The Basics of Model United Nations Conferences

Goals of MUN Conferences: For a Model UN conference, delegates research an important global issue (ranging from humanitarian affairs to international economic crises to extraterrestrials), formulate a position on these issues based on a UN country, and work together with other nations in order to create a solution to the problem. Instead of focusing on competition and awards, BHS Model UN emphasizes the experience and knowledge students gain when they research for conferences, and ways MUN members can become part of the global community.

Members of Council:
- Most Beginner councils are Security councils, which consist of 10 countries which rotate every two years, and 5 permanent veto-power countries.
    - 2014 UN Security Council Members

■ Argentina	■ Luxembourg
■ Australia	■ Nigeria
■ Chad	■ Republic of Korea
■ Chile	■ Russia*
■ China*	■ Rwanda
■ France*	■ United Kingdom*
■ Jordan	■ United States*
■ Lithuania	

  *Permanent veto-power countries

- Intermediate councils are usually larger assemblies with assorted member-states that represent all areas of the globe.
    - The largest United Nations council is the General Assembly, which has all 193 member-states of the UN. It is divided into 6 main committees, which are:
        - **Disarmament and International Security Committee**, which is concerned with disarmament and related international security questions
        - **Economic and Financial Committee**, which is concerned with economic questions
        - **Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee** which deals with social and humanitarian issues
        - **Special Political and Decolonization Committee** which deals with a variety of political subjects not dealt with by the First Committee, as well as with decolonization
        - **Administrative and Budgetary Committee** which deals with the administration and budget of the United Nations
        - **Legal Committee** which deals with international legal matters
- Advanced Councils are often a mix of large general assemblies and small, unique councils, such as Crisis Councils and Historical Councils.

Conference Agenda: Most conferences will follow a similar outline that is based on normal United Nations procedure:

1. Roll Call
2. Motion to open debate
3. Set the Agenda (decide which topic to discuss first if there are more than one)*
4. Set the Speaker's List
5. Open Debate

      a. Moderated caucus - A moderated caucus is a form of formal debate, in which a total length of time will be determined for multiple speeches that also have a pre-determined time (i.e. A moderated caucus of 5 minutes with 30 second speaking times). The Presiding Officer will call on delegates to give speeches until total time runs out.

      b. Unmoderated caucus - This is an informal debate, in which a total length of time will be voted on, and delegates will be able to leave their seats, and collaborate with as many or as few other delegates as they'd like. Unmoderated caucuses are good times to draft working papers (resolutions in progress) and amendments, and to talk in an informal setting.

6. Submit resolutions and/ or amendments
7. Authorship speeches for amended/ created resolutions
8. Debate of amendments and/or resolutions
9. Vote on amendments/ resolutions
10. Move on to next topic/ resolution (if there is one)
11. Close Debate
12. Judge's comments

*If the council is a Security Council, the delegates will also vote on which resolution to discuss and amend first

Basic Parliamentary Procedure: Unless Presiding Officers explain otherwise, all conferences will follow the same basic rules of procedure. The specifics will be discussed at the Intro to MUN conference and later lunch meetings, but here are basic guidelines so you generally understand how councils function:

- Conferences are run by one or two Presiding Officers, whose jobs are to time speeches, monitor debate, and keep the council process moving. While POs shouldn't give their opinions on the issue or influence the nature of debate, they might give the council suggestions about plausible solutions or certain tools you can use to make your resolutions/ amendments stronger.
- Delegates have placards with the name of their country on them, which is used to ask for speaking time. When you want to speak or make a motion, raise your placard with the name of your country visible, and the PO will call on you
- Types of motions:
  - Point of order: A delegate may use this point if the Chair or a delegate makes an error in Parliamentary Procedure. Unless it is extremely important, you shouldn't interrupt a speaker to make this point.
  - Point of Information (to the Chair): A delegate may use this point if they have a question for the Chair (the Presiding Officers) regarding something that is unclear
  - Point of Information (to a delegate): A delegate may use this point if they have a question for another delegate regarding something that is unclear in debate.

