

HMDC Presents... The Student Diplomat

HMDC Presents... The Student Diplomat: Our First Guide to Model UN

This guide explains what Model United Nations is, what a delegate does, and how a conference weekend works from the first roll call to the final vote. We read it first, before the other HMDC guides, so that every new word in those guides already makes sense.

WHAT MODEL UN IS

Model United Nations is a practice version of the real United Nations. Each student becomes a delegate who speaks for one country, and the delegates in a committee work together to solve one world problem by writing and passing a resolution.

1. **Speaking for a country:** We do not share our own opinions. We learn what our assigned government believes and speak as its diplomat, even when its view is different from ours.
2. **Solving problems together:** Model UN is not a debate with winners and losers on each side. The committee succeeds when many countries agree on a strong plan.
3. **Learning by doing:** Each conference teaches research, public speaking, teamwork and negotiation, because we practise all four at once.

THE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM

Every committee has the same kinds of people, even online. Knowing who is who helps us know whom to ask for help.

1. **Delegates:** The students who represent countries. At Harvard, General Assembly committees can be large, while specialized committees are smaller.
2. **The dais:** The chair and the staff who run the committee. The chair calls on speakers, rules on motions and approves working papers.
3. **Our bloc:** The group of countries that share our goals on the topic. We find our bloc during caucus and write our working paper together.

HOW A CONFERENCE WEEKEND FLOWS

A Model UN weekend follows a pattern that repeats in every committee. When we know the pattern, nothing surprises us.

1. **Roll call:** The chair calls each country, and we answer "present" or "present and voting" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 31, Last Accessed: October 2026).
2. **Opening speeches:** Delegates join the Speakers' List and explain their country's position. Our opening speech is the chair's first impression of us.

3. **Moderated caucus:** The chair calls on delegates for short speeches about one part of the topic. These speeches help the room find areas of agreement.
4. **Unmoderated caucus:** Delegates move freely, or into breakout rooms online, to form blocs and write working papers.
5. **Draft resolutions:** The chair approves the strongest working papers as draft resolutions, and their sponsors present them to the committee.
6. **Voting:** The committee closes debate and votes. A resolution passes with a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 26, Last Accessed: October 2026).

WORDS EVERY DELEGATE KNOWS

These are the words we hear most in committee. We learn them before the conference so we can follow every minute of debate.

1. **Position paper:** A short paper, written before the conference, that explains our country's view on the topic and the solutions we support. Harvard requires one from every delegate (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026).
2. **Motion:** A request to the chair to do something, such as open a caucus or close debate. The committee votes on most motions.
3. **Point:** A short question or concern raised to the chair, such as a point of order about the rules or a point of personal privilege when we cannot hear.
4. **Working paper:** Our bloc's written plan before the chair approves it.
5. **Sponsor and signatory:** A sponsor helped write the paper; a signatory only agrees that it should be debated (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 24, Last Accessed: October 2026).
6. **Yield:** What we do with the time left after our speech, such as giving it back to the chair.

HOW WE PREPARE AS HMDC DELEGATES

HMDC prepares every delegate the same way, step by step. Each step has its own guide on our Harvard MUN page.

1. **Learning our committee:** We open our committee's button and watch the Committee Explained video.
2. **Studying the topic:** We read the Quick Guide first, then the report, then watch the videos for our December topic.
3. **Researching our country:** We use the Country Guide to learn our government's position, allies and red lines.
4. **Writing the position paper:** We follow the Position Paper guide and the chair's own instructions, which always come first.
5. **Practising speeches and diplomacy:** We rehearse our opening speech and practise polite disagreement with a partner.

6. **Writing our own work:** We do our own research and writing, and we follow the conference's and the chair's academic integrity rules.

HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026