

MUN Position Paper Writing Guide: Tutorial Edition



What this guide will include:

What is a position paper?

Why are position papers important?

How to research for a conference/position paper:

How to write a position paper:

How to use your position paper in debate:

Sample Position Paper

What is a position paper?

A “position paper” is a formal MUN document which each delegate prepares. They are typically required to attend conferences, and an essential part of research/preparation if you wish to do well. Position Papers outline your country/person/delegate position’s STANCE (how they view it, if they adopt it/revoke it, etc.) on the issues at hand in a formal, well-constructed 3-paragraph structure. Position papers are to be submitted to committee facilitators or conference organizers, as a testament to your research and preparedness.

Why are position papers important?

Students, of course, are not expected to know the details of the delegate positions they are assigned to (ex: what their stance is on the global issues, what treaties they have signed, who their allies are, etc.), but, these are all essential pieces of information to a successful MUN debate. Recall that MUN is about inheriting and immersing within the delegate position you have been assigned and upholding their values (i.e. simulating their behaviour to effectively simulate an international community). This is to ensure that whatever resolutions are created for the topics/issues that are being debated, are feasible, accurate and could actually be accepted by nations. For instance, if China signs a treaty banning child labour, while this may seem great for the committee, it does NOT align with their country policy on child labour (they are widespread adopters of this), and so this resolution would not be internationally accurate.

Also, position papers are used by many conferences to assess awards to delegates. A position may be optional, however if submitted, a paper that is well-written gives a delegate an advantage in being considered for awards. It also helps YOU ensure that you've covered all areas of research needed for successful debate. Position Papers are necessary to be considered for awards at some conferences, and some conferences even have their own position paper awards.

How to research for a conference/position paper:

First, start with reading and note-taking on the Background Guide. This is a document your conference will provide, either by e-mail or posted onto their website (this is more common). It is usually written by the chair/co-chair of your committee, outlining the general parameters of the committee's topic, offering guiding questions for your research, and listing some resources/links at the bottom. It is wise to start by exploring this document and seeing what the debate will likely be centered on, because the topics can sometimes be misinterpreted.

Next, research your topic BROADLY. Search it up on the internet, ask family/friends, or watch the news. Whatever comes up when you do this kind of research is the most IMPORTANT to the essence of the topic. It will help you realize who the major players are, and who you may want to consider checking your international relationships with. While you do all this, start preparing a research document where you paste your resources and take jot-notes of statistics, data, events, major countries, developments or anything else you find important to bring into your debate.

Once you have a general understanding of the topics, you can begin THOUGHTFUL research.

- History/Context of Situation (how did it start?)
- What are the actual effects of the issue (on people, societies, countries, the world)
- Who are the major parties involved in this issue (endorsing it, causing it, opposing it)
- What are the most recent developments in this issue (foreign aid, civil war, etc.)?
- How is your country involved in this issue/ how does it affect you? (stats, data)
- Which delegates could be allied with you/who could be opposed to you?
- What has your country done to resolve/instill this issue? (treaties, etc.)
- What possible resolutions could solve this issue/what have international powers done to solve it? (this will be the hardest to research)

Yellow: Answer in Paragraph 1 of position paper

Green: Answer in Paragraph 2 of position paper

Purple: Answer in Paragraph 3 of position paper

How to write a position paper:

A position paper is split up into 3 distinct paragraphs:

Formatting:

- 12 point font
- Times New Roman/Arial (something readable)
- Double-Spaced
- 1-2 pages in length
- In text-citations and references at the end (any format)
- Speak from country tone, not personal (i.e. Canada believes in...)

[(Name of Conference) Position Paper]

Committee: [Committee Name]

Topic: [Topic Being Debated]

Country: [Your Delegate Assignment]

Delegate: [Your Name, Your School]

Paragraph 1: History/Context/Issue Overview

Here, discuss how the issue came about, what are the root causes, which parties are involved, and what is the history that brought this issue to global attention. This is where you include global statistics and data of the issue, and you are also free to include an anecdote/story as your hook. Discuss how the issue affects individuals, why it is such a problem and how widespread it is. The use of statistics reinforces this section greatly. (20-25% of paper)

Paragraph 2: Your delegate's Position/Stance/Action/Involvement with the issue

This should be the bulk of your paper, because this underscores the PURPOSE of the paper: which is to outline what your country's STANCE is on the issue at hand. Here, discuss some characteristics about your country if they pertain to the debate (like land size, geographic region, GDP, population density, QoL index, etc.). For example, if your debate is about deforestation, you can discuss how much of your country is covered in wilderness/how many ecosystems would be affected. This section also benefits from data/statistics. Discuss what previous work your country has done within its own borders, and with allies, to resolve the issue (treaties, pacts, meetings, etc.). If there are any initiatives your country is a part of/leading regarding the issue, mention that here. Discuss if your country is an example for the global community to follow with this issue, or if they are in need of assistance (and call on countries to help). Identify the depth of involvement/relevance your country has with this issue. (50% of paper)

Paragraph 3: Your delegate's proposed course of action to SOLVE the issue

This paragraph is often the least data/statistic-heavy, because it is more creative and original. Here, you should work to demonstrate your uniqueness of thought as a delegate. In MUN, being different stands out. Discuss initiatives you could work with your allies on, how they would be executed, how it would be funded, how the impacts would be measured, and what the goal is. Discuss existing programs that you can fund more intensively, interesting allies you can work more closely with. From your country's perspective, what do you think needs to be done to effectively solve this issue in the long-term? At the conference, you will work with other delegates to form an actual resolution, but this is important to write so you have ideas to propose. (25-30% of paper)

How to use your position paper in debate:

Typically, during a "primary" speakers list, delegates will be asked to stress the importance of the issue at hand. If there are multiple issues, they discuss why they believe they should discuss one over another. The first paragraph is most useful for this. Use statistics, stories, and widespread impacts to justify your claims.