- - Point of Personal Privilege: A delegate may use this point to ask for something to be changed in the room to make them more comfortable (i.e. Point of Personal Privilege, can the Chair close the door because it's loud outside?)
- PO's will ask delegates to motion for moderated and unmoderated caucuses, setting the agenda, moving into voting procedure. A list of motions will be compiled every time the Chair asks "are there any points or motions on the floor," and the delegates will vote on each one from most destructive to least destructive (a.k.a most likely to least likely to disrupt the flow of debate), and the first one with a simple majority will be passed.
- A Speaker's List will be created at the beginning of the council, after the agenda is set. If there are no points or motions on the floor, the Chair will revert to the Speaker's List and go through two or three speeches before asking for any points or motions again. Because the speaking time for these speeches is usually longer than the time for most moderated caucuses, it's important to get on the Speaker's List as often as possible.
- Working Papers and Amendments should be submitted to the Chair after they're finished and have the right amount of signatures, who will review them and discuss with the authors any technical or substantive changes that should be made before they are debated and voted on.
- Before voting on any resolutions or amendments, most councils have to reach Minimum Debate, which varies, but will always include completion multiple Speaker's List speeches and moderated caucuses.

Resolutions: Resolutions are the main product of an MUN conference, because they are the written action that the General Assembly/ Committee has decided to take, and represent the collaboration that has taken place.
- Resolutions are drafted throughout the conference, as member-states make their positions known and work together to create a solution that will be amenable to the majority of the council, so it can pass
- Resolutions that are in the process of being drafted are called Working Papers, and aren't considered resolutions until they are passed by simple majority (51%)
- Resolutions begin with preamble that essentially states what the problem is, and occasionally a general statement about the resolution authors' response to it. Each preambulatory statement must begin with a preambulatory clause.*
- The main portion of the resolution are the operative clauses, which describe proposed actions to solve the problem. Each operative statement is numbered and must begin with an operative clause.* The operative part of a resolution might reference specific UN bodies, countries, international coalitions, Non-Governmental Organizations, or other groups and explain the action that the Assembly suggests they take. Resolutions should be fairly detailed - at least enough so that the solution being described is plausible and makes sense - and specific references and statistics are always helpful.
- Working Papers must have at least one author (a.k.a sponsor) and at least ⅓ of the countries present must be signatories in order for it to be submitted.
- In a Security Council, a "No" vote from a permanent five country counts as a veto - you only need one veto to fail a resolution! However, veto power does not apply for these countries in other councils.
- Signing a resolution doesn't mean that you necessarily agree with it, only that you want to see it debated further.

*Here is a list of potential preambulatory and operative clauses:
leimun.com/images/List%20of%20Suggested%20Clauses.pdf

Amendments: Written to amend Resolutions in both Security Councils and General Assemblies, Amendments are an essential part to creating a comprehensive and widely accepted resolution.
- Amendments can either be friendly or unfriendly. Friendly amendments are written by one or more of the sponsors of the resolution by the beginning of the conference and are automatically added to the resolution without a vote. Unfriendly amendments are drafted by a non-sponsor country during the conference, and must be signed by at least 1/5th of the present member-states.
- Unfriendly amendments need a 2/3rds majority vote in order to be passed.
- Once an amendment is added to a resolution, it can't be removed. The only way to make sure that it doesn't become part of the solution is to fail the entire resolution.
- Veto power does not apply when voting on amendments in a Security Council or otherwise.
- Signing an amendment doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with it's content, only that you want to see it debated further.

Useful Links: These links have useful information about how Model UN conferences are run, MUN terminology, Parliamentary Procedure, how to write Amendments and Resolutions, and more.

Best Delegate - www.bestdelegate.com
United Nations Association Model UN -
http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate
Colorado MUN - http://www.coloradomun.org/
Model UN Glossary -
http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/getting-started/model-un-glossary
Preambulatory and Operative Clauses -
http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/model-un-preparation/resolutions/preambulatory-and-operative-clauses

There's also a Model UN app for iPhones!