

Backgrounder Writing 101

As a director, your primary role is to write high-quality, well-researched backgrounders. Different conferences will have different specifications, style, citation requirements. However, the core content is generally formatted as below.

Format

- Source: CAHSMUN 2018

1. Introduction (~200 words/letter)

Serves as a brief introduction to the authors of the committee's background guide, and serves as the opening interaction between the committee director and his/her delegates. Each committee staff members should introduce him/herself (such as school, grade, interests).

2. Committee Description (~350 words)

This section provides a brief outline of the committee function itself. Include the committee's history, its mandate, its role in past regional/international crises, and its current relevance in the international politics.

3. Overview of topic (~300 words)

A short introduction and overview covering the contemporary relevance of the topic, longer term implications, key points, how it relates to the committee, and the broader importance of the issue (for example, in a topic on empowering women in the developing world, you would explain the importance of women's rights in general and why this is even being discussed).

4. Timeline

This timeline should display all major events that pertain to the topic, including any past United Nations resolutions or involvement. Include a minimum of 10 events, including the date and a short description of each event.

5. Historical Analysis (~600 words)

A history of the topic, emphasizing why the issue is relevant to the world today. Sufficient information should be provided to help delegates understand how the topic developed to the current state of the issue.

6. Current Situation (~900 words)

A factual analysis of the issue, and the subsequent effects which stem from relevant facts you've identified. Remember to stay impartial.

7. United Nations Involvement (~400 words)

An outline of the UN's current role in the topic, paired with information indicating the outcomes of previous UN action on the issue.



8. Possible Solutions (~500 words)

A listing of potential solutions that are both plausible and practical. Provide both pros and cons to each proposed solution. Include past controversies and attempted solutions if applicable. This section should begin paving directions delegates can take in their research and later, in committee session, as they try to reach a resolution. Make sure you don't just tell delegates everything they should do, and do your best to cover different angles and solutions.

9. Bloc Positions (~500 words)

This section describes the positions of major blocs within the committee, and their political interactions. Include a minimum of four blocs, with varying stances on the issue. Keep in mind that delegates often use this section to determine their allies and what other nations might disagree with them on.

10. Discussion Questions

A list of 5-9 questions that can serve as a guide for delegates in their preparation. Ensure that these questions task delegates in giving thought to their political position in the committee, and assists them in developing diverse, and multi-faceted solutions to the issue. This section should serve to point delegates to what is truly important about the topic and their country's perspective on it, and as such is essential to helping delegates interpret all the information they receive. Every question on here will determine what your delegates will further research and explore, and what your delegates will likely end up discussing during committee session.

11. Works Cited

A Works Cited page (bibliography) must be included for each topic, with the aim of providing delegates additional resources for their preparation purposes. Further information and requirements about the completion of the Works Cited section is included in the "Citations requirements" portion of this document.

Additional Instructions

- Source: CAHSMUN 2018
- One space follows commas and periods
- Punctuation marks are placed before the closing quotation mark
- Oxford commas are to be used throughout your writing (ex. "apples, oranges, and pears")
- Do not use contractions (ex. use do not instead of don't)
- Avoid using superlative (ex. sad, luckily, unfortunate, etc...)
- Use unbiased, objective language

Content Expectations

- Source: CAHSMUN 2018
- Topics should be addressed from an international point of view (balanced perspective)
- Specific country's foreign policy should not be given except in special circumstances
 - case studies are still welcome for contextualization of the topic



- In most circumstances, more important to address the present aspects of the topic than its history

Self Review Guideline

- Source: CAHSMUN 2018
- Once completed, self review by considering the following questions:
 1. What are the sub-issues taking place, and which ones are most relevant for discussion?
 2. Which population groups are affected by this issue? Does region, race, ethnicity and/or religion play a role in the discussion of your topic?
 3. What are the consequences of failing to solve the committee's topic?
 4. What are the expectations set upon your committee with regards to addressing your topic? In which areas has it helped solve the issue? In which areas has it failed to do so?
 5. What important treaties and/or resolutions have an impact upon your committee's topic? What are the stances of different blocs with regards to these documents?
 6. What other organizations are working to accomplish a similar goal as that of your committee? How does each organization go about doing so?
 7. How does your background guide incite delegates to complete further research?

