

Berkeley Model United Nations
UNITED STATES SENATE PROCEDURE GUIDE

The United States Senate relies heavily on tradition and precedent: many of its current procedures date back to the First Congress in 1789. In BMUN, we will be integrating these U.S. Senate traditions with our own. That is to say, this committee will largely proceed according to the general skeleton of BMUN procedure, but with interesting — and sometimes inconvenient — Senate rules integrated into it. Our goal is to capture the spirit of U.S. Senate debate while working within the values and themes of the Berkeley Model United Nations conference.

Any aspects of procedure not mentioned here will remain identical to standard BMUN procedure. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at senate68@bmun.org with any questions or clarifications you may have. We also highly recommend keeping a copy of this procedure guide with you in committee should you ever need to refer to it.

I. OPENING COMMITTEE

Electing Party Leadership

In this committee, the leaders and whips will not be the actual leaders and whips of the current U.S. Senate. Before entertaining a motion to open debate, we will highly smile upon a Motion to Elect Party Leadership. This is a type of motion that is unique to our committee and that will be further described later in this procedure guide.

Majority and Minority Leaders

The Senate majority and minority leaders are expected to coordinate the process of bill writing. In addition, majority and minority leaders are the only senators who can motion to reset the agenda. While each leader may be heavily involved in the bill writing process, we expect to see other senators taking the lead on writing. Ultimately, the main objective of a leader is to attempt to compromise with the other party so that a bill can achieve bipartisan support.

Majority and Minority Whips

Party whips are expected to rally or “whip up” votes among senators within their own party. They are responsible for counting votes and making sure that each measure has enough support to pass.

We want to emphasize that being elected to the position of whip or party leader in no way factors into the award process at the end of committee. Senators can stand out in many ways, whether it be through their oratory skills on the Senate floor, their efforts at bipartisanship, or their role in the bill writing process. Here are some other crucial things to remember:

- Should the majority of a party believe that the leader or whip is not fit to represent the party, the party leader or whip can be removed and re-elected at the chair's discretion. In this case, we will not go through the procedure of a motion to elect party leadership and instead take a simple vote.
- No matter what, we will rotate new Senators into these roles at the start of each topic. Furthermore, no one senator can fulfill the same leadership position twice. If any Senators have concerns about a fellow Senator abusing their leadership role, they are encouraged to communicate that to the chair at any time.

II. FLOW OF COMMITTEE

The Speaker's List

Once given the floor, speakers will behave in accordance to the following rules:

1. Senators will be limited to a **speaking time of two minutes** with a double gavel tap when there is thirty seconds left and a single tap when time has expired.
 - Note: We **do not** expect every speaker to fill this time. However, the Senate traditionally has no time limits for a speaker. We chose to add thirty seconds to the normal speaking time at BMUN in order to balance Senate traditions with a desire to give everyone a chance to speak.
 - This will be the speaking time unless otherwise specified by the chairs or changed by the committee.
2. After a speaker has yielded their time to the chair, we will entertain two comments from Senators, to be chosen by the chair.
3. Once this time has elapsed, we will proceed to the next speaker on the speaker's list.

Important Points and Motions

Points of Parliamentary Procedure (Personal Privilege, Order, or Inquiry): Standard BMUN procedure.

Motion to reset the agenda: Can only be motioned by a party leader at the beginning of a session. Requires a 50% + 1 vote to pass.

Motion to elect party leadership:

This is a little bit of a more complicated motion, but we will be helping you through it. Senators do not need to specify a time and purpose for this motion because it will always default to the same process. This motion will take twenty minutes to complete. The process of electing party leadership will proceed as follows:

1. Before entertaining a motion to open debate, we will highly smile upon a motion to elect party leadership.

2. For eight minutes, Senators will participate in a party caucus within their respective parties. After the eight minutes are up, each party must be ready with nominations for Senate leadership.
 - Each party can have *up to* three nominations for majority or minority leadership. For example, the Republican Party may choose to nominate Marco Rubio, Susan Collins, and Mitch McConnell to be the leader of their party.
 - Each party can have *up to* three nominations for majority or minority whips. For example, the Democratic Party may choose to nominate Dick Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, and Kirsten Gillibrand to be the whip of their party.
3. The dais will take note of the nominations. We will then transition into a moderated caucus, where each nominee will have a one minute speaking time to briefly explain to the Senate chamber their candidacy for their respective leadership position. This moderated caucus will take twelve minutes.
4. Finally, we will be sending out a secret ballot for each party. Members of each party will vote for the leader and whip of their respective party.
5. The majority and minority leaders and whips will be announced.

Motion to move into formal caucus: Moving into presenting bills for consideration.

Motion for an unmoderated caucus: Standard BMUN procedure. Once both parties have completed drafts of their proposals in party caucuses, an unmoderated caucus may be called in order to merge the two drafts and achieve a bipartisan bill that can pass committee.

