**Model UN Cheat Sheet**



A

Abstain from Voting / Abstention

When a country abstains from voting in a substantive vote, it means that the vote is effectively not counted. The country withdraws from having to take a position in favour or against the matter up for voting. It is typically not possible to abstain during procedural votes.

Agenda

The topic which is to be discussed in committee. It is typically set through a "Motion to set the agenda".

Amendment

A change to an already introduced draft resolution. It may remove, add or change existing operative clauses.

Awards

At most conferences, the best delegates of a committee are recognized for their performance. Typically the chairs pick the best delegate of their committee and a few runner-ups.

B

Bloc

A group of countries that share similar interests or positions. These countries often work together during the conference to create and pass resolutions.

C

Caucus

A meeting of delegates representing specific countries, often held to discuss specific issues or strategies. There are two types: moderated (structured with a speaker's list) and unmoderated (informal, free debate).

Chair

Not a piece of furniture. Impartial moderator of the debate and mentor to delegates. Typically a committee has multiple chairs to handle all required tasks.

Committee

One of the usually many simulated bodies of the United Nations which focuses on a specific topic in international relations. Committees can be as small as having only 15 people, like the Security Council or as large as 400, like a double-delegate General Assembly.

Consensus

Agreement among all parties. In some committees, a resolution may be passed by consensus rather than by a formal vote.

Credentials Committee

A committee that deals with disputes over the rights and privileges of member states. It can also be called upon to resolve issues such as the improper use of placards.

D

Dais

The group of staff members who manage the committee, usually including a chair, a co-chair, and a rapporteur.

Decorum

The order and respect for others that all delegates are expected to show during formal sessions. Chairs often use the phrase "Decorum, delegates!" to request delegates to be silent.

Delegate

A participant in an MUN conference who represents a particular member state, non-governmental organization, or political figure in a simulated committee.

Diplomatic Courtesy

Delegates are expected to act respectfully and professionally throughout the conference, as they are representing their respective countries. This is referred to as diplomatic courtesy.

Division of the Question

During voting on a draft resolution, delegates may move to vote on different parts or clauses of a resolution separately. This is called division of the question.

Draft Resolution

Already fulfilling all formal resolution requirements, a draft resolution remains a draft until it is voted upon after the closure of the debate. If it is adopted, it becomes an actual resolution, and the 'draft' prefix is dropped.

F

Flow of Debate

The order of events in a Model UN committee, generally: roll call, setting the agenda, formal debate, presentation of draft resolutions, amendments, voting, and adjournment.

Formal Debate

The standard format of Model UN conferences, where delegates speak for a set time following a set speaker's list.

Friendly Amendment

An amendment to a draft resolution that all sponsors agree with. It can be incorporated into the resolution without a vote.

G

Gavel

A small hammer used by the chairperson to call for attention or signal the beginning or end of a session. It's also a common award given to the best delegate in a committee.

General Speaker's List

A list of countries which will speak in order one after the other. The GSL persists for as long as the agenda item is debated. Though it can be interrupted by different modes of debate, such as moderated or unmoderated caucuses, it continues to persist in the background. It will be returned once the dedicated mode of debate has elapsed.

I

In favour

When you are for something, not against it, you are in favour of it.

Informal Debate

Less structured than formal debate, often used in unmoderated caucuses to allow free-flowing discussion.

M

Moderated Caucus

A moderated caucus is an intense debate lasting for a specified amount of time (usually between 5 and 15 minutes) to discuss a specific aspect of the overall agenda. Speeches are shorter than in the general speaker's list.

Motion

A suggestion to change something about current committee procedures which is brought forward by one of the delegates: if the motion is granted by the chairs and a majority of delegates, the change will be adopted.

N

Note Passing

A method used by delegates to communicate with each other during formal debate. This is typically facilitated by the conference staff.

O

Observer

A participant that represents a non-member state or organization, such as the Red Cross or the Vatican. Observers can participate in debates but usually do not have voting rights.

Operative Clause

The part of a resolution that describes the actions or policies that the committee will adopt to resolve the issue.

P

Placard (not Playcard)

A little sign stating your country's name. In committee sessions, it is used, so chairs know which country you represent. You can raise it to indicate to the chairs that you want to raise a point or a motion.

Point of Information

This really is just another word for 'question'. Points of information may be allowed after speeches on the General Speaker's list or at some conferences also directed at the chair.

Point of No Return

A point in the debate after which no more points or motions are in order, usually after a motion to close the debate has been passed.

Point of Order

When the chair has made an error, or there was some other error in the committee's proceedings, this can be raised to the chair requesting a correction of the error.

