Parliamentary Procedure

How to Debate MUN: Language & Procedures

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Introduction

Parliamentary Procedure, or "Parli Pro," is the means by which debate is conducted in Model United Nations. It provides structured, timed debate; as well as free-flowing forums for collaborative writing. When papers are presented, it enables them to be investigated, edited, and passed. Parli Pro proceeds through motions and points, which delegates raise their placards to introduce.

Basic Elements of Parli Pro

Motions:

These are proposed by delegates to guide the course of the committee. All motions must be voted on to implement their proposals. Motions can be used to initiate and pause debate, propose structured and unstructured debate, introduce and amend writing, and enter voting procedure. These can only be offered when the chair opens the floor to motions.

Points:

Points can be brought up by individual delegates at any time that doesn't interrupt a speech. These interact with the dais in a formalized matter and so do not require a vote. Points can be used to identify and amend discomfort, ask procedural questions, or inform the chair of a perceived error of parli pro on their part.

01

Starting Procedures

Procedures to Begin Sessions

Roll Call

At the beginning of every committee session, chair call roll. They go down the list of positions and call them out. Delegates may respond in one of two ways:

- Present: Indicates presence; allows them to be abstinent in substantive votes
- Present and Voting: Indicates presence; disallows abstinence in substantive votes

NOTE: All delegates must vote in procedural matters, like on motions. Abstinence is only permitted while in voting procedure
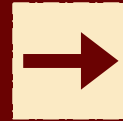
Opening Motions

Motion to Open Debate

A motion necessary to initiate debate in the first committee session. After this motion, debate can proceed.

Motion to Resume Debate

A motion necessary to restart debate at the beginning of each committee session after the first session.

GA/SA Preparatory Motions

Open the Speakers' List:

This motion opens the speakers' list, which is the list of speakers that the committee defaults to when there are no other motions for debate proposed. After this motion passes, the chair will accept a discretionary number of speakers. Speakers will then proceed along the speakers' list to discuss which topic the committee should first debate.

Set the Agenda:

After discussion in the speakers' list, GA/SA chairs will allow delegates to propose this motion. The language for this motion is as follows:

- "Motion to Set the Agenda to Topic __."

This motion, if it passes, establishes which topic the committee will discuss first. It requires a simple majority to pass.

02

Debate Procedures

Procedures that govern substantive discussion

Structured Debate Motions

Round Robin:

This motion must only specify a subject and a speaking time, usually of under one minute. The language for this motion is as follows:

- "Motion for a Round Robin on __ subject with a __ speaking time."

If it passes, the chair will go down the roll call list and allow each delegate the allotted speaking time to voice their opinion on the subject.

Moderated Caucus:

This motion must specify a subject, a total time, and a speaking time or a number of speakers. The language for this motion is as follows:

- "Motion for a Mod on __ subject with a __ speaking time and a __ total time."
- "Motion for a Mod on __ subject with a __ total time and __ speakers."

If it passes the delegate who proposed it gets the choice of first or last speech.

Yielding Time

If there is time left on the timer after the delegate finishes their speech, they may yield their time to:

- The Chair: this ends the delegate's speech and enables the chair to move to the next speaker
- Another Delegate: this must be agreed upon in advance and is permitted at the chair's discretion
- Questions: other delegates may ask questions of the speaker; only the time when the speaker is speaking counts in the timer

To yield time, delegates can simply end their speech with, "I yield my time to __".
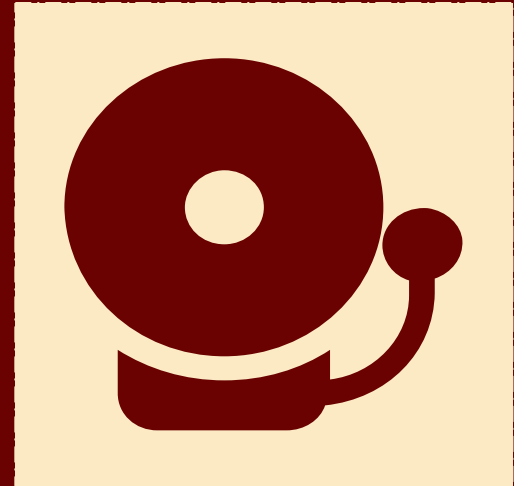
MUN Math

This defines the connection between the total length of a moderated caucus, its speaking time, and its number of speakers.
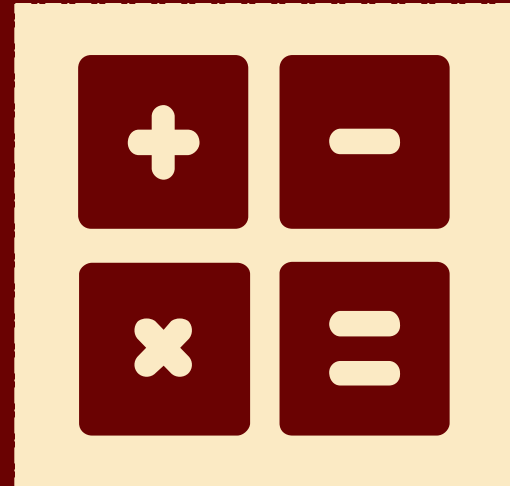
1 minute speaking time

