



National Model United Nations

Background Guide Manual

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Introduction

Congratulations again on joining National Model United Nations Volunteer Staff! We are extremely happy to welcome you to the family and are excited to go on this journey with you.

One of your roles as a staffer is to write part of a Background Guide (BGG). This manual goes over all BGG requirements and processes to help you through each task related to the writing process. You will receive additional information from conference leadership.

For many delegates, the BGG is the first (and potentially only) introduction to the topics they will be discussing during the conference. It is important that you present information in a way that will give delegates a neutral overview of the issues and challenges within the topic, which they can address in their working papers. In general, a BGG that meets NMUN's academic standards will:

- ★ **Accurately reflect the topic and its real-world implications.** This includes highlighting the most important aspects of the topic from an international perspective, as well as addressing key themes, relevant actors, forthcoming events, the current international agenda, and the extent to which the committee being simulated has addressed the issue.
- ★ **Provide completely factual, well-supported, neutral information.** BGGs should present the current state of the topic in a neutral tone. A reader, regardless of their background or country of origin, should have little to object to in a BGG. The author's opinion or point of view should not be able to be inferred from reading the text. The text will incorporate a diverse body of relevant and reliable sources, including footnotes on every sentence from which the included fact, idea, or argument was drawn. Sources should be accessible online to delegates at no charge and UN sources of all types should be prioritized.
- ★ **Present information in a well-organized, concise, and accessible manner.** Delegates, regardless of their experience level and native language, should be able to read and understand a BGG. Prior knowledge or expertise shouldn't be assumed and concepts should be introduced in a logical order. Any necessary technical language should be introduced and jargon, slang, idioms, and vernacular terms avoided.
- ★ **Formatted perfectly, according to the posted requirements.** The text will be grammatically excellent with no spelling errors. All footnotes and bibliography entries match the structure and citation requirements given in this manual.
- ★ **Written in your own words.** At NMUN, you receive publication credit for the BGG that you have contributed to. This means that we have to produce original substance, written in the words of the author. We, therefore, run each draft through plagiarism software to make sure no content was copied from another source. Please look through the guidance provided in the plagiarism section to make sure you identify the difference between plagiarized content and paraphrased content.

If you have any questions related to any part of the writing process, never hesitate to reach out to your Under-Secretary-General (USG) or Secretary-General (SG). You can also view past BGGs in the [NMUN Archives](#).



Background Guide Basics

The Writing Process

The “Writing Process” refers to the series of steps that we use to draft NMUN BGGs from start to finish. While timelines and exact processes may vary between conferences and years, the most common basic process is as follows:

1. **Researching & Outlining:** Authors start with researching the topic to create a basic outline of important documents and bodies they wish to cover, as well as propose subtopics that they think are important to cover. Outlines are reviewed and added to by experienced staff to ensure that when you begin to write you are covering the most important aspects of the topic.
2. **Writing (Main, Revised, and Final Drafts):** The bulk of the writing process consists of writing the Main Draft and subsequently revising it. The Main Draft is the first complete version of the BGG that you are writing, incorporating any feedback and input from the outline. That Draft, and the Revised Draft, have multiple reviews conducted, resulting in numerous edits and comments. The Final Draft incorporates all requested updates and is near publication-ready.
3. **Finalization & Other Components:** The Senior Staff team will work to finalize the BGG, ensuring that it meets all of NMUN's publishing standards. They may also reach out for inputs needed in other sections of the BGG.

BGG Structure

Every Background Guide published by NMUN has the same basic structure, which includes:

1. **Cover Letter:** This letter briefly introduces the dais staff and committee. It is completed at the very end of the writing process and instructions will be provided at that time.
2. **Committee Overview (CO):** This section provides a concise overview of the committee's function and primary areas of work in order to give delegates an idea of the kinds of actions they might take. COs are standardized with minimal updates each year. They will be incorporated by conference leadership at the end of the writing process.
3. **Topics:** These sections provide the background information of the items on the committee's agenda that will be discussed at the conference. These are what staff draft throughout the writing process. Each includes the following sections:
 - **Introduction:** The introduction defines what the topic is and why it is a problem, often relying on statistics or other descriptions to help delegates understand why the topic is important. It can define important terms and provide readers with the basic information to understand the context for the rest of the guide.
 - **International and Regional Framework:** Provides an overview of important international documents related to the topic, including major resolutions, reports, treaties, and other frameworks. These are usually presented in chronological order, starting with the oldest adopted document and laying out a timeline of international thought/work on the topic. Regional documents/frameworks may be included in chronological order or covered separately.



- **Role of the International System:** The international system section goes over “actors” - programs, bodies, agencies, and other organizations that do work related to the topic at hand. This is usually a good space to describe how the committee being simulated addresses the topic, whether it be adopting a resolution each year or overseeing a body that does work on the ground. This section usually focuses on what these actors can do, but may also describe limitations as they are relevant. Non-governmental and non-UN organizations may be included if they are directly relevant, but should generally not be the focus of this section.
- **Subtopics / Thematic Sections:** Each Background Guide includes two to three sections on “themes” proposed by the author(s). They delve into the substance of the topic, presenting the reality of past, current, and potential problems/gaps, the extent to which the international community has addressed them, and providing delegates with enough context to come up with potential solutions. The subtopics/themes should be directly related to the overall agenda item and should avoid prescriptively telling delegates how to solve certain aspects of the problems presented.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion briefly reiterates why the topic is important and any takeaways/important concepts that are important for delegates to remember. They may allude to potential types of actions that delegates may take within the context of the committee, but, as with the thematic sections, should not prescribe what delegates should do.
- **Further Research:** A section that provides questions for delegates to consider and enable further research.
- **Bibliography:** Lists all sources referenced as footnotes in the rest of the guide.

Authorial Ownership

Authors have primary responsibility for the portions of the Background Guide to which they are assigned and should strive to submit a substantively complete and stylistically excellent draft. Throughout the writing process, you will submit your work, editors will give feedback, and you will then incorporate that feedback into your text. The editing pyramid to the right shows the distribution of work between the author and editors. This structure reflects the typical editing process for an academic journal.





Researching and Outlining

Research

The first step of the writing process is to familiarize yourself with your subject. As you research, you will develop an outline, adding and removing information as you discover and decide what you think is important to include in the guide. Especially if you are assigned a topic that you don't have an in-depth understanding of, you should start by gaining a broad and comprehensive understanding of the subject. While not a citable source, Wikipedia can often be very helpful to gain a high-level understanding, as can UN Library research guides, news articles on the topic, and even past Background Guides. Each of these may also point you to useful primary sources. Some of these can be found just by using a search engine, but you can also start with:



- **Wikipedia's list of global issues:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_global_issues
- **The UN Library research guides:** https://research.un.org/en?b=s&group_id=2087
- **NMUN's Archives:** <https://www.nmun.org/about-nmun/conference-archives.html>

Once you have a basic understanding of your committee and/or topic, you should begin to seek out primary sources related to the topic, including:

- Major treaties, covenants, outcome documents, resolutions, declarations, or strategic frameworks related to your topic.
- International bodies, programs, and agencies that do work related to your topic.
- Meeting agendas, committee calendars, press releases, meetings coverage, and annual reports from recent sessions of your committee related to the topic.
- Recent reports on the topic from the UN Secretariat, other bodies, and civil society.
- Scholarly publications and news articles related to the topic.

