

# Understanding Points and Motions

## OBJECTIVE(S)

By the end of this lesson, students should:

1. Understand the basic framework of a Model UN debate
2. Have a theoretical grasp of what different points and motions mean
3. Be prepared to simulate debate

## REQUIREMENTS

**Level:** 5-12 Grade(s)

**Time:** 30 minutes

### Materials Needed

1. Points and Motions and Flow of Debate handouts
2. Say v. Think activity

---

## PROCEDURE (Please use additional space as needed)

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

Explain to students that the way things get done at the UN is through debate. When the UN wants to solve or address an issue, all 193 member states will have strong opinions and will want to share them and try to influence the opinions of others. For this reason, there are strict rules of debate in the United Nations.

There are 193 member nations, a massive agenda, and nothing will get done if the debate is chaotic! Let students know that today you will be going over what these rules of debate are, so they can have a general understanding of how it works. Make sure to follow this lesson with a simulation, so that students can look forward to the exciting pay off from the tedious information they are about to be presented with.

### II. Activity

Begin by explaining the general function of debate at a Model UN Conference. There are two kinds of debate – formal and informal.

Formal debate is the default setting of a Model UN conference and consists of formal speeches to the entire committee for a set amount of time using a speakers list that allows delegates to speak in a specific order. During formal debate, if a delegate finishes speaking before they run out of time, they need to “yield” the remainder of the time. There are several types of yields. A yield to the chair means that remaining time is absorbed by the dais and goes away. A yield to another delegate means that the speaker may share their remaining time by passing it off to someone else. Finally, a yield to questions or points of information allows other delegates to ask the speaker about the speech.

Informal debate is also caused caucusing, and there are two kinds of caucus. A moderated caucus is a mix of formal and informal debate where anyone may speak if called upon by the chair, for a shorter amount of time. An unmoderated caucus consists of informal meetings between delegates in small groups.

Pass out the Flow of Debate handout. Go over it with students, explaining the process. The flow of debate usually consists of the following major steps:

- Roll Call
- Setting the Agenda and Speaking time (depending on the conference)
- Debate (a healthy mix of formal and informal)
- Introduction of draft resolutions
- More debate
- Closing debate
- Voting Procedures

Pass out the Points and Motions handout. Explain that for debate to change styles away from formal debate, delegates need to make points and motions. Go over some of the important points and motions on the sheet.

#### Points

- Point of Inquiry
  - Addresses procedural matters and can be used by the delegate to get help from the chair in clarifying how debate procedures work.
- Point of Information
  - Concerns the topic at hand and can address either the chair or another delegate. This can only be used at specific times during the conference, such as when a delegate yields to questions.
- Point of Personal Privilege
  - Concerns personal comfort of the delegate, such as being cold or unable to hear, and can be made at any time including in the middle of another delegate's speech.

#### Motions

- To open/close/reopen the speakers' list
  - Allows people to add their names or stops this
- To suspend debate
  - For a moderated caucus – need to specify speaking time, time, purpose
  - For an unmoderated caucus – need to specify time, can specify purpose
- To close debate
  - Moves to voting procedures
  - Happens automatically when the speakers' list runs out
- To adjourn the meeting
  - Ends the simulation entirely

Explain to the students that they will be asked to follow these rules when they are speaking at the Model UN conference. Each of these rules has a specific name and definition.

Explain to the students that they are going to be doing a Jigsaw activity.

To start this activity, ask students to count off 1-5. Go around the room until all students have a number. Have students separate into groups according to their assigned number. Explain to the students each group is an "expert" group—they will receive two Rules of Procedure that they must become "experts" on. Give each group at least two Rules of Procedure (see answers below) and their definitions. Provide the groups several minutes to study the words and their definitions. They may take notes.

Ask students to now form "home" groups. Each of these groups should contain one member of each "expert" group (numbers 1-5).

Use the Say v. Think activity and have students match up the points and motions in the "Say" column with the phrases in the "Think" column using the information they learned in their small groups. Go through the worksheet with students, calling on students to match the appropriate answer, to make sure that everyone understood the information.

### III. Closing/Wrap-Up

Ask students to recap the flow of debate. See if they can recreate the basic timeline, from roll call to closing debate. Let students know that they will have the opportunity to see this in action soon – preferably the next class. This will get them excited and looking forward to the simulated debate.

#### **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

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

Use the rules you have gone over today to introduce the simulation. See Lesson Plan – Introducing Debate

##### Homework

Use the Debate Vocabulary handout. You can have them fill in the blank sheet or learn the words for a quiz later.

## Say v. Think

### **What You Say**

- a.) yield to the chair
- b.) yield to questions
- c.) yield to another delegate
- d.) motion to suspend debate
- e.) motion to close debate
- f.) motion to adjourn
- g.) point of inquiry
- h.) point of information
- i.) point of personal privilege
- j.) motion for a moderated caucus
- k.) motion for an unmoderated caucus

### **What You're Thinking**

- 1.) "I want my friend to talk for the rest of the time."
- 2.) "I want to go home!"
- 3.) "I want to work in small groups and talk about the debate."
- 4.) "I can't hear you!"
- 5.) "Can we just finish this and vote now?"
- 6.) "I'm done talking and I don't want anyone else to talk."
- 7.) "Does anyone have any questions for me?"
- 8.) "Chair, are we speaking for 30 or 60 seconds?"
- 9.) "Do the delegates want \_\_\_\_ for their country?"
- 10.) "I want everyone to make a short speech."
- 10.) "When do I get to eat?"

**Answers:**

A - 6

B - 7

C - 1

D - 11

E - 5

F - 2

G - 8

H - 9

I - 4

J - 10

K - 3