

CAPITAL MUN 2019
Washington Adventist University
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How to Research

No matter what MUN conference you attend, good research is important. 'Good research' doesn't mean printing out 80 pages of real United Nations resolutions and other information into your new MUN binder. 'Good research' is all about finding relevant information and collecting it as concisely as possible.

Before getting too deep into the research for a conference, you should research the committee you will be serving on. What are the powers of the committee? What range of topics can be addressed in the committee? Once you are familiar with the scope of the committee you can begin looking carefully at specific topics and the position your country will take on those topics.

The main benefit of research is that the more familiar you are with your country and topics, the easier writing your resolution will be and the more comfortable you will be at the conference. Below are a few research tips that will help you avoid spending too much time on petty details and help you better understand the important information concerning your country and topics.

The Topic

You should have a solid, general understanding of your topic. You should understand its history, the key players, and the current global situation regarding the topic. A good place to start is with the history and background of the topic. Not only will this give you a general overview, but it will highlight the key aspects of the topic that will likely be discussed at the conference.

Another way to better understand your topic is to know what sort of action the international community has already taken towards the issue – look at past United Nations action. While it is not necessary to read every resolution passed on the topic, you should generally understand the position the UN has taken on the issue. It might also be useful to have a broad sense of where some of the major global power stand on the issue. This will help you better understand the topic when it comes time for debate and will allow you to engage with those countries when you agree and/or disagree with them.

Another great way to understand topics at a conference is simply by paying attention to the news. Most topics are relatively current and they are often in the news. Taking some time to look at news sources such as the BBC, Reuters, the Associate Press, the Economist, or any other reputable sources will help you develop a more detailed understanding of the topic. Always take into account the possible biases of the sources you use.

Your Country

It is always a good idea to know some of the very basic information about your country like population, size of military, main languages, major religion, type of government, etc. just to get your

bearings. A lot of times these factors also shape your policy in a big way. The best place to get this kind of information is from the CIA World Factbook or the country data published by the World Bank or IMF.

What you should focus on next is your country's position on topics. Question you should be able to answer are: How is my country related to this issue, if at all? What related actions have we taken in the past? What course of action are we trying to pursue right now? One of the best places to find policy positions is to look at a country's website. This could be an embassy website, or the website for the foreign affairs division of the government. You can also look at your country's past votes on relevant UN resolutions.

While researching policy, remember that there is a difference between a country's official stated policy and its true policy that guides the country's actions. For example, the North Koreans can claim they support the spread of democracy, but that does not mean they would want to spread democracy. Qatar may claim it wants to improve foreign workers' rights in the nation, but that does not mean Qatar would be willing to take significant steps in order to ensure this happens.

If you find yourself in a position where your country does not seem to have anything to do with the topic, just see how your country has historically treated the issue in other contexts and what their opinion is on it.

The main point of researching your topic and country is to prepare for the writing of resolutions and to be prepared for the general debates that will take place during the conference. Proper research translates to better resolutions and better arguments during debates.

In summary, to make sure you have researched your topic effectively, try answer these questions. If you can answer them briefly, you should be in good shape:

- What is the topic?
- When did the issue become important?
- How has it changed or evolved over time?
- How does it stand at present?
- Which countries are currently most involved?
- What is your country's position on the issue?
- Which countries have the same position as you?
- Which countries have the opposite position?
- What have you done about the issue in the past?
- What course of action would best solve the problems presented in the issue at hand?
- What course of action would be most in line with your country's position on the issue?
- What would a UN resolution contain that would cause you to support/reject it?
- How would international intervention by the UN help the issue at hand?
- To what extent would international intervention hurt the sovereignty of your country?