



STEPS FOR WRITING A POSITION PAPER

The position paper is literally your bible throughout the conference.

Essentially, the paper forces you to write out your country's viewpoints in paragraph form. It's also the **first important** mode of evaluation for the committee chair; all papers must be submitted some weeks or months in advance to the Conference Secretariat.

Naturally, given its significance to the MUN experience, the position paper is something you want to excel at, and to do this, several criteria must be met.

At the onset of this discussion on the position paper it is particularly significant to stress that it must be written from your country's perspective.

Again, as this document will be your guideline for action throughout the entire conference, it's in your best interests to give an accurate portrayal of your country's stance on the issues at hand.

Simply put, the position paper is meant to give delegates an opportunity to **organize** their research into an organized **policy statement**.

Before You Begin

Before you start writing, it's important to look at the **questions** that were outlined in your background research packet (the documents sent to you by the committee chair). Suggesting a comprehensive course of action that answers these queries is the ultimate goal of your write-up. A good position paper should make **clear reference** to these guidelines and demonstrate that the students clearly comprehend the creative and compositional depth required for an MUN simulation.

If one were looking for some sort of rubric as to what the ideal position paper should consist of, there would be a number of clearly identifiable elements. The position paper has a definite general structure to it: three sections (totalling one page in length) each of which serves a clear purpose within the general context of the paper.

With reference to Sample Position paper A (bottom of the post), we can analyze these different parts and comment on the relative successes of specific techniques used to elucidate points.



1. Outline the Topic in General

The first section (labelled 'A') serves the purpose of outlining the topic in general and providing insight into the root of the conflict.

As the subject of the paper is Free Trade, the write-up begins by first stating the areas of concern, discussing some of the positive and negative aspects of globalization, as well as emphasizing the controversial nature of the topic at hand. Your opening paragraph should, as this paper attests to, be a brief summary of the current perception held towards the status quo. It should state the problem and express why it is significant.

2. Identify and Describe Your Country – How Has Your State Been Affected?

The second section (labelled 'B') is where your background research on your country pays off. Firstly, you should identify and describe your country. Be sure to state how your nation relates to the topic for discussion, specifically citing how your state has been affected (B1). It is imperative to emphasize the extent to which change has taken place. Hold off any normative judgments in this section, the purpose of this paragraph is not to evaluate the institution or development in reference to your country, but rather, to merely discuss how it has altered domestic dynamics.

3. Your Country's Policies and Proposed Solutions

The third section (labelled 'C') is where you outline your country's policies and what factors contributed to those policies being established in the first place.

At this point, you are to address the relative benefits (if any) and detriments of the development, specifically relating to your nation and the actions you have taken to maximize or minimize these effects. You are to explain why your country has acted in a certain fashion historically (C1), and why it will continue to follow this course of action.

Outline your state's particular interest in the issue being discussed, and begin to discuss what needs to be changed about the current interpretation of the situation. Cite the areas needing reform (C2) and provide suggestions as to how this revision process should be accomplished. Following this, you may want to focus on one area of particular concern for your country (C3). Depending on your topic area, this could be anything from the effect of a war on a nation's health care infrastructure to how creating new national boundaries may affect resource deposits running along the potential borders.



In this particular paper, attention is brought to Regional Trade Alliances (C4) and their associated problems, something that, as been noted, holds special significance to Oman. By approaching a problematic scenario in greater detail, you are demonstrating to the chair and to fellow delegates that you have the capacity to think critically and can identify the issues with which your country has the greatest concern. This being said, choose this area carefully: given the issue's prominence in your position paper (and correspondingly the problem's significance to your country as a whole), you will have to stress its importance during committee session.

Be sure to select an area of concern that could potentially form the basis of a resolution, or at least one that can stimulate prolonged debate.

4. Tie Together Loose Ends

Finally, a conclusion should be written to restate your country's position and sum up what you hope to achieve throughout the duration of the conference (D).

The position paper leaves the committee chair with a **first impression** of your delegation. Naturally, it's important to make that impression as strong as possible. The staff looks for original and critical thinking, a true understanding of the nature of your nation and both a function and applied knowledge of your topic.

Be sure to demonstrate this through presenting a concise yet effective paper. As expressed before, be sure to dedicate equivalent energy to position papers for both topic areas. They are equally important in the eyes of the committee and the directors (the people who will be evaluating your write-ups).

