



# Yale Model Congress 2016

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## *Guide to Yale Model Congress*

Welcome to Yale Model Congress! We are excited to see you in December. This guide aims to help new delegations learn about Yale Model Congress and how to prepare for participation. In addition to reading through this guide, stay in touch with our board to make sure that you are submitting materials on time, and check our website for relevant deadlines.

### **1. About YMC**

Yale Model Congress is the oldest student-run model government conference in the Ivy League. For over twenty years, Yale Model Congress has held conferences that provide high school students with the opportunity to assume the responsibilities of our elected representatives and to tackle the issues that face our nation. Over the course of four days, more than 600 students will come to Yale's campus to participate in Congressional committees, focusing on topics that range from national security to the environment.

To help create an accurate simulation of our federal government, we integrate all three branches of government into the YMC experience. Our two special programs, the Presidential Cabinet and the Supreme Court, interact with the Congressional committees to enhance our delegates' understanding of the legislative process.

### **2. How It Works**

#### 2.1 Committees:

At Yale Model Congress, delegates participate in committees modeled after the US Congress. Each delegate will choose a committee ranging from Environment & Public Works, Science Space & Technology, Foreign Affairs, Health Education Labor & Pensions and more. Committees will meet five times throughout the conference. During these sessions, delegates will present a bill that they have submitted for the conference. This bill is a mock piece of legislation that delegates write and submit in November that fits within the topic of their chosen committee. Tips on bill-writing can be found in Section 3.1.1.

Committee sessions are run by a Chair, a Yale student who has volunteered their time to preside over committees for the weekend. These chairs likely have interest in the committee they are working with and provide insight throughout the weekend, becoming a great resource for delegates.

For each bill, a delegate will make a motion to introduce the piece of legislation, the committee will follow structured debate (see section 2.2.3) and general debate if desired (see section 2.2.4). Bills may be amended by utilizing the motion to amend, procedure rules to which

are described below. To end debate on a bill, a delegate will move to the previous question, at which time delegates will vote on whether or not to pass the bill.

Committees follow Robert's Rules of Order with adjustments as necessary, as described below.

## 2.2 Committee Rules of Procedure

This section provides a summary of the key rules of procedure for new delegates to prepare for the conference. For full rules of procedure in detail, please visit our website here:

[http://www.yalemodelcongress.org/delegates/#roberts\\_rules](http://www.yalemodelcongress.org/delegates/#roberts_rules)

### 2.2.1 Agenda:

The delegate guide, which each delegate will receive on Thursday at registration, contains bills submitted for committees. The bills assigned to the committee in the delegate guide constitute the agenda for committee proceedings. The committee can choose to introduce these bills in any order it desires. After all assigned bills have been considered, legislation not in the delegate guide (i.e. legislation not submitted on time) can be introduced.

### 2.2.2 Voting

All bills and resolutions require a simple majority of those present for passage; a tied bill does not pass. A simple majority is *one more than half* of the members of a Committee. Thus, the majority of a Committee of 25 students is 13 students. Votes requiring a two-thirds majority for passage do not fail on ties. Constitutional amendments shall require a simple majority to pass in Committee, but shall require a two-thirds majority to pass in plenary sessions; see the chapter on plenary sessions, below. Votes shall be taken by asking delegates to raise their placards. No roll call or voice votes shall be taken. All delegates must vote on procedural matters.

### 2.2.3 Structured Debate

The consideration of any bill or resolution begins with Structured Debate. Structured Debate consists of four speeches, in alternating pro-con order, with the first speech in favor of the main motion. The sponsor of the bill is selected based on the procedures of Motion to Consider (the sponsor is usually the author of the bill), and the sponsor gives the first pro speech. Next, the Chair recognizes a delegate opposed to the main motion. These two delegates can each speak for four minutes. Delegates chosen by the Chair give the next pro speech followed by a con speech, and these speeches can last no more than two minutes each. Time signals during all speeches will be given by the Chair using their gavel. The Chair has discretion to use a time signal procedure of their choice, but normally will give one tap at half way through a speech, two taps at 30 seconds left, and 3 taps at 10 seconds left.

Motions to amend a bill or resolution, or for the previous question, are not allowed during structured debate. Delegates may yield the remainder of their time to the Chair or to questions, but not to other delegates. This means that if delegates do not wish to speak for the entirety of their allotted time, they may use the rest of their time for questions by announcing "I yield the remainder of my time to questions," or they may relinquish their time by announcing "I yield my time to the Chair."

### 2.2.4 General Debate

The committee moves into General Debate after Structured Debate has ended. Here, the Chair recognizes delegates to give alternating pro-con speeches. These general debate speeches may not last longer than two minutes. As in Structured Debate, delegates may yield their time to the Chair or to questions; however, in General Debate, delegates may also yield the remainder of their time to another delegate. A delegate speaking on yielded time may speak until time elapses, or the delegate can yield the remaining time to the Chair. However, the delegate cannot yield to a third delegate or to questions. As in Structured Debate, time signals will be given by the Chair at their discretion. During General Debate, delegates may present motions to amend a bill or resolution, provided the amendments are made in accordance with the rules of procedure described below. In addition, a motion for the previous question is also in order during general debate.