- # speakers = # minutes total time

30 second speaking time

- # speakers = 2 x # minutes total time

45 second speaking time

- 4 speakers = 3 minutes total time
- 8 speakers = 6 minutes total time
- 12 speakers = 9 minutes total time

Unstructured Debate

Unmoderated Caucus:

The chair only permits this motion after sufficient structured debate through round robins or moderated caucuses. As a motion for unstructured debate, an unmoderated caucus only needs to specify a total time. The language is as follows:

- "Motion for a __ minute Unmod"

If this motion passes, delegates can move around the room, converse freely, and write resolutions or directives.

A special type of this caucus is a Gentlemen's Unmod. In this caucus, people remain in their seats and talk freely without moving around to write.

Extensions

Caucuses, i.e. Moderated or Unmoderated Caucuses, can be extended. Under an extension, the same caucus can be extended for up to half the total time of the original caucus. This extension will maintain the original subject and speaking time in the extended caucus. The language is as follows:

- "Motion for an extension of the current caucus by __ minutes"
- "Motion for an extension of the current caucus by half"
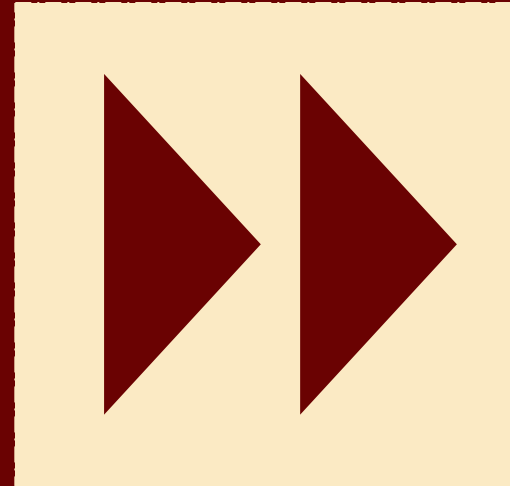
For/Against

This is a unique type of debate which takes an equivalent number of speakers for and against a topic. The motion must specify the number of speakers, the topic, and the speaking time. The language is as follows:

- "Motion for a __ for/__ against on the topic of __ with a __ speaking time."

Most commonly, there are 1-2 speakers. The order of speakers alternates between for and against. Since this format must speak on specific solutions, it is usually only used for unfriendly amendments and crisis voting procedure.

03

Writing Procedures

Methods for introducing and amending writing

Types of Writing

Formal

This is the collaborative, committee-level writing that offers formal solutions to the issues at hand. They must be passed to be implemented. These are governed by parli pro.

Notes

This writing is between specific individuals and does not need to be passed. It is private to the sender and the receiver. These are not governed by parli pro.

Intro to Formal Writing

Resolutions

These are long documents (max 25 pages) written in GAs and SAs. Generally, any individual writes with a bloc, which only works on one resolution per topic. Generally, an individual works on at maximum 2 resolutions.

Directives

These are short documents(max 2 pages) written in Crisis Committees. Individuals write any directives with various changeable groups. Committees pass at least one directive per crisis update.

Intro to Note Writing

GA Notes

These are private notes passed between delegates to create blocs, share ideas, and begin drafting resolutions. These are NOT available to committee staff and serve a comunicative purpose.

Crisis Notes

These are letters that delegates, as their characters, write to crisis back room, acting as other characters. The purpose of these notes is to secure resources and carry out secret plans.

Introducing Documents

After a working paper or directive is written, it must be submitted to the dais. If the dais determines it has the correct formatting, you can then motion to introduce the document or all documents submitted to the dais. The language is:

- "Motion to introduce __ working paper."
- "Motion to introduce __ directive."
- "Motion to introduce all working papers/directives submitted to the dais."

It is only after a document is discussed that it can be amended or voted on.

Introduction comes with certain procedures, as on the following slides.

Introduction Procedures

After a motion to introduce passes, there are a few ways to introduce the document. In both Crisis and GAs, the delegate who motioned can choose a reading period or for the document to be read aloud. In GA, there is the additional option of an Author's Panel or Q&A Session.

Reading Period

The dais projects the document and allows the delegates time to read it.

Read Aloud

The dais projects and reads aloud the document to the delegates.

Author's Panel

A selection of the authors discuss the important points of the document in a specified time period.

Q&A Session

A selection of the authors answer other delegates' questions about the paper in a specified time period.

Introduction Language

The follows is the language to specify the introduction procedures in the motion to introduce. If you do not specify the procedures, the chair will decide whether to provide a reading period or to read aloud. For GAs, the chair will ask will if you prefer Author's Panel or Q&A.

Reading Period

"Motion to introduce __ document with a __ minute reading period."

Read Aloud

"Motion to introduce __ document, read aloud by the dais"

Author's Panel

"Motion to introduce __ document with a __ minute author's panel." Assumes reading period to save time.

