

Position Paper Writing: the basics

"The International Affairs Association president told me I have to write a position paper for this upcoming conference, but I'm not sure it is worth my time. Why do I have to write this?"

Why we write position papers?

- For other delegates—at "good" conferences, all delegates' position papers are available for everyone to read
- For ourselves—the position paper is an important part of your research; it may help you organize your research and help you hold yourself accountable for researching (but this is just a positive side effect not a true reason *why* we write these)
- For the staff—position papers are a tool that staff use to help determine awards; at some conferences staff might give you feedback (this is uncommon)

"Okay, so it is important that I write this thing, but how do I write it effectively?"



How do I structure my position paper?

- There are two main types of position papers
 - Type a: with an introduction (becoming more common)
 - Type b: without an introduction
- Make sure you know which type each conference requires
- No matter which type your conference requires, there are three main sections (in type a these sections follow the introduction)
 - Section I: introduce the topic
 - Section II: Describe your nation in relation to the topic
 - Section III: Explain plans for a "solution" to the topic

"So there are three key components...but where do I focus my attention?"

Where should the focus of a position paper be?

- The emphasis should either be on section II or section III
- The emphasis should generally be on section III
- ...but sometimes you may want to focus more on section II, especially if your country is closely connected with the topic
 - Example: the topic is the rights of a minority group that is heavily concentrated in your region (You represent Spain and the topic has to do with the Basque population in Spain)
 - Example: the topic is an issue your country has battled successfully (or sometimes unsuccessfully)

"Great! Now that I know how to write a position paper, what do I do with it?"



How do I get the most out of my position paper?

- Take quotes from your position paper and make a speech
- Reread your paper *before* the conference
- Print and bring your paper to the conference
- Always cite your sources