

The Perfect Research Binder (and what goes in it)

- **Goal:**

To learn the country's positions and proposals thoroughly, quickly, and painlessly; and to make it easy to explain those positions and proposals to others.

- **Benefits:**

- Putting together a binder speeds up research.
- Well-organized research gives a delegate an invaluable edge in committee.
- A great binder communicates to the whole room that the delegate means business.

- **Overall Strategy**

- Understand the big picture: the conference, committee, and country.
- Then, zoom in on details: topics, policies, and solutions.

- **What the Best Binders Have**

1. Conference

- a. Rules of Procedure. This helps the delegate understand the conference: whether or not laptops are allowed and if there are any special rules. They can also check to see whether or not regional dress is allowed at that conference! (Doubtful.)
- b. Awards policy. If the delegate is concerned about winning an award, an awards policy statement can guide their performance in committee.

2. Committee

- a. Information from the committee's UN website. Delegates should understand the committee's mandate (why it was created), powers (what it can do), organization (how it fits into the UN and the larger international community), and membership (who's in it).
- b. The UN Charter. The UN Charter is massive, but a copy is invaluable. Delegates can use a different highlighter for every conference to mark which sections apply to their committee (for example, committee powers/limitations).

3. Country

- a. CIA World Factbook. Put together a chart that acts as a "cheat sheet" on the country: the country's location, neighbors, population size, type of government, type of economy, success of economy, trade partners, historical allies, and its membership in international organizations. It's embarrassing to not know this!
- b. Statements from the country's government-sponsored website. Some information may only be useful for citizens of that country, but most sites list the government's work divided by topic, policies, or region.

4. Topic

- a. Background Guide. This should be highlighted, annotated, etc. (It should also form the backbone of the delegate's research – operative clauses and speeches that refer to issues the Chair mentioned in the BG will grab his/her attention.)

- b. Recent news articles. The simplest method is to run searches on Yahoo! News and Google News, and print out the headlines and a few applicable, informative sentences. Another favorite is BBC Online, which has easy-to-use timelines and profiles on a huge scope of issues and countries.
 - c. Past documents: resolutions, treaties, conventions. Delegates should know what has already been done (i.e. what worked/what didn't), and build solutions off of successful policies. A useful (if convoluted) source is the UN Documentation Center.
5. Policies
- a. Speeches/press releases. Perhaps *the* most helpful gauges for country policy. Delegates should find them from people in the executive branch of the country's current government (President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister/Secretary of State, ambassadors) because those people represent the country. Excellent sources are a country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Department of State.
 - b. Voting records. Actions speak louder than words, and the UN documents all of its passed and failed resolution voting records online. Pay attention to the country's voting record!
6. Solutions
- a. Country efforts. Many topics are discussed on the country's official government website. Delegates should look for relevant organizations of which the country is a part/has created and the country's past efforts towards the issue.
 - b. Think tanks/Academic papers. These sources are too dense and comprehensive to truly analyze, but delegates can skim the abstracts to find proposals and historic action on a topic. A good source is the RAND Corporation.
 - c. NGOs. Applicable NGOs can be found online. They are goldmines in Model UN, and can theoretically be used to coordinate humanitarian efforts, build infrastructure, allocate funding, etc.
7. Misc.
- a. Notes. Most committees don't provide paper, but notes are crucial to consensus-building. White computer paper cut into neat squares is fine for committee.
 - b. Pencil bag. Black or blue pen looks most professional, and highlighters are useful when delegates are given update papers in committee.
 - c. Legal pad. Jot down potential allies, main issues, rough drafts of clauses, etc.

• **Organization**

- Dividers are helpful to organize binder sections.
- Cheat sheet/talking points: The information can be organized in whatever way is comfortable for the delegate, but a "cheat sheet" at the beginning of the binder is invaluable. It should list the proposals the country wants to see, its allies/trade partners, and helpful NGOs/organizations. This acts as the main guide when writing resolutions and keeps the delegate on track in committee.
- Opening speeches, prepared early and placed at the front of the binder.
- Remember a great, bold, colorful binder cover to get you psyched!