Point of Parliamentary Inquiry

This is a request to the chair to clarify the rules of procedure.

Point of Personal Privilege

When raised to the chair, this point allows delegates to communicate concerns regarding their personal well-being (too warm, too cold, can't hear, can't read...) to the chair in hopes of improvement of the situation.

Position Paper

A document prepared before the conference outlining a country's position on the agenda item or items. It ideally states how the country feels about the current state of affairs and also hints at possible solutions it envisions.

Preambulatory Clause

The part of a resolution that describes the problem being addressed, the past international actions, and the purpose of the resolution.

Precedence

The order in which motions or points will be considered by the chair, usually based on their importance or disruption to the flow of debate.

Q

Quorum

The quorum is the amount of countries present which is required for the committee to conduct its business. Typically it is a certain share of the countries present during the conference's first roll call.

R

Rapporteur

A member of the dais whose role is to assist in the administrative tasks of the committee, such as maintaining the speakers' list or passing notes.

Resolution

The document detailing the measures your committee has agreed upon to tackle the committee's agenda. Resolutions are written as one long continuous sentence and must fulfil a specific format. They generally contain two sections: the preambulatory clauses to justify the action taken in the resolution and the operative clauses which take action.

Right of Reply

A right given to a delegate to respond to serious insults against their country. It is granted at the discretion of the chair.

Roll Call

The process of checking who is there and who isn't. During a roll call, the chair will check for each country which should be part of the committee, whether it is absent (not there), present (there and participating fully), or present and voting (there and committing not only to vote infavor or against at the end).

Rules of Procedure

A document outlining how the specific conference works and what guidelines have to be followed during the debate. They typically vary to different degrees between conferences, so it's worth taking a look every time you go to a new conference!

S

Secretary General

While in the real world, a Secretary General is the head of the UN, in Model UN, he or she is usually the chief organizer or head of the conference's academics.

Signatories

Countries that support putting a draft resolution on the floor for discussion. Being a signatory does not necessarily mean the delegate agrees with the resolution, it simply means they would like it to be discussed.

Simple Majority

A type of voting requirement where a motion passes if more members vote in favor than against. Abstentions do not count towards the total.

Speakers' List

A list that determines the order of speakers during formal debate. Delegates put their names on this list if they wish to give a speech.

Sponsors

The authors of a draft resolution or an amendment. They have usually worked together to write the proposal and are the ones who will be advocating for its passage.

Study Guide

A document provided by the chairs before the conference. It offers background info, key issues, and sources to help delegates prepare the topic of the committee.

T

Tabling

A motion to suspend discussion on a certain issue or draft resolution. The issue can be "brought off the table" by another motion.

The Floor

The current right to speak given by the chair. A delegate who is speaking is said to "have the floor".

Two-Thirds Majority

A type of voting requirement, often used for important decisions. It means that in order for a motion to pass, two-thirds of the members must vote in favor.

U

Unfriendly Amendment

An amendment that some or all sponsors do not agree with. It must be voted on by the committee.

Unmoderated Caucus

A mode of 'debate' during which most rules are suspended. Whilst delegates are usually still expected to remain in the room, they can move around freely, talk to each other and prepare documents. They typically last 10 to 20 minutes at a time.

V

Veto Power

The power held by the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States) to prevent the adoption of a resolution, regardless of the level of support from the rest of the body.

Voting - Procedural Vote

Procedural votes are voting procedures which decide on procedural matters (the proceedings of the committee) only. They do not decide on substantive matters, such as measures being taken in a resolution. Their most common use is to decide on the adoption of motions.

Voting - Substantive Vote

A substantive vote is one that decides on substantive matters in the committee. It is almost exclusively used to vote on draft resolutions once the debate has been closed. At some conferences, votes on amendments are also substantive. Depending on the conference and committee, the required majorities may be different when compared to the procedural vote. Substantive votes usually also allow for additional motions to customize the voting, such as voting by roll call, division of the question, division of the house or reordering of draft resolutions.

W

Working Paper

Whilst not having to fulfil a specific format, working papers are the first time ideas to tackle the agenda are written down, introduced to the committee and shared with everyone else. A document can usually only be formally referred to as a working paper once it has been introduced through a motion.

Y

Yield

The concept of returning 'the floor' or speaking right back to the chair, another delegate or questions at the end of a speech on the General Speaker's list.

Yield to Another Delegate

After delivering a speech, a delegate may use the rest of their time to let another delegate speak.

Yield to Questions

After delivering a speech, a delegate may decide to use the rest of their time to answer questions from other delegates.

Yield to the Chair

After delivering a speech, a delegate may return the rest of their speaking time to the Chair.