Due to the variety of topics we cover at NMUN, it is difficult to say exactly where you should search for these documents, but as a starting point you can often try to find:

- A website from a UN body that has links to many related frameworks, actors, and other relevant items.
- A resolution on the subject, which may include the most important frameworks in its preambular clauses and bodies and programs in its operative clauses.
- A report of the Secretary-General, which will often have a summary of major issues; reference other frameworks and reports; and usually has recommendations for multiple bodies.
- Especially if it is a "newer" topic, a news article or press coverage from a meeting may be a starting point that will identify topics/actors/frameworks that you can look into.

Search engines are your best friend in finding all of the above. Searching is key to research and as you find references to frameworks or actors, you should follow them to get a comprehensive understanding of the topic, outlining as you go.

Outlining

Outlining is the process of organizing what you found in your research into a usable set of lists that will help you to organize thoughts while you write. Being methodical in outlining can go a long way in ensuring you have a solid base to write from.

Outlines vary between conferences (a template will be provided for you), but in general you will want to make note of the following things for the first four sections of the Background Guide:



- **Introduction:**
 - Any facts, statistics, or descriptions of reality will help delegates understand what problems exist related to the topic and why the topic is important.
 - Terms and definitions that delegates will need to be able to discuss the topic.
 - Important concepts that will help give a reader context for the rest of the guide.

- **International and Regional Framework:**
 - Major documents directly related to the topic.
 - Broad frameworks (human rights or development frameworks, for example) that affect or are affected by the topic.
 - Major resolutions that shifted international work on the topic.
Note: if a body, like the GA or ECOSOC, passes a resolution on the topic each year, it may be better to describe what that body does in the international system section rather than highlighting their resolutions in the framework section.

- **Role of the International System:**
 - UN bodies, programs, agencies, or funds that do any work related to the topic.
 - Other intergovernmental and regional actors that have a role related to the topic.
 - Regional bodies that act in relation to the topic.
 - Any *major* non-governmental organizations that have an outsized role.
 - If the private sector is relevant, their role may be included as well.

Proposing Subtopics

Identifying subtopics can be the hardest part of outlining a topic. For some topics, you may be able to identify clear ways in which the topic is discussed. For example, narcotic drugs are often discussed in terms of either “addressing supply” or “addressing demand” and action on climate change is usually split into “adaptation” or “mitigation.” For most topics, however, determining subtopics is not straightforward. As you think about subtopics, you should consider:

- **What are the most important aspects of the topic?** What are the biggest/hardest gaps/problems? What is the international community discussing right now?
- **What are the various perspectives on the topic?** Is there a difference in viewpoint between highly developed and less developed countries? Will the subtopics you write about be interesting and important to most Member States?
- **To what extent is the subtopic actionable?** We want to write about subtopics that delegates will be able to propose action on.



For each BGG section and subtopic, you'll want to add potential sources you'll use in writing to your outline. The conclusion and further research sections need not be included in an outline.

Writing

Before you start writing, you should rework your outline and do additional research in line with any comments received. Reviewers will also make additions to your outline, which you'll want to understand. Writing is easier if you know what you want to write about before you begin. If you aren't confident with the direction of your topic after the outline phase, reach out to your Director, Under-Secretary-General, or Secretary General for additional guidance or a conversation. Once you're comfortable with your outline, you may choose to copy it directly into the template and use it as you write.



Additional Resources

If you are a Director, you will be editing & reviewing a portion of a background guide. Additional guidance is available in Annex I: Editing Checklist & Annex II: Editing Supplement.

Best Practices and Guidance on NMUN Writing

NMUN Background Guides have a certain tone and style. They do not read like typical academic papers and are not meant to be persuasive. While it takes time to adapt to the NMUN style, writing in line with the following best practices will help ensure your drafts align with expectations.

- ★ **Use active voice.** Active voice refers to sentences where the subject of a sentence directly acts upon the verb, as in "NMUN staff write Background Guides each year." In a sentence with passive voice, the verb is "acted upon" by a subject which may or may not be named, as in "Background Guides are written each year (by NMUN staff)."
- ★ **Watch your sentence length and structure.** Sentences containing more than 30-40 words or numerous clauses organized with conjunctions, semicolons, or dashes should be shortened or broken up. You also want to avoid multiple long or short sentences in a row as this can inhibit reading flow, especially for non-native English speakers.
- ★ **Use direct and clear language.** Avoid using wordy phrases when a single word or shorter phrases would work just as well. Simple examples might include just using "because" or "since" instead of "because of the fact that" or "due to the fact that."
- ★ **Ensure that your language is inclusive.** The NMUN Code of Conduct prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability. Our publications should demonstrate respect and inclusion for all participants. Accordingly, authors are expected to avoid any language that could be interpreted as discriminatory or that may imply a general assumption about any group of people. In keeping



with the [United Nations Guidelines on Gender-Inclusive Language](#), authors should reference gender only where necessary for the sake of clarity.

- ★ **Synthesize instead of summarizing.** Summarizing refers to writing that gives facts only as they were described by a source. Nothing is written by the author that could not be gathered by some reading directly from the original source. Synthesizing, by contrast, refers to concisely providing the facts, providing additional insight as to what those facts mean, and then connecting them back to the topic. Rather than simply summarizing what a source says, a synthesizer will assess what multiple sources say and present them in a logical way that allows a reader to understand the context and draw a conclusion.

Summarizing	Synthesizing
<p>Report X by Z was published on <date>. The report talked about ABC.</p> <p>Report X said Y about topic A. It said Y about topic B. Then Report X said Y about topic C.</p> <p>Report T said...ABC and Y are now under consideration by <body>.</p>	<p>Z published Reports X and T, which detailed the ongoing discussions around ABC. Specifically, they highlighted YYY as key areas of focus for <committee> in 2014.</p> <p>The emphasis on Y is indicative of the <body>'s shift in focus towards new more innovative approaches to ABC, including DEF. An example of <committee>'s work on D is W.</p>
<p>There are several key publications that provide guidance on this issue. UN-Women published the "Manual On Women's Role In Elections," which detailed some of the most important challenges, including discriminatory laws, lack of security, and lack of information regarding their rights.</p> <p>Further, UNFPA produced a report entitled "Facilitating Women's Access to Electoral Processes," which notes some key issues, including safety and security concerns as well as intimidation by various political parties and misinformation.</p>	<p>There are several publications produced over the last year that provide guidance on this issue, including the "Manual on Women's Role in Elections" by UN-Women and the report on "Facilitating Women's Access to Electoral Processes" by UNFPA. Both reports describe specific issues that women face when engaging in political processes, including discriminatory laws that prevent women's full participation and lack of knowledge on women's civil rights. UNFPA specifically highlights the role that misinformation plays in preventing women from fully exercising their right to vote.</p>

- ★ **Do not use idioms or slang.** Avoid any colloquial language, which is often specific to a single culture, organization, language, or region. These rely upon metaphors, cultural references, and linguistic humor which may not be accessible to all delegates. Whenever you find yourself using colloquial language, consider how the same information might be expressed more literally. Examples are provided below.