The Waiting Game

After submitting your position paper to the conference secretariat, there usually is a two week to one month stretch where you play "the waiting game". As you will no doubt be busy with schoolwork, don't worry excessively about preparation. On weekends, however, you may find it helpful to review material and do more researching so as to keep up to date with the latest happenings. Other than that, get ready for Showtime!



SAMPLE POSITION PAPER

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Topic: Nuclear Test Ban

Country: The Republic of Sierra Leone

School: High School Academy

A.

The nuclear test ban issue has been the first item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament since 1978 with good reason. In 1963, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the USSR entered into the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), which prohibited testing in the atmosphere and underwater. In 1974, the United States and the USSR entered into the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) which placed an upper limit of 150 kilotons on nuclear tests.

The next logical step, a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT), has been long overdue. Nuclear weapon testing allows the arms race to continue and even escalate. The implementation of a test ban would slow down the development of new nuclear weapons and thereby slow down the arms race. Furthermore, a CTBT would not, as some states have claimed, threaten the stability of the policy of nuclear deterrence, on which both superpowers rely. In fact, a CTBT would maintain stability by preventing innovations and developments which could potentially give one nuclear state a unilateral advantage. Moreover, the increasing use of super-computers has essentially eliminated the need for actual testing.

B.

The Republic of Sierra Leone believes disarmament to be crucial for the maintenance of worldwide security and considers a nuclear test ban to be an important step in the process of reaching that goal. Sierra Leone is not a nuclear power nor does it aid other countries in producing nuclear weapons.

In the past, the policy of Sierra Leone has been to work diligently towards a CTBT. We wish to accomplish this goal through negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament. In accordance with this policy, the Resolution 485 banning nuclear testing in Africa and Resolution 781 banning nuclear testing in Southeast Asia received wholehearted support from Sierra Leone. Furthermore, our government received glowing reports from the international press for our stance on the issue. The African Journal wrote that "To maintain the fundamental principles of Africa, the UN needs more nations like Sierra Leone" (Volume 48, 1993, pp. 12).



C.

The Republic of Sierra Leone supports the following proposals for a nuclear test ban treaty:

The treaty must be a comprehensive and permanent one. Although Japan's proposal to have a progressive lowering of the threshold limit until it reached zero is an interesting idea, not only does this legitimize nuclear weapon testing, it also delays a true resolution of the problem. In addition, it gives the nuclear states a greater opportunity to escape their obligations through inevitable loopholes in the treaty.

Although peaceful nuclear explosions could potentially bring about beneficial results, the nearly insurmountable difficulty in differentiating between nuclear tests for weapons and nuclear tests for peaceful purposes makes such a distinction infeasible. The proposal that a state must provide the Secretary-General with all relevant data about the planned explosion is laudable, yet proper assurance of the peaceful nature of a test would require a degree of monitoring to which most nuclear states would not agree.

States can rely not only on all national means of verification which are consistent with international law, but also an international verification system. Current seismic monitoring systems, such as the Norwegian Seismic Array (NORSAR), are sufficiently advanced to determine whether states are complying with a CTBT. In addition, the 1984 experiment involving the World Meteorological Organization/Global Telecommunications System (WMO/GTS) illustrates the viability of an international seismic network. As per the Ad Hoc Group's report, Sierra Leone is in favor of an international network of seismic monitoring stations which would send their data to International Data Centers (IDCs) for analysis. These IDCs would automatically give out type I data (basic information) with type II data (data subjected to more advanced analysis) available upon request. Of course, even after the conclusion of a CTBT, there should be further research into the development of even more sensitive and accurate seismic monitoring equipment and analysis techniques. If the test ban treaty involved the gradual reduction of the threshold limit, then that limit should reflect current seismic monitoring technology. In addition, on-site inspections should be allowed.

Regarding compliance, a test ban treaty is of such paramount importance that violators should be punished. Yet the fact remains that embargoes would most likely have little if any effect on most nuclear states. Perhaps compliance measures will eventually rely on first convincing the superpowers, and any other nuclear states, to enter into a CTBT and then getting the superpowers themselves to ensure that their allies abide by the treaty.

References:

<http://vmun.com/writing-position-paper-model-united-nations/>

<http://www.harvardmun.org/assets/pdfs/HMUN-2017-Guide-to-Delegate-Preparation.pdf>