

MODEL UN CRISIS KIT PART 2

HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR CRISIS

LEVEL: For Intermediate MUN Delegates, Ages: 14 - 18



CRISIS TRACK
BY BEST DELEGATE

How to Research Your Crisis

In MUN crisis committees, there are two different kinds of research you'll need to do to prepare—research about the “topic” (meaning the committee, crisis, and historical context) and research about the person you're representing. However, while in traditional MUN committees you may be researching UN topics using UN sources, it gets trickier for crisis topics. Where do you find information about the Biafran Revolution in Nigeria in 1969? Or the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan? While many crisis delegates simply rely on Wikipedia as their crutch for topic research, there are a few other ways to get information you can much better leverage for your committee.



Tip: Research for Historical Crises:

If you're in a historical committee, it's tempting to research everything that happened in the crisis, along with its date and time, so you can walk into committee like Nostradamus. However, once you've started committee, the actions of your committee will mean the crisis will diverge from what actually happened historically. While it's important to study what happened during and after the crisis, these events may not transpire in the alternate course of history your committee is taking. Keep this in mind— the most important research for you to do is the lead up and beginning of the crisis!

What You Should Be Looking For

Your objectives in researching for a crisis committee are to 1. Understand the topic and intelligently discuss solutions, and 2. To find tools that you can use in committee to help you win the crisis. By tools, we mean information other delegates don't have. This lets you demonstrate expertise, write better crisis notes and committee directives, or give you speech and your solutions more power and realism based on what your research has uncovered.

To understand the topic, some major things to look for are:

- General time-line of the crisis from beginning to end (or present)
- Overview of the tensions and conflicts that caused the crisis
- The major issues that caused one side to win or lose, what the major subtopics are
- What each side wanted in the conflict, and why
- What other major events were going on at the time, and what foreign powers had interests

To find tools for you to use during the crisis, some major things to look for are:

- Maps from the time of the crisis that show major cities, roads, and military installations
- List of the weapons and equipment used by the involved parties to the conflict
- Economic, Political, Religious, and Social Tensions in the involved countries
- Names of important individuals leading opposition parties and rebel groups
- Economic, Military, and Intelligence (spying) capabilities of the involved parties
- Organization charts of the country or body your country is representing

Crisis Research Resources

Books

Reading 100 1-page summaries of the crisis isn't going to help you very much. It'll be exclusively high-level details, few of which will differ. Reading a book (or even a chapter of a book), however, will let you go deeper into the conflict and find information nobody else in your committee will have found. Your school or local library probably have books about this topic, or you can look through Google Books to see what you can find online!

Wikipedia

We're not going to bother repeating every teacher you've had in explaining why Wikipedia can be a dangerous source to use. However, it is put together in such an easy-to-read fashion, and for modern or historical conflicts it's easy to see why Wikipedia can help you define the major actors in the conflict, the casualties of each sides of the conflict, and all the major high points. However, the most valuable thing you'll find on a Wikipedia article about the crisis is at the very end- the sources! Go directly to the sources Wikipedia uses for more credible and more specific information about your crisis.

Academic Databases - LexisNexis and National Security Archives

Googling can only take you so far- 99% of the content on the internet isn't indexed by Google, and that especially pertains to huge troves of information such as LexisNexis. Looking for transcripts of phone conversations on a topic from former Secretary of State? Declassified CIA documents about the crisis? Newspaper articles in their original form from the time? Sites like LexisNexis, the George Washington University National Security Archives, or the US State Department Office of the Historian are critical resources for historical crises, but are also a great source for modern crises as well (though fewer government documents will be declassified, of course!)

International Relations Think Tanks

While many think tanks come with their own biases and may be funded by political organizations, they can be great sources for well-researched articles, and often are more readable than other scholarly sources. They're especially helpful for modern conflicts- the Council on Foreign Relations runs an ongoing "Global Conflict Tracker" following the biggest issues around the world right now, and the International Crisis Group has continual updates on the world's biggest crises, and even recommends some solutions to these conflicts for policymakers to consider.

Research your title, not just your person (and vice-versa)

Using the above resources, as well as government websites, search to see if the government organ you're in charge of still exists or if there's much information about what specifically it could do. Otherwise, infer based on similar titles and departments in other countries (for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France is similar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sierra Leone as far as what areas of work they deal with). Make sure to research what the sub-divisions of your department or ministry are- even small agencies could add more to your portfolio in times of crisis, like a policing force, intelligence wing, or any other specialization under your command.



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