Colloquial Language	Formal Language
"The NGO has demonstrated that actions speak louder than words."	"Rather than just writing reports, this NGO has run projects to affect tangible change."



“The donation was a far cry from what was pledged.”	“The actual amount donated was much lower than what was pledged.”
“The Member States do not see eye to eye.”	“The Member States do not agree.”

- ★ Have a professional, objective tone. In your writing for NMUN, aim to use language that reflects the formality of the international system. Avoid conversational writing or contractions and never use personal pronouns. Use an objective tone that does not imply an authorial interpretation. Non-objective (or subjective) language includes the expression of opinions, preferential statements, value assessments, and recommendations. Unless you have clearly indicated that such language is coming from an external source, the use of subjective language suggests to delegates and faculty that the guide has been unduly influenced by your opinion. Examples are provided below.

Non-Objective Language	Objective Language
“Methods to establish sustainable food systems must consider the concerns of local governments.”	“FAO has worked with governments to localize food systems and found it to be more sustainable than generic solutions.”
“UN OCHA was the key actor in implementing this project.”	“UN OCHA was primarily responsible for implementing the project.”
“Ending poverty remains extremely relevant to the achievement of the SDGs.”	“Global poverty levels remain high, which may inhibit the ability of Member States to achieve the SDGs.”
“The General Assembly should consider hosting a conference to adopt a new convention or establishing a committee to examine the feasibility of a different framework.”	“In 2023, the High Commissioner for Human Rights gave a speech on the necessity of a new convention but acknowledged that the adoption of such a convention was unlikely...”

General Expectations

All submitted drafts must adhere to the following guidelines.

- Length:** Each topic in a Background guide must contain **a minimum of 2,500 and a maximum of 3,500 words**, not including any footnotes or the Bibliography.
- Number of properly cited sources:** At least **20 unique footnotes/bibliography entries** that include multiple types of sources.
- Incorporation of feedback:** Every draft should incorporate feedback from the previous draft or outline.
- On template:** All submissions must be on the NMUN-provided template.



- ☑ **Self-editing:** Every draft must be self-edited to eliminate any basic grammar, spelling, and stylistic issues.

Any submitted drafts that do not adhere to the above requirements **may be sent back to the author** for further revision before they are reviewed by editors.

In addition to the above requirements, each subsequent round of writing has slightly increased expectations. A general description of each round of writing is provided below.

Draft Stage	Guidance & Expectations
<p>Main Draft</p>	<p>We recognize that a Main Draft will never be publication-ready, but ask that at minimum, all drafts meet the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A complete draft, incorporating comments and guidance from the outline and meeting the general expectations outlined above. ● Adheres to the structure described above and provided by the template. ● Has a balanced perspective and neutral tone. ● Has complete footnotes and Bibliography (details below). ● Reflects self-editing and is free of major spelling, grammar, and other basic errors. <p>If you submit a Main Draft that does not meet the above criteria, it may be sent back to you for revision before review is completed.</p>
<p>Revised Draft</p>	<p>Main Drafts may be returned with numerous comments and questions. Each should be considered and incorporated as possible. If you disagree with a comment or do not understand why it was made, you should reach out to your reviewer.</p> <p>Building off your Main Draft and its feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate all edits and feedback from your reviewers. ● Clarify and refine concepts and writing. ● Clean up tone and style. ● Fill in any content gaps, resulting in a guide that is as content complete as possible. ● Be extensively self-edited, ensuring that there are few, if any, lingering grammar, citation, or other issues. <p>For some topics and committees, if the Revised Draft is near publication-ready, conference leadership may reach out for minor changes and move towards publication without moving on to a Final Draft.</p>
<p>Final Draft</p>	<p>Final Drafts incorporate all prior edits and comments. When you submit a Final Draft it should, from your perspective, be ready to be published on the NMUN website. For that reason, Final Drafts should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not exceed the length requirement. <i>Overly long guides may be returned to authors for further editing.</i> ● Incorporate all edits from the Revised Draft. ● Be exhaustively self-edited such that formatting, grammar, and citations are error-free.



- Address any lingering tonal or stylistic issues.

Before you self-edit your Final Draft, it is good to review the [Editing Checklist](#), which outlines many common issues in BGG writing.

Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Authors must be given appropriate credit according to the citation method detailed within the Background Guide Manual. It is very important as a staff member to make a conscious and careful effort to avoid any potential situations of plagiarism in your writing. In an attempt to avoid plagiarism, Conference Leadership uses software to check for plagiarism in all Background Guides to ensure that it has not occurred and that all sources are properly cited.

Writers must use proper citations in footnotes wherever they are using the thoughts, ideas, or words of another person. Additionally, because NMUN wants to ensure that students and faculty, **you should have a citation for every single sentence in your guide**. When using the same wording as an original source, you must put the wording in quotes. The following examples represent actual occurrences of plagiarism, with the examples and footnotes that would have justified the use of the author's work.

Original Statement	Plagiarized Statement	Properly Cited, When Accompanied by a Properly Formatted Footnote
"Preventive Diplomacy requires measures to create confidence;"	Preventive Diplomacy requires measures in building confidence...	The implementation of confidence-building measures has been identified by former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali as the primary mechanism for the development of Preventive Diplomacy initiatives.
"Despite the strong public opposition, the Reagan administration continued to install so many North American men, supplies, and facilities in Honduras that one expert called it "the USS Honduras, a [stationary] aircraft carrier or sorts."	Despite strong public opposition, by December 1981 the Reagan Administration was working through Argentine intermediaries to install contra safe houses, training centers, and base camps in Honduras. One expert called Honduras "the USS Honduras, a stationary aircraft carrier of sorts."	In the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration made increasing use of Honduras as a base for the contra war. The Administration set up a number of military and training facilities--some American, some contra, and some housing Argentine mercenaries--along the border between Nicaragua and Honduras. The country, as one observer noted, was "a [stationary] aircraft carrier," which he described as "the USS Honduras."

Disciplinary Policies

Documents published for NMUN are professional products. We expect staff to respond to feedback received, follow all content and formatting guidelines, avoid plagiarism, and meet all deadlines. While we hope that all staff are able to successfully complete the writing process without encountering major issues, NMUN has disciplinary policies in place for instances of plagiarism, missed deadlines, lack of communication, and non-responsiveness to guidance and feedback. All staff with assigned writing tasks are expected to complete it as part of serving on staff.