Motion to break into party caucuses:

In party caucuses, each party will have the opportunity to caucus within their own party. The role of a party caucus is to facilitate the bill writing process and advance the party's goals. Senators will split into different groups to accomplish various tasks critical to the legislative process. For example, several groups may function as "committees" and volunteer to work on drafting sections of a particular bill, while another group helps the party leader in negotiating bipartisan compromises, while yet another group may work with the whip to ensure that the entire party supports even the most controversial aspects of the bill.

For this motion, Senators must specify a time and purpose like with an unmoderated caucus.

Review: What's the difference between unmoderated caucuses and party caucuses?

Within a traditional BMUN committee, the informal/unmoderated caucus is initially used to gain insight into each delegate's position on a topic and then later to form working groups and draft resolutions. This will be slightly different within the Senate. The dais will certainly encourage informal discussions between members of both political parties; bipartisan work is key to success in this committee. However, given these polarized times, **we expect most of the bill writing process to be accomplished within party caucuses.**

Motion for a moderated caucus: Standard BMUN procedure.

Motion to suspend debate: Standard BMUN procedure.

Motion for cloture: This is the equivalent of a motion to move into voting bloc. It is elaborated on in the bills section below.

Motion to adjourn debate: Standard BMUN procedure.

III. VOTING ON LEGISLATION

For the sake of time and simplicity, we will not be considering other types of U.S. legislation such as resolutions or BMUN deliverables such as communiques. Senators will only be submitting bills in this committee.

Bill Formatting

There will be no format differences between a Senate bill and a U.N. resolution. However, like the Security Council, Senators will be able to take direct action in operative clauses (eg. “Demands that” or “Requires that”).

Amendments and division of the question will also function in the same way as in standard BMUN procedure.

Though we expect political parties to be heavily involved in the bill writing process, in practice any Senator or group of Senators may submit a bill to the dais to be entertained on the Senate floor.

Voting on and Passing Bills

The process of voting on resolutions within the Senate is slightly modified from the process in a regular committee. After a formal caucus has presented the bills to be voted on, the following steps must occur to pass a bill:

1. A Senator must **motion for cloture**, ending debate and moving into the voting process. As with the actual Senate, this will require at least 60% of the vote in order to pass. There will not be two speeches for and two speeches against cloture.
2. Once a motion for cloture passes, the same rules as voting bloc apply (no talking, passing notes, etc.)
3. Senators will vote on bills and amendments in the same way as in a standard BMUN committee.
 - Like in other committees, Senators may motion for a roll call vote (at the discretion of the dais to approve), which will proceed exactly like any other BMUN committee.
4. A simple majority is needed to pass a bill.
5. After voting has been completed, a Senator will **motion to end cloture**.
6. The committee will select a rapporteur, clean up, and motion to suspend/adjourn debate.

In real life, the bill would need to go through several committees, pass the House, and be approved by the President to become legislation. For the sake of time, we will only symbolically do this.

Types of Acceptable Votes

Typically, Senators will do a roll call vote to count votes. For the sake of time, we will default to using normal BMUN counting procedure with some slightly modified rules. Here is a list of acceptable responses:

Yea: “Yes, I approve this legislation.”

Nay: “No, I do not approve of this legislation.”

Abstain: If abstaining, the Senator must give a reason for abstention, according to Senate rules. The dais will count the number of abstentions and then proceed into a short period where each abstaining Senator will have 20 seconds to explain their abstention. Nonetheless, **we highly discourage Senators to abstain** from voting; typically, abstentions do not occur in the Senate unless something in the bill suggests a conflict of interest for that Senator.

As a reminder, a Senator can motion to do a roll call vote, but this will only proceed at the discretion of the chair.

The rules for “present” and “present in voting” will remain identical to BMUN procedure when doing attendance roll call.

IV. OTHER NOTES

The Dais

In session, the chairs will technically function as the presiding officer of the Senate chamber. We will also be updating the chamber with the actions of the coequal branches and other bodies of governance. Honestly, just don’t mind us too much.

Crisis Updates

Senate is not a crisis committee. However, we may have one or two crisis updates per topic. Should this occur, we will not follow crisis procedure, and senators will not be expected to know crisis procedure. Senators will continue to write and submit bills; this means crisis updates will essentially function as guiding events, just as they do for senators in real life.

Partisanship

We adapted this procedure guide to BMUN procedure in order to reflect the reality of the rules and procedures in the Senate as closely as possible, given our restrictions. Although the bulk of these rules are more conducive to partisanship than not, we would like to stress that a good portion of this committee must entail bipartisan efforts. In other words, bipartisanship (and accordingly, creativity) with respect to chamber rules is an interesting nuance to consider.