

## Writing and Organizing a Position Paper

### OBJECTIVE(S)

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the parts of a position paper.
2. Explain the information that would ideally be included in each part of the position paper.
3. Convey the information gathered from research into the appropriate position paper format.

### REQUIREMENTS:

**Level:** Grade(s) 6-12

**Time:** 1 or more class periods

### Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Supplies for sorting research data (ie: folders, baggies, paperclips, note cards, etc...)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Hamburger Graphic Organizer
- Position Paper Outline and Tips
- Position Paper Rubric
- Sample Position Papers – see if you have some from a previous year

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### PROCEDURE

#### I. Lesson Introduction/Activation of Prior Knowledge

Discuss with students how everything has a beginning, middle and end. Make a list on a piece of chart paper. (ie: movies, songs, days, meals, house-building, etc.) Refer to a hamburger. Similarly, a complete hamburger has a top, middle, and a bottom. Show chart paper with blank hamburger pieces, (like on graphic organizer).

#### II. Activity (can be done independently or in small groups)

**Preparation:** Type the separate parts of a position paper on the computer. The descriptions can be as general or specific as you like, depending on the age of the students. They should be based on the *Position Paper Outline* as well as the *Position Paper Rubric*. Cut up the strips and put them in envelopes, enough for each student to get one.

Generally speaking, a position paper should be organized in the following format:

1. Introduction, including:
  - a. Background on your country and its history concerning the topic and committee
  - b. How the issue affects your country
2. Background, including:
  - a. National and foreign policy
  - b. Specific actions taken by the government
  - c. Conventions, resolutions, and other UN actions supported or opposed
  - d. Quotes from government officials and statistical data to back up your position.
3. Conclusion, including:
  - a. Your country's recommendations to the committee on how best to resolve the issue
  - b. How the position of other countries affects your country's position
  - c. What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution

**Hamburger Puzzle Activity:** Pass out the blank Hamburger Graphic Organizer, one to each student. Pass out envelopes with the paper slips. On each slip, write a description of each separate paragraph for a position paper. Ask the students to arrange the slips onto the hamburger in the correct order. Once they are finished, students share out and the teacher writes the correct order on the large chart paper version. Students can then paste their own slips correctly on the hamburger graphic organizer.

### III. Activity (independently)

**Arranging Research:** As students gather research facts, data, and findings over the course of days/weeks/months, they arrange them under each category of the Position Paper Organizer. This can be done in several ways, ie: in a notebook on separate pages, on separate note cards, etc.

### IV. Activity (small group)

**Transition Words:** Write a grocery list on the blackboard. Ask students to write down the list in sentence form, as if they were explaining to someone in a letter what they needed to purchase at the store. Tell them they **MUST** stick to the list and mention no other topics. Ask students to share their letters. Point out transition words they used and how they made the grocery list flow into sentences that made sense. Relate this to their position papers. Position papers cannot be a list of facts. It must flow in sentences and make sense as a whole. Generate a list of transition words that can be used when writing the position papers and keep it up in the classroom on a piece of chart paper.

### V. Activity (independently)

**Writing the Position Paper (finally!):** Once the students have generated enough research to fill an adequate amount of information for each category, and once transition words have been thoroughly discussed, the students can begin writing their position papers. They should keep in mind that they must stay *on topic* using the research they gathered and sorted for each appropriate paragraph.

### III. Closing/Wrap-Up

Ask students to share the experience of writing their position paper, and discuss problems and questions that have arisen. Remind students that their position papers will be invaluable to them once they arrive at the conference, and that it's worth the time and energy to write a useful paper.

## **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### Future In-class Follow-Up for Teachers

- 1- Peer editing
- 2- Teacher conferencing

### Homework

Have students evaluate their own work using the Position Paper Rubric. They should be critical and self-edit their work. You can also have them work in groups based on country or committee and ask them to constructively evaluate another delegate's position paper.

**Main Idea:**

**Detail #1:**

**Detail #2:**

**Detail #3:**

**Concluding  
Sentence:**

## Preparing to Write Your Position Paper

Use the research you have already done to complete this activity. Look for facts/statements in your research, and sort them into the categories below.

Name of Country \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Topic \_\_\_\_\_

**Opening Statement** Your facts might answer the following questions: Why is this topic important for the committee to address? Why does your country care about this topic in general? How does your country justify its beliefs on the issue?

**National and International Actions** Your facts might answer the following questions: Is the topic an issue in your country? What actions has your country done to address the issue on a national level? Have government officials spoken on this topic, or passed legislation? Include pertinent quotes and relevant documentation. Can you find any statistics that back up your country's position on the topic? How has your country addressed the issue on an international level? What international conventions and resolutions has your country supported?

**Recommendation for Action** Your facts might answer the following questions: What recommendation(s) would your country make to the international community to address the problem? What issues would your country like addressed in your committee's resolutions?

## Position Paper Rubric

	<i>Major Improvement Necessary (1)</i>	<i>Needs Improvement (2)</i>	<i>Average (3)</i>	<i>Above Average (4)</i>
<b>Background Guides</b>	Shows limited understanding of the task, with vague, unclear references to the documents.	Attempts to address some aspects of the task, making limited use of the documents.	Addresses most aspects of the task or addresses all aspects in a limited way; uses some of the documents.	Thoroughly addresses all aspects of the task by accurately analyzing and interpreting most of the documents.
<b>References</b>	Presents no relevant outside information. Attempts to complete the task, but essay demonstrates a major weakness in organization.	Presents no relevant outside information. Presents few facts, examples and details; simply restates contents of the documents.	Incorporates limited or no relevant outside information. Uses some facts, examples and details, but discussion is more descriptive than analytical.	Incorporates relevant outside information. Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but discussion may be more descriptive than analytical.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Communicates with a lack of control and understanding of the conventions of English grammar and usage. Uses inappropriate and/or incorrect language and sentence structure.	Communicates with partial control and understanding of the conventions of English grammar and usage. Uses familiar language and simple sentence structures.	Writes a satisfactory developed essay, demonstrating a general plan of organization. Restates the theme in the introduction and concludes with a simple restatement of the theme.	Communicates with full control and understanding of the conventions of English grammar and usage. Experiments with sophisticated language and varied sentence structures.
<b>Purpose</b>	Limited awareness of audience and purpose.	Attempts to establish and maintain purpose and communicate with the audience.	Focuses on a purpose, evidence of voice and suitable tone.	Establishes and maintains clear focus: evidence of distinctive voice and appropriate tone.
<b>Policy Development</b>	Minimal policy development, limited or unrelated details, no evidence of successful negotiation.	Lack of elaborated policy development, unelaborated or repetitious details, little evidence of successful negotiation.	Depth of policy development and success of negotiation supported by elaborated, relevant details.	Depth and complexity of policies supported by rich, engaging and pertinent details; evidence of analysis, negotiation, reflection and insight.
<b>Reference to the Real World</b>	Few references to international treaties, international organizations and real-world stakeholders.	Some references to international treaties, international organizations, and real-world stakeholders.	Numerous references to international treaties, international organizations, and real-world stakeholders.	Frequent reference to international treaties, international organizations and real-world stakeholders.