Citations

All NMUN publications are considered fully original works. Proper attribution is a fundamental responsibility of authorship. For both the integrity of the author and the publishing agency (in this case, NMUN), it is imperative that we identify the sources which inform our writing. To do so, we must cite consistently throughout our work. Citations also allow delegates to begin their own research by reviewing the sources cited in Background Guides and then branching out into other materials and resources. Citations appear in both the Bibliography for each section of the BGG and in footnotes throughout.



How to Cite Sources

NMUN uses a standardized format for all citations regardless of source. All footnotes and bibliography entries should follow the format below.

Footnote	Bibliography
Author (Last Name)/Creating Entity. Publisher (if applicable). <i>Document title (Document Code, if applicable)</i> . Year or N.d. p. #.	Author (Last Name)/Creating Entity. Publisher (if applicable). <i>Document title (Document Code, if applicable)</i> . Year or N.d. Retrieved Day Month Year from: URL

The formatting is identical between the footnote and Bibliography, except at the end of the Bibliography where the “retrieved” information and URL are added. You can save some time in drafting by copy and pasting footnotes into your Bibliography or vice versa. When adding citations to your Background Guide, keep in mind that:

- If any of the items listed in the templates above are not available or not applicable (namely publisher and document code), you simply exclude that portion of the citation. The only exception is the publication year. If the work has no apparent publication year, list “N.d.” instead of the year.
- If any source has more than one author or creating entity, list the first author’s last name (or first listed creating entity) and “et al.” afterwards. For example, if a publication is by Juana Wisnefski and William Sonoma, “Wisnefski et al.” would be the author in the citation. Similarly, if many UN bodies worked on a report, the first one listed (or top left graphically) will be the only one cited.
- UN bodies should be cited as “United Nations, Body Name” except where “United Nations” is explicitly included, in which case the comma should be excluded. For example, “United Nations, Economic and Social Council” and “United Nations Development Programme.”
- “United Nations” by itself should never be cited as an author/creating entity. Every UN website is created by a subsidiary UN body. The main website, UN.org, along with any UN News



articles or press releases, are drafted and published by the United Nations Department of Global Communications and should be cited as such.

Footnotes

When adding footnotes to your BGG, keep in mind the following:

- Write out the full footnote citation each time. **Do not use “ibid” or “supra,”** even if you use the same source multiple times in a row.
- “A footnote indicator appears only at the end of a sentence **after the period and any quotation marks**, as demonstrated in this sentence.”⁷
- If you utilize multiple sources in one sentence, they should be cited in a single footnote at the end of the sentence. In the footnote, **separate different sources by replacing the final period of a citation with a semicolon (;)**. The last citation ends with a period.
- References to **specific pages** in a long document should be listed in the following format:
 - p. #. (for single-page references)
 - pp. #-#. (for page ranges)
 - pp. #, #. (for multiple non-contiguous pages)

Bibliography

The Bibliography contains all of your footnoted sources along with your date of access and a URL for delegates to find the source online. As you complete your Bibliography, remember:

- **All footnotes must have a Bibliography entry and all Bibliography entries must be used in at least one footnote.**
- Sources in the Bibliography must be ordered as follows:
 - Alphabetical by author/creating entity.
 - Sources with the same author are ordered chronologically from oldest to newest, whereas sources with (N.d.) are placed before sources with publication dates.
 - Sources with the same author and same year of publication are ordered alphabetically by title. If the title starts with a non-letter, put non-alphanumeric characters first, then numbers, starting with the lowest first number.

Example Citations

Examples of different types of sources are provided below. If you are unsure about how to cite a specific source, reach out to your Director, Under-Secretary-General, or Secretary-General.

Footnote

Bibliography



United Nations, Security Council. <i>Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/RES/2083 (2012))</i> . 2012.	United Nations, Security Council. <i>Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/RES/2083 (2012))</i> . 2012. Retrieved 2 May 2022 from: http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2083(2012)
United Nations Conference on International Organization. <i>Charter of the United Nations</i> . 1945.	United Nations Conference on International Organization. <i>Charter of the United Nations</i> . 1945. Retrieved 2 May 2022 from: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text
United Nations, Department of Global Communications. <i>Secretary-General's opening remarks at press conference in Nairobi, Kenya</i> . 2023.	United Nations, Department of Global Communications. <i>Secretary-General's opening remarks at press conference in Nairobi, Kenya</i> . 2023. Retrieved 4 May 2023 from: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-05-03/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-press-conference-nairobi-kenya
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. <i>World Investment Report 2022</i> . 2022. pp. 14, 15-18, 24.	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. <i>World Investment Report 2022</i> . 2022. Retrieved 4 May 2023 from: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2022_en.pdf
The Economist. <i>Frightening tourists away</i> . 2014.	The Economist. <i>Frightening tourists away</i> . 2014. Retrieved 2 May 2022 from: https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2014/06/21/frightening-tourists-away
United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. <i>United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER)</i> . N.d.	United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. <i>United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER)</i> . N.d. Retrieved 4 May 2023 from: https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/ourwork/un-spider/

Additional Citation Guidance

- If a sentence references ideas, concepts, or content that are not common knowledge, it requires a footnote that identifies the originating source(s). While one sentence may contain several references, each footnote may only cover one sentence. This will result in almost every sentence in your Background Guide being footnoted.
- The period after the title in a citation is not italicized. If a title ends in a question mark or other punctuation, it should be italicized and followed by a non-italicized period.
- The author for [UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#) as well as [UN News](#) and similar websites should be “United Nations, Department of Global Communications.”
- If you have a UN document code, the easiest way to download a document and generate a stable link is to add the document code after the following URL: <http://undocs.org/en/>. Please use this format in the Bibliography for all links to UN documents with codes. For example, if you want to access General Assembly resolution 67/1, type into your browser: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/67/1>.



→ For UN Security Council resolutions, rather than list the document title as “Resolution 2083,” we want to list the actual agenda item or topic as the title. You will need to refer to the [Security Council website](#) to determine the agenda item under which the resolution was adopted.

In-text References

In general, in-text references should only be used in two instances:

1. When **knowledge of the document being referenced will be useful for delegates**. For example, referencing a document that delegates may be able to use in a working paper.
2. When **describing a conclusion/argument that is contained in a report or document**. As we never want a reader to infer authorial opinion, if you feel an argument or conclusion should be included in a Background Guide, you should reference the source of the opinion in-text.

Outside of these two cases, in-text references are generally unnecessary and should be avoided. Delegates and faculty can refer to the included footnotes if they require additional information. When it is necessary to refer to a document in-text:

- Do not refer to documents using only the document code (for example, "A/RES/**" or "S/RES/**" or "E/**") when referring to documents in text.
- Use the name of the drafting committee/organization in the sentence.
- The word “resolution” should be lowercase.
- Refer to a resolution as “adopted,” not “passed.”