During a "secondary" speakers list, delegates are asked to narrow in more closely on the issue, from their country's perspective. Usually being 45s to 1m30s, delegates will ADAPT their second paragraph to fit this time requirement, only including information that shows where their country stands, most effectively.

During an "unmoderated" caucus, delegates begin forming resolutions in "blocs" with other delegates. This is where you can propose the ideas which you've generated/played out in your third paragraph and see how they line up with others' ideas. This is how you can find compatible delegate ideologies, and see who you can work best with.

Sample Position Paper (next page):

note: this is not properly spaced + references are not included, to conserve space

King'sMUN Position Paper

Committee: African Union

Topic: Cobalt Mining in the DRC

Country: Democratic Republic of Congo

Delegate: John Doe, King's Christian Collegiate

Cobalt is a demanded element and remains an asset to all economic activity. 75% of the world's cobalt is extracted from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where it was first discovered in 2014. With an increase in demand for cobalt-based electric cars, Lithium-ion batteries and power phones, Congolese people see an escape to poverty caused by years of dictatorship, civil war, corruption, and famine. Even with high risk, personal mining endeavours begun in the Southern part of Congo where an estimated 3.4 million metric tons of the element sits. Although illegal and unsafe, artisanal mining in vulnerable and exposed tunnels, accounts for about 15% of Cobalt produced, because of the Congolese desperation. Out of the 200,000 people working in these rushed conditions, 10% die annually from structural instability, unsanitary areas, exposure to chemicals, exhaustion, and accidents. The extraction leads to exploitation of children, environmental pressure, high metallic presence in pregnant women and fetal abnormalities. The Democratic Republic of Congo strives to create a safer form of extraction, that can bring justice to the Congolese government, economy, and people.

“Do I send my child to school, or do we eat today?” (NPR). In such desperation for money, any opportunity to grow income is mandatory to fulfil, no matter what else is available. The Democratic Republic of Congo, as a nation, is within the 5 poorest countries in the world, where most people live on less than \$2.15 daily. After gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, the Rwandan genocide influenced the Congo Wars because of ethnic tensions which caused 5.4 million deaths, and shaky ongoing political status. The effects from these events last until this day, as the country struggles to recover economically, with over 85% forced to work by informal accommodations such as cobalt mining. Unable to find decent wages anywhere else, many Congolese moved to the Southern part of the nation and begun digging in their personal plots of land. The municipality enforced a restriction against such activity, however received a massive backlash as the Congolese saw this as their only way of potential success. Quite literally “rocks were thrown at the mayor”, and the Congolese people continue to insert themselves into these mining environments. To this day, governmental leaders of the Congo are suggesting a plan

to avoid “hasty movements” and humanitarian disaster. In 2009, President Kabila signed an agreement which entailed that China have access to these mines in exchange for “development assistance”. Instantly, China took control of 15 of the 19 available mines, and now has 70-80% of the refined cobalt market, leaving our country without significant potential for profit due to how desperate we are to improve our societal standards. Additionally, militia groups find ways to actively exploit child labour through recruitment patterns which are incapable to be disturbed. The Congolese government is unable to control the activities occurring in relation to these mines due to the monopolization by militias, the Chinese, general desperation, and the giant production companies. The DRC does not promote or want the residents of the country to feel as if it is necessary to work in such hazardous environments, and we want to decrease the measures required. Unfortunately, we are unable to take any action due to the state of our country, and government being insecure. Congo is in desperate need of assistance in stabilizing the activity surrounding these mines. We are in hopes of utilizing the value of this resource towards our instability and creating a better lifestyle opportunity within our country.

To resolve this crisis, coordinated international action is required. The DRC advocates for direct aid to the national government, calling upon developed nations to provide financial, medical, and security assistance. A strengthened government will be able to regulate extraction companies, enforce ethical labor standards, and ensure safe working conditions through stable infrastructure, medical access, and legal employment practices. As stability improves, wages may rise and employment opportunities expand. The DRC also stresses the need to reduce global reliance on cobalt, as opaque supply chains often obscure its humanitarian and environmental costs. Encouraging alternatives to cobalt-dependent technologies would ease environmental strain and allow mining practices to improve. Recognizing the limits of external aid, the DRC proposes reciprocal support: once economically stable, cobalt exports will be distributed under state authority to assisting nations in either resource or monetary form. Through this approach, the DRC aims to ensure ethical mining, worker safety, economic stability, and equitable international cooperation.