

How to Start a Model UN Club in your School

By Emma Dieterle

Model UN is more than just learning about the world: it's a way for you to find your place in it. Participate in it and you develop leadership skills that translate throughout your life. Model United Nations is more than a competition: it's a community of diverse individuals who want to work together to solve problems. It is a club that should be present in every high school and available to every student who enjoys not just international relations, but also is curious about the world. When I was a sophomore in high school, I started a Model United Nations club with little prior knowledge of the nature of Model UN. All I knew was that it was the one team that I really wanted to be a part of. In this article, I'm going to share my experience starting a club; I hope that it proves useful for anyone wishing to do the same in their community.

When first starting the club, I struggled with feeling insignificant. I didn't have the slightest clue on where to start and had very little experience participating in Model United Nations. I had only been to one conference in middle school that I hardly remembered and that scared me. I was certain about one thing, though: that this club had to become more than just an impressive extra-curricular, but rather a space of belonging for all its members. Four years later, the club has quadrupled in size and has not one but three faculty advisors all dedicated to its success. Our club's international foods fundraiser is now a biannual occurrence that the entire school looks forward to. It isn't easy to start a MUN club without much prior experience, but it is possible and worth it!

5 steps towards a starting your club:

1. The first thing you need to know about starting a Model United Nations club is that you are capable. You can do this. Model United Nations benefits from the inclusion of everyone; we all have the right to participate. You are no less qualified than anyone else to start this club (that's something that took me a long time to figure out).
2. The second thing you need to do is create a set of principles that guides you: a mission statement. This mission statement needs to include the values that will ground the very nature of your club. You are creating a space where peers will be able to find freedom, friendship, and themselves. The importance of the values you set forth for your club cannot be understated. When I started my club, I was genuinely excited about creating a space where people were able to share their love for international relations as well as become a tight-knit team. I wanted to make sure that although Model UN does have a competitive aspect, my team would not become consumed on the high of winning. Be sure to consider inclusion and diversity when coming up with your values, as Model UN is available to everyone and not just the students who already seem like they'd be good at it.
3. The third step is to find a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor's main job is to supervise the club and deal with all administrative matters. How involved you want your advisor to be is dependent on you. My word of advice when asking teachers to be the advisor is to be persistent, show that you care about the club and are willing to put in the work.

Oftentimes, the biggest hesitation with teachers is that they will be burdened with most of the heavy-duty work (like organizing meetings and fundraising). Don't give up-- I had to ask three teachers before my AP World History teacher finally agreed on the second time I asked!

4. Once you have a sound mission statement and a faculty advisor, you can start recruitment. For this step, begin with organizing an interest meeting. Advertise for the meeting with flyers, emails, administrative announcements, and posts on the school Facebook page. Ask your friends and classmates to show up to the meeting, ask the school to show up at the meeting by making in person announcements during class. Whatever you think to do, do it! Do not be shy about being loud and asking people. I remember that I was the sophomore who was known for asking just about anybody during *any* conversation to join Model UN. Have pride in your club, be proud of yourself! Starting something new is intimidating, but just know that your attitude toward the club will reflect on the club. If you have total confidence in its success and a positive attitude no matter what, then people will want to join. Also, make sure there's food, as that is always a prime incentive for anyone to show up to a meeting.
5. Once you've had the interest meeting, set a regular meeting time as well as a way to get in touch with your members (email or GroupMe is best). Now you can say that you've successfully started your club! The first few meetings will be a bit shaky, as you are finding your routine. Typically, the first meetings with my club consisted of team building activities (can be cringy, I know, but necessary!), many power point presentations introducing everyone to the rules of Model UN, and of course, the Parks and Rec Model UN episode. Really, what you do during your club meetings is up to you and your club. Once you get further into the Model UN season, you will need to find and register for conferences, fundraise money, and prepare for those committees, so you will have plenty to do in your meetings. Do not be afraid to ask for help from your teammates, as this is all a collective effort. The hardest part of starting something is the beginning. Once you get past that hurdle, you can only go up. Good luck!