Below are guidelines and examples for in-text references to common UN documents.

<p>Treaties</p>	<p>Italicize the name of the treaty and provide the date of adoption either in parentheses afterwards or in the context of the clause.</p> <p><i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)</i> ... as stated in the 1989 <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> ...</p>
<p>General Assembly, ECOSOC, of Security Council Resolution</p>	<p>State the source, followed by “resolution, then the code, and the subject in quotes. The year may be optionally included for GA resolutions but is needed for Security Council resolutions.</p> <p>... in General Assembly resolution 71/246 on “Sustainable Gastronomy Day”... ... ECOSOC resolution 2016/17 on “Restorative justice in criminal matters”... ... Security Council resolution 2337 (2017) on “Peace consolidation in West Africa”...</p>
<p>Reports</p>	<p>Italicize the title if it is the full, proper title for a report. For Secretary-General reports, include the code.</p> <p>...<i>Millennium Development Goals Report 2015</i>... ... which was included in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/1137)...</p>



Days of Observance	Not italicized or in quotation marks. ...on the International Day of the Girl Child...
Program Names	Not italicized or in quotation marks. ...the Global Vaccine Action Plan, which was endorsed by...

Style and Formatting

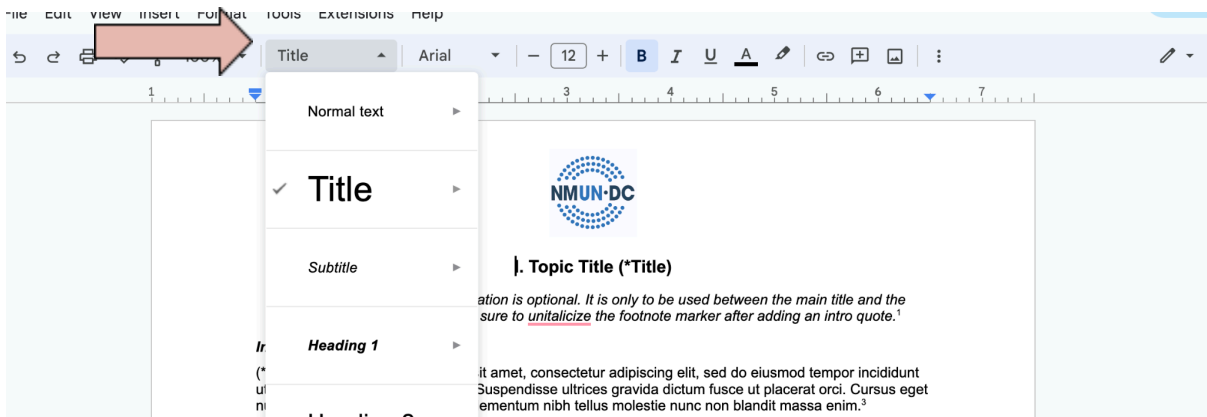
Template

A Background Guide Template will be provided by conference leadership on Google Drive. All BGG drafts must be submitted on the official template and be properly formatted in line with the appearance of the original template as provided.

After writing the portion of a Background Guide to which they are assigned, staff must spend time ensuring that all text is properly formatted in accordance with the template.

Styles

In the Google Docs template, styles are set up to standardize appearance across all BGGs. To ensure that you have the correct style, you can highlight the text you want to format, click the “Styles” dropdown in Google Docs, and select the appropriate style.



NMUN uses four categories of styles.

Title	The “Title” style is used for the main topic title and bibliography title only. It is Arial font, size 10, with single line spacing and space after the paragraph.
Subtitle	The “Subtitle” style is used for the introductory quote only. When using this style, authors are asked to manually unitalicize the footnote marker at the end of the quote. It is Arial font, size 10, italicized, and single-spaced with space before the paragraph.
Heading 1	The “Heading 1” style is used for each section header in the Background Guide, namely the Introduction, International and Regional Framework, and so on. It is Arial



	font, size 10, bold and italicized, and single spaced with space before and after the paragraph.
Normal text	The “Normal text” style is used for all body text (and footnotes) in a Background Guide. It is regular Arial font, size 10, and single spaced with no space before or after the paragraph.

All text in a background guide should use one of the above styles. As a general rule, NMUN does not use block quotes, subheadings, numbered lists, or bulleted lists (with the exception of in Committee Overviews) or other formatting types that may be outside of the above styles.

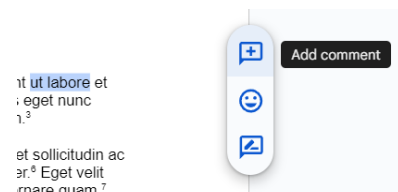
Additional Template Guidance

- The “Normal text” style doesn’t automatically incorporate space after each paragraph. Authors should hit “enter” twice at the end of any paragraph to introduce a line break.
- The footnotes use the same “Normal text” style and should not be adjusted.
- Footnote markers should never be italicized and should be outside of any punctuation.
- Bibliography entries use the “Normal text” style. Be sure there is a line break between the first entry and the Bibliography’s title and a line break between each entry.
- Be sure that you click space after putting in the URL in the Bibliography entry so that Google Docs converts it to a clickable link with blue font and an underline. Do not put a period after the URL. If it doesn’t create a link select the URL, right click, and click “insert link.”
- To quickly insert a footnote at the end of a sentence, click CTRL+ALT+F on your keyboard.
- If while editing you encounter a common error (two spaces after a period, for example) you can hit CTRL+F on your keyboard to open up the find dialogue. You can find and replace two space with one. It’s recommended that you turn off “Suggesting” mode while fixing this error in particular.
- If at any point you aren’t sure how to format something, something seems off, or even if something just looks bad and you can’t figure out why, never hesitate to reach out to your Under-Secretary-General or Secretary-General.

Tracking Changes and Commenting

Whether self-editing or reviewing someone else’s work, you can use the “suggesting” feature in Google Docs to track any changes you make to the document. When using it, it will allow you to accept or reject the changes after you’ve made them, allowing you to quickly revert to the original text if needed. If you want to view what the final document looks like without any tracked suggested, you can click “Viewing.”

You can also leave comments, either as a reminder for yourself or as a note to your editors. To leave a comment you select the text you want to comment on and hit the “Add Comment” button that





will pop up on the right. Alternatively, right click on the text and Click “Comment.”

Grammar, Style, and Language

All prescribed general guidance on various grammar, language, and formatting is described below. It is also included in [Annex I: Editing Checklist](#), which is an excellent reference for self-editing your Background Guide before submitting it to your reviewers. If you encounter any items not addressed in this manual, please reach out to your Under-Secretary-General or Secretary General.

Spelling

Spelling errors can easily detract from substantive content and be distracting. All staff members are required not only to run a spell check before submitting every draft, but also to be cognizant of NMUN’s spelling standards. Specifically, NMUN publications use American English spelling (as in “program” or “color”) unless referencing a proper noun that uses alternative spelling (as in “World Food Programme” and “International Labour Organization”).

