, September 14, 2026.
 - <https://www.harvardmun.org/s/HMUN-2027-Guide-to-Delegate-Preparation.pdf>
2. **Checking the online conference format:** Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026.
 - <https://www.harvardmun.org/hmun-online>

HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026

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