Q&A Session

"Motion to introduce __ document with a __ minute Q&A Session." Assumes reading period to save time.

Friendly Amendments

A friendly amendment is a change to an introduced draft resolution which all the sponsors approve of. If this is motioned for, it is automatically added to the draft resolution. The language is:

- "Motion to introduce friendly amendment __ to draft resolution __."

Note that, before an amendment is introduced, it must be submitted to the dais.

Unfriendly Amendments

An unfriendly amendment is a change to an introduced draft resolution which some of the sponsors do not agree with. The language is as follows:

- "Motion to introduce unfriendly amendment __ to draft resolution __."

Note that the amendment must be submitted to the dais prior to this motion.

This amendment is read aloud, then the dais seeks motion to debate the amendment. This is usually a 2-for/2-against motion.

This motion requires two votes:

- ⅔ majority to pass the motion
- ½ + 1 majority to add the amendment

Divide the Question

This motion aims to divide a draft resolution or directive into parts that can be voted on and passed or rejected separately. The language is as follows:

- "Motion to divide the question on __ draft resolution/directive."

If this motion passes, the dais asks the committee for all proposed divisions i.e. sections to separate from the main document.

Each of these is voted on, with no delegates allowed to abstain. Those that pass are separated from the full document may be voted on individually.

Reorder

By default, draft resolutions or directives are voted on in the order they are introduced. The motion to reorder changes the order these documents will be voted upon, generally to put a delegate's preferred options first. Within the motion, the delegate must specify their preferred order. The language is as follows:

- "Motion to reorder the draft resolutions/directives to __."
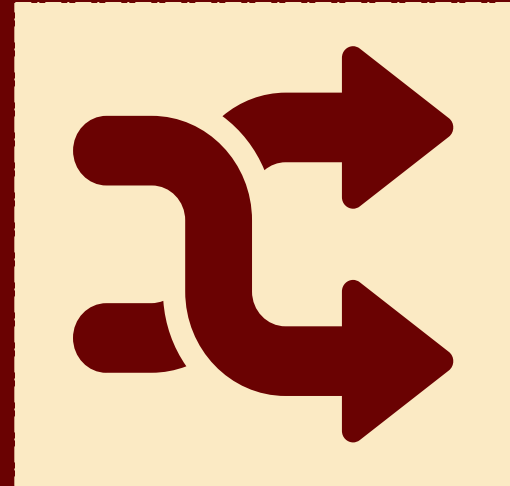
Entering Voting Procedure

During voting procedure, the doors are figuratively barred. This means no one can enter or leave the room during voting procedure, and any press corps members must leave the room. A committee can enter voting procedure for specific documents or for all introduced documents. The language is as follows:

- "Motion to close debate and enter voting procedure on ___."
- "Motion to close debate and enter voting procedure." – defaults to all documents.

This motion requires a ⅔ vote to pass, though each of the documents voted upon requires only ½ + 1. Recall that those who stated present at roll call are permitted to abstain in voting procedure.

Types of Voting Procedure

Traditional Vote

For each document at issue, the dais asks all those for to raise their placards and then all those against to raise their placards.

Vote with For/Against

Must be specified in the motion to enter voting procedure. For/against speakers precede a traditional vote.

Roll Call Vote

Must be specified in the motion to enter voting procedure. The dais reads the list of positions and asks each to specify how they vote.

Vote by Acclamation

Must be specified in the motion to enter voting procedure. Everyone who agrees says "aye." If there is a "nay," it reverts to a traditional vote.

05

Closing Procedures

Procedures that govern how sessions are ended.

Closing Motions

Motion to Suspend Debate

A motion to pause debate at the end of each committee session except the last. Debate is resumed in the next session.

Motion to Adjourn Debate

A motion which is made at the end of the last committee session to end debate without the possibility of resuming it.

06

Miscellaneous Procedures

Other aspects of MUN procedure

Points

Points are ways for delegates to formally and publicly bring up questions or concerns to the dais. Points can be proposed by a delegate raising their placard at any time that does not interrupt a speech. Points are addressed as soon as they are brought up. Here are the three points:

- Point of personal privilege: for the delegate to convey some discomfort and request accommodations; for example, changing the temperature of a room
- Point of information: for the delegate to ask the dais a procedural or clarifying question
- Point of order: for a delegate to identify an error in procedure by the dais and request correction or clarification

Disruptiveness

Points and motions are addressed, i.e. arranged by the dais for voting, in order from most to least disruptive. Some motions are by nature more disruptive. For the same type of motion, motions with more speakers are more disruptive, and after that motions of longer length are more disruptive. To the right is the organization of common motion types from most to least disruptive.

1. Points
2. Adjourn, suspend, resume
3. Voting procedure
4. Introducing documents
5. Introducing amendments
6. Extensions
7. Unmoderated Caucuses: Longer ones are more disruptive
8. Round Robins: Longer speaking time are more disruptive
9. Moderated Caucuses: More speakers are more disruptive:

Good Luck!

Do you have any questions?
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