Merriam-Webster ([merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com)) is considered the authoritative spelling resource for NMUN authors. Where the Merriam-Webster Dictionary does not provide a clear answer, the UN Editorial Manual includes a [full spelling list](#) that serves as a quick reference for common words and compounds with more than one possible spelling. It includes a number of words that are commonly used in UN documents. For further guidance, see also the UN’s guidance on [abbreviations and acronyms](#) and [capitalization in English](#).

Italics

Italics are used only to highlight the formal name of treaties and other significant international frameworks and documents. Subsequent references that use informal names or acronyms need not be italicized. For example, you may reference the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and later reference the 2030 Agenda. The *Charter of the United Nations* should also be referenced formally and italicized.

Unlike in some style guides, foreign words, such as Latin words used to refer to legal concepts, are not italicized, but should usually be included within quotation marks. The names of organizations, firms, ministries, and related are also not italicized. Resolutions are similarly not italicized.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Use acronyms and abbreviations to simplify your writing for delegates. Do not use acronyms for the United Nations, General Assembly, or Security Council. When used in the text, the committee acronym should generally not be preceded by “the.” Additional guidance is included below.

First Use of Acronym / Abbreviation

An acronym or abbreviation must be written out on its first use, with the shortened form immediately following in parentheses. Only the acronym should be used subsequently and no acronym should be defined twice. For example:

“The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) often works alongside the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). CSW and UN Women both address women’s issues in different ways.”



	Periods should not be used in uppercase acronyms and abbreviations.
Plural Acronyms	To make an acronym or abbreviation plural, simply add an “s” without an apostrophe. For example, “NGOs,” never “NGO’s.”
Non-Proper Name Acronyms	When making an acronym out of a non-proper name, do not capitalize the letters. For example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), small arms and light weapons (SALW), and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Numbers

Generally, the numbers zero through nine should be spelled out (two, five), while all numbers 10 and above should be given in figures (25, 783). Additional rules and exceptions are provided below. Writers should also use their own judgment if departing from the general rule adds clarity.

Dates & Times	Both dates and times should be expressed in digits. Dates should be presented according to the UN style: 1 July 2016. Times should be written as follows: 4:58 p.m.
Date Format	All dates are written in “UN/European” style (Day Month Year)
Large Numbers	When expressing numbers in the thousands or greater, you may simplify the text by using a combination of words and figures: “Over 5 million people attended the event.”
Currency	Dollar and other monetary amounts should be expressed in digits, with the currency symbol (such as “\$” for US dollar) preceding the figure.
Percentages	Percentages should also be expressed as a figure followed by the percentage symbol. For example, grants comprise 78% of the program’s funding. The word “percentage” should always be spelled out.

Capitalization

Capitalization standards vary between various publication styles. NMUN strives for consistency in line with the standards outlined below.

Always Capitalize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first word of a sentence, a sub-paragraph, or item on a list • Any word used in a specialized or restricted sense, as in “the Committee” to refer to a specific committee previously defined • Proper nouns, adjectives, and recognized geographical names
Generally Capitalize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titles of UN documents • Headings of chapters, sections, subsections, annexes, tables, figures, and articles • Legends on figures and maps • Titles of articles and unpublished papers • Official titles of persons, councils, commissions, committees, Secretariat units, organizations, institutions, political parties, and organized movements • Names of special rooms, halls, and buildings: the General Assembly Hall



Foreign Languages	<p>Elements of proper names transliterated from Arabic, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The definite article “al” is capitalized when it is the first element in a name and lowercase when it is in the middle - for example, Al-Jazeera, Al-Qaida, Mohammed al-Ansari • The same rule applies to “bin” and “ibn” - for example, Osama bin Laden, Mr. Bin Hamdan, Abu al-Walid ibn Rushd (Averroës), Ibn Sina (Avicenna) • For names that are originally in a non-latin alphabet, use the most recent transliterated version of the name from any UN source you find in your research.
Technology Words	<p>The main component of an e-compound refers to an established electronic system or tool, such as eDoc or eFolder; otherwise email, e-commerce and so on. The word Internet is always capitalized.</p>

Punctuation

Proper use of commas, semicolons, and colons can make your document more readable.

Periods	<p>A period marks the end of a full sentence and should be followed by a single space. Periods are included inside quotation marks. If parenthetical content is nested inside another sentence, the period should be on the outside. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I really like National Model United Nations.” • The attendees enjoyed a large breakfast (fruit, croissants, eggs).
Commas	<p>A comma should be placed after every item in a series of three or more items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair, bookshelf, and desk belong to my roommate. <p>Commas also serve to set off nonrestrictive clauses, but not restrictive clauses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission on Human Rights, which meets annually in Vienna, deals with those issues. • The gentleman standing by the fireplace is a well-known composer. <p>Commas are necessary when combining two independent clauses (complete ideas) with a conjunction but not otherwise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann loves National Model United Nations, and her enthusiasm grows each year. • Caitlin enjoys the General Assembly and visits it each year. <p>A comma should be used after transition words or phrases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, UNDP implemented a program to provide toast.
Semicolons	<p>Semicolons are used to separate clauses that are not joined by a conjunction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our first stop will be the UN bookstore; our second will be the General Assembly Hall. • We wish to eat breakfast; however, we refuse to eat pasta for breakfast. <p>Semicolons also separate elements in a list when one or more of those elements contains a comma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three choices were eggs and toast; oatmeal, fruit, and a muffin; or cereal with bananas and yogurt.
Colons	<p>A colon can link a complete thought with a modifying clause or description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She gasped as she recognized her nemesis: Vanuatu.



	<p>If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A line had formed for the cafeteria: Breakfast would be served in five minutes. <p>Colons should not be used following an incomplete clause or thought.</p>
Hyphens	<p>Fractions expressed in words are not hyphenated (e.g. one third of the total) unless they are used as adjectives (e.g. one-third share). Compound adjectives in which the first word ends in -ly are not hyphenated (e.g. environmentally sustainable growth). Titles are hyphenated as they are presented by the UN, e.g. Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, and Under-Secretary-General.</p>



Annex I: Editing Checklist

This editing checklist is meant to provide reminders as you edit or self-edit a Background Guide. It is not comprehensive and is meant to help remind you of common errors. For more details on formatting and style guidance, please refer to the specific section of this manual.

Formatting / Basics

- Guide is on the provided template.
- Word count under the limit (3,500 without footnotes or Bibliography).
- All acronyms used are spelled out on first use and provided in parentheses. No acronyms are defined in parentheses more than once. No use of UN, GA, or SC as acronyms.
- Line break (visible space) between each paragraph.
- All text left-justified.
- % rather than percent.
- Proper date format: DAY MONTH YEAR. No leading zero for single-digit days.

Grammar & Punctuation

- There is a single space after the period at the end of every sentence (CTRL+F/CMD+F for two spaces).
- Oxford comma (comma after penultimate item in a list of three or more) is used throughout.
- Capitalization of: Member States, States parties, and states.
- The word “which” is always preceded by a comma while “that” is not.
- Hyphens in Secretary-General & Under-Secretary-General but not in Assistant Secretary-General or Deputy Secretary-General.

In-Text References

- Lowercase "resolution." In text, referred to as: General Assembly resolution 13/37 on “The Importance of Cake.”
- All major documents, when referred to by name, are italicized.
- No program/body names or non-English words are italicized.
- All quotes (including intro and block quotes) have quotation marks.
- In-text citations are only utilized to inform delegates of an important document or to cite a



source for an opinion or conclusion that could not otherwise be presented.

Footnotes

- All footnotes are in 10 pt Arial font.
- All sentences that contain factual information have a footnote reference.
- Footnote markers are only at the end of each sentence after all punctuation. No footnote markers are italicized.
- No links or retrieval dates are included in footnotes.
- Period at end of the last source only, with semicolons separating multiple sources in a single footnote.

Bibliography

- All footnotes are referenced in the Bibliography and all bibliography entries are used in at least one footnote.
- Links are formatted to appear as links (underlined in blue font).
- Links to all sources are still functional. Click on each one!
- No periods after URLs.
- No “on” is between “Retrieved” and the date (DAY MONTH YEAR).
- Alphabetized Bibliography by author/publishing entity. Citations with the same author are ordered in chronological order from oldest to newest (sources with N.d. are listed before sources with a date).
- N.d. is included when there is no date.



Annex II: Editing Supplement

In part because of the dedication we put into our Background Guides, NMUN has an outstanding reputation as one of the most realistic, highly-academic simulations of the UN. Editing is a key part of ensuring that we uphold that reputation and build up the writing skills of less experienced members of staff.

Introduction

The editing pyramid reflects the level of work expected of each person within the writing process. Authors are meant to do most of the work and also have most of the ownership of that work, including the final product. First editors will generally provide the most direct feedback and guidance and subsequent editors will generally provide more generalized or supplementary feedback. Editors should be cognizant of their role and, ideally, ensure that they aren't writing on behalf of the author, but helping to guide them to make necessary improvements themselves.



Thoughtfully providing feedback and careful editing can take a significant amount of time and you should set aside several hours for each portion of a Background Guide that you are editing. The exact editing flow and calendar will be provided by conference leadership at the onset of the writing process. If for any reason you won't be able to complete editing in line with the provided guidelines, be sure to communicate as soon as you are able.

Editing Flow

As outlined throughout this manual, authors are expected to complete rigorous self-editing as the first step in the editing process. Once complete, they will submit it to their first editor.

In the case of a Director/Assistant Director committee, the Director is the first editor, to be followed by other editors as determined by conference leadership. All Background Guides will receive at least two rounds of edits.

Each editor will make direct edits to the guide while tracking their changes, leave comments, and then provide overall feedback to help the author improve the guide and learn from the process.

Editing Best Practices

Editing is a process that requires analysis, critical thinking, and attention to detail to ensure a fluid piece of writing that is coherent with clearly expressed ideas. Most importantly, it involves **reading your work or the work of someone else from the perspective of a reader with little or no subject matter expertise**. Below are several best practices to help you be the best editor possible.



Shift the way that you read. When you read to edit, you should not read the same way that you would read a book, an academic journal, or a school paper. In normal reading, you can probably read through and consider the main ideas as a whole, ignoring minor errors, missing substance, or flawed structure because your brain is not looking for them. As a reader, your brain is looking to learn and retain the information that you are reading. As an editor, you should try to shift your brain into actively questioning what you are reading. It can be helpful to break your reading down into smaller sections and ask: Does each paragraph make sense? In that order? What about each sentence?



Be reflective. Ask yourself questions as you edit. If I didn't know X, would this make sense to me? Does this sentence connect and flow with the following two sentences? If either of your answers is no, you have identified a flaw in the draft. As an editor, this is the moment when you stop reading and insert a comment to ask a question or tell the author that something requires attention.



Work methodically. You must read the paper line by line rather than page by page or even paragraph by paragraph. Every word counts; even a single poor word choice can throw off an entire paragraph. If something disrupts your reading, it will likely also confuse another reader. Making that connection between your reading experience to the target audience's experience is crucial to the editing process. The more you learn this style of reading, the faster the process will become, but when you first begin, take your time to think, question each sentence, and focus on being an active reader.

Pre-editing

Before editing, you should check all of the following basic requirements. If any are not met, consult with the Under-Secretary-General or Secretary-General as applicable and return the draft to the original author to be rectified.

- Template:** The draft must be on the template provided by conference leadership and reflect the required stylistic presentation.
- Structure:** The guide includes all required sections and they appear to be relatively content-complete.
- Length/word count:** The total number of words, excluding footnotes and Bibliography, **must be between 2,500-3,500 words**. In early drafts, they may slightly exceed the 3,500 words if seeking guidance on where to cut.
- Footnotes:** Footnotes have been incorporated throughout and nearly every sentence already has a footnote.
- Bibliography:** The Bibliography must be completed and there **must be at least 20 unique entries from a variety of sources**.
- Previous Edits/Comments:** All prior comments/edits should be addressed/incorporated.

How to Edit

"Editing" is not a process of just finding basic mistakes. It is a methodical process that involves checking the content of the text to ensure that the ideas are expressed clearly & logically and form a



coherent and meaningful whole. Editing is not merely proofreading, or checking over the text to detect errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and format.

Editing	Proofreading
<p>Editing requires focusing on the content of the text and provide feedback or make changes that ensure it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flows logically • Is coherent, clear, and consistent • Forms a meaningful whole • Is accurate in the information it provides • Has an appropriate and professional tone • Makes topic clear and is targeted towards delegates 	<p>The aim of proofreading is to spot and correct errors in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling and punctuation • Grammar and language • Punctuation • References, citations, and Bibliography • Formatting and layout

While we certainly want to proofread and find basic errors, we want to first prioritize editing the core of the substance first. For that reason, many editors find it is easiest to read a draft multiple times and “switch modes” for each, breaking up their review into components.

1. Content, structure, and coherence.
2. Style, tone, and related.
3. Footnotes and citations.

Review Content and Structure

Reviewing the content/substance of a guide should take up most of your editing time. Before you begin, re-read the title and, if you’re not familiar with it, consider doing some cursory research such that you understand the basics. As you edit, consider the questions below for each section of the guide:

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the introduction describe what the topic “is?” A reader should be able to give a brief description of the topic from the intro alone. • Are statistics or factual realities used to establish why the topic is important? • Are the most important concepts introduced? The intro should set up the foundation for the rest of the guide.
International & Regional Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all the most important documents included? • Are they in an order that is logical (likely chronological)? • Can a reader understand what the frameworks establish? • Are the frameworks described in a way that helps to lead into the subtopics?
Role of the International System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the most significant UN bodies that do work related to the topic described? • Is there a description of how the topic relates to the body being simulated? • Are there actors included that may take action in relation to the subtopics? • If other intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations are described, are they relevant to the topic and large enough to be internationally significant? • Are any applicable regional organizations covered?
Subtopics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the subtopics logically flow from the information presented in the framework and systems sections?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Is it clear after reading how the subtopics presented tie directly into the topic as titled?● Is it clear why the subtopics are important?● Are the subtopics presented such that delegates can draw conclusions about how to take action? Watch out for any sentences that might “tell” delegates what to do or suggest that a course of action is the “correct” one (which we want to avoid).● Does the Background Guide as whole present sufficient documents and bodies that a delegate could write a basic resolution on each subtopic using only the information available in the guide?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Does the conclusion reiterate the most important concepts from the guide?● Is the conclusion free of authorial assumptions or implications that delegates should or “must” take an action?● Does the conclusion set up for delegates to take action in committee?
Further Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Is the Further Research section in paragraph form?● Would the question spur delegates to conduct research outside of the guide?● Would the questions help delegates contextualize the topic for their Member State or region?

In addition to specifically considering each section, an editor should consider each of the content of the guide as a whole, specifically examining:

- **Whether all content aligns with the title.** Re-read the title of the background guide (the name of the topic) and ask if the content presented is directly responsive to the topic as approved. If something seems irrelevant, it may not need to be included.
- **The level of detail included.** Ensure that there is sufficient explanation of key issues. In individual sentences and paragraphs, look for things that are described overly broadly or aren’t easy to contextualize.
- **Whether or not the information is up-to-date.** If something is happening internationally relevant to the topic, is it mentioned? Consider whether the issues presented are relevant to a modern audience.

While you are reviewing the content and considering all of the above, you also want to ensure that the guide is structured well. Even Background Guides that have well-researched substance may look poor because they are disorganized. Points and sentences should flow logically and each paragraph & section should be connected. If ideas are thrown together without being connected, it can be difficult to understand how things fit into the broader picture of a topic.

Transitions between paragraphs should be coherent and smooth. If you have multiple paragraphs on the history of a topic, these should be chronologically ordered so that the section reads logically, and transitional language should be used at the beginning and end of the paragraphs so the text “flows.” If an author is struggling to connect sentences, it may make sense to recommend reorganization of sentences or paragraphs or methods by which they can connect documents/frameworks (chronologically), actors (functionally), or various issues in a subtopic (thematically).



Review Style, Tone, and Related

After substance, most of an editor's time will probably be spent adjusting or suggesting improvements on tone and style to improve clarity and ensure objectivity. While we want to ensure that delegates and faculty, regardless of their background, won't be able to object to what is written in a Background Guide, we also want to ensure that authors are empowered and that editors **preserve the original author's voice**. You should not change wording simply because you prefer a different word or would have phrased it differently.

While authorial control is important, NMUN has several minimum requirements in terms of style and tone that an editor must address.

- ☑ **No first or second person.** The words "I," "you," and "we" should never be used. For example "I previously mentioned" or "as we will see" are not acceptable phrases.
- ☑ **No "opinionated" language.** If anything is described as "important," "critical," something that "should or should not happen," or using similar language without attributing the opinion to a source, it can be read as authorial opinion.
- ☑ **Formal language.** Language should all be formal and in line with international writing on the topic. No colloquial/informal language or slang. Similarly, idioms should not be used.
- ☑ **Active voice.** Active voice should almost always be used. "The General Assembly adopted the resolution" is far preferred to "the resolution was adopted by the General Assembly."

The principal goal in editing for the above requirements is to ensure that any reader will understand every sentence as a factual statement about reality, not the author or NMUN's opinion. While you are editing for tone and style, you will also want to proofread to identify things like misspelled words or incorrect grammar. While these errors should not be your main focus, in early drafts, they will become increasingly important later on. For reminders on things to look for in terms of spelling, grammar, and presentation, refer to the [Editing Checklist](#).

Review References and Citations

As with tone and style, NMUN has requirements that editors must consider as part of their review.

- ☑ **All factual statements have a footnote.** Nearly every sentence will have a factual claim asserted or implied and therefore must have a footnote. Delegates and faculty must be able to find the original source of the information.
- ☑ **All footnotes and bibliography entries are properly formatted** in line with the standards described in the [Citations](#) section of this manual.
- ☑ **All footnotes in the bibliography.** All footnotes must have a bibliography entry and all bibliography entries must be used at least once in a footnote.
- ☑ **At least 20 unique sources are referenced.** If there are fewer sources in the bibliography, the draft should be sent back to the author for updates.

In addition to verifying the standards above, editors should consider whether the sources used are appropriate. For example, 10-year-old statistics and figures are likely to be out of date even though a



10-year-old reference to a historical event may be perfectly accurate. As you review the cited sources, briefly consider:

- **Potential bias.** Information from state-run media sources or highly politicized sources may have slanted information or may be viewed by NMUN attendees as inappropriate to use. Consider how they are being referenced and if they are necessary.
- **Variety.** While we focus on United Nations sources, they should likely not be the only ones used or, at minimum, various UN bodies should be referenced. If referencing multiple news articles or academic journals, different ones should be used, ideally.
- **The age of sources.** If a “timely” source such as a news article is several years old, consider examining the extent to which its information is still accurate.

Additional Editing Guidance

- **Make suggestions for concise writing.** We work with word limits. It is great if the writer uses the full word allocation to write their topic, but the focus should be on quality, not quantity. Ask if the writer can present information in a more concise way or if disparate information can be better synthesized.
- **Dig into weirdness.** If a statement, statistic, or anything else in the guide doesn't seem sensical to you, check out the footnote. Make sure the source actually says what the guide is implying. Authors can misread, misremember, or make an error in synthesizing that can cause a reader to take away the wrong message.
- **Fix formatting, or have the author fix it.** In early drafts, you may make a comment, but if significant formatting issues exist in later drafts, feel free to ask the author to fix it. All background guides must be in the proper format and the NMUN template must be used.

Editing Strategies

Editing can be time-consuming and even tiring. These strategies can make your editing time a bit less stressful.

- ★ **Establish a workspace.** Do not try to do your proofreading in front of the TV or on the treadmill. Find a place where you can concentrate and avoid distractions.
- ★ **Give yourself time.** Do not leave writing until the last minute – you will not have time to research and write to a high standard, or then be able to edit and proofread carefully.
- ★ **Get some distance from the text.** It is hard to edit a guide that you have just finished writing or that you've already spent hours with. If you have the time, put the paper aside for a few hours or days. Clear your head so you can take a fresh look.
- ★ **Don't repeat yourself.** Rather than correcting every instance of a recurring mistake, add a comment on the first occurrence comment and ask the writer to correct the same mistake throughout the paper. Trust them to learn from the original error. You can also use the general comments you leave at the end to provide high-level feedback.