### 2.2.5 Precedence: Points and Motions

The points and motions in the following precedence shall be in effect for the committees of the *Yale Model Congress*:

PRECEDENCE	MOTION	SECOND?	DEBATABLE?	VOTE
1	Point of Personal Privilege	No	No	Chair
2	Point of Order	No	No	Chair
3	Point of Parliamentary Inquiry	No	No	Chair
4(a)	Point of Information, Follow Up	No	No	Chair
4(b)	Point of Information	No	No	Chair
5(a)	Point of Inquiry, Follow Up	No	No	Chair
5(b)	Point of Inquiry	No	No	Chair
6	Appeal the Decision of the Chair	Yes	Appeal to the Chair	Two-Thirds
7	Motion to Suspend a Rule	Yes	1 pro, 1 con	Two-Thirds
8	Motion for a Caucus	Yes	No	Majority
9	Motion to Amend	Yes	Yes	Majority
10	Motion to Lay on the Table	Yes	No	Two-Thirds
11	Motion to Take from the Table	Yes	No	Majority
12	Motion for the Previous Question	Yes	1 con	Two-Thirds
13	Motion to Divide a Question	Yes	1 pro, 1 con	Majority
14	Motion to Consider a Bill/Resolution	Yes	No	One-Third
15	Motion to Introduce a Bill/Resolution	Yes	No	None
16	Motion to Recess	Yes	No	Majority
17	Motion to Rise	Yes	No	Majority

### 1. Point of Personal Privilege□

A delegate may raise a point of personal privilege if something prevents his or her participation in the proceedings (*i.e.* lack of decorum, sound problems, etc.). The point of personal privilege may interrupt a speaker only if the conditions prevent the delegate from following the proceedings. If a delegate needs to use the restroom or get a drink of water, they may do so using a point of personal privilege.

### 2. Point of Order

□i. During the discussion of any matter other than a pending point of order, even when another delegate is speaking, a delegate may raise a point of order. A Point of Order notes a violation of parliamentary procedure (*i.e.* a motion to move to previous question is not in order, because the bill is still in structured debate.) The Chair, in accordance with the rules of procedure, shall immediately decide upon a point of order.

□ii. A delegate may subsequently appeal the ruling of the Chair. The delegate may speak briefly on behalf of his or her appeal, and the Chair may then speak in defense of his or her ruling. The Committee then votes on the appeal, and the Chair's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a two-thirds majority vote.

□iii. A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion. The Chair may refuse to recognize points of order deemed by his or her discretion dilatory or irrelevant.

### 3. Point of Parliamentary Inquiry□

During the consideration of any matter, except the address of another delegate, a representative may raise a point of parliamentary inquiry. This motion enables delegates to request a clarification of committee procedures. The Chair shall answer inquiries in accordance with the rules of procedure.

### 4. Point of Information□

□i. A delegate may raise a point of information in order to ask a factual question regarding the matter under discussion. The point is made when no one has the floor or during the question period of a speech. The question is addressed to the Chair, who may refer it to a delegate, if necessary. A point of information may not relate to procedure or express an opinion, and it may not interrupt a speaker. An example of such a question is, "What percentage of the federal budget is allocated for defense?"

□ii. After the Chair has answered one question, the delegate who asked the initial question may ask one follow-up question. To do so, that delegate must announce that his or her point is a follow up. Follow-up questions will be entertained at the Chair's discretion.

□iii. The Chair may recognize him- or herself for points of information in order to correct grievous factual errors that would affect the matter under discussion.

## 5. Point of Inquiry□

i. After a speaker has yielded to questions, delegates recognized by the Chair may present a point of inquiry, a question for the speaker about anything regarding the topic of discussion. Through points of inquiry, delegates can solicit the speaker's opinion on some aspect of the discussion; these points also help to spark lively debate. The Chair may rule any point of inquiry dilatory.

At all times, and especially during Points of Inquiry, Delegates should remember to remain courteous and respectful of other delegates when questioning them. Delegates should phrase all points of inquiry to the delegate through the Chair (that is, in the grammatical third person). By using the third person, debate maintains its proper focus on the issues, and limits personal attacks. For example: "How does the Senator/Representative feel about...?" rather than, "How do you feel about...?" Likewise, a delegate responding to a question should use the third person and not refer to the person who asked the question as "you." Use of the word "you" is acceptable when speaking in the passive voice.

ii. After the speaker has answered one question, the delegate who asked the initial question may ask one follow-up question. To do so, that delegate must announce that his or her point is a follow up. Follow-up questions will be entertained at the Chair's discretion.

## 6. Motion to Appeal the Decision of the Chair

If a delegate believes that a Chair's decision has violated these rules of procedure, he or she may appeal the decision of the Chair. If passed, this motion will reverse a decision made by the Chair. This motion requires a second and a debate between the appellant and the Chair, with the appellant giving the first speech. Only one speech by the appellant and one by the Chair are in order during this debate. The motion must gain support of two thirds of the body to reverse a Chair's decision. Note that motions to appeal the decision of the Chair are normally extremely unsuccessful, because of the Chair's discretion in all matters.

## 7. Motion to Suspend a Rule□

The Motion to Suspend a Rule signals a member's desire to temporarily change a rule of procedure. It requires a two-thirds vote for passage. When making the motion, a delegate must indicate when the normal rules will resume effect. For example, a delegate may move to suspend the rules in order to extend another delegate's speaking time.

## 8. Motion to Caucus□

This motion calls for a short time period to informally discuss the current issues. The delegate must state the desired amount of time. Chairs have full discretion to allow such motions, which require a majority to pass.

## 9. Motion to Amend□

Delegates should make a motion to amend when they wish to change a bill or resolution in a manner that is still consistent with the preamble. The following procedure shall be followed for a motion to amend:

- i. A delegate will write an amendment on paper and pass the written amendment to the Chair.□
- ii. When the Chair asks for motions, the delegate makes a motion to amend. The Chair reads the proposed amendment aloud.□
- iii. The Chair asks the bill's author if the amendment is friendly or unfriendly.□
- iv. If friendly, it becomes part of the bill and General Debate on the bill as a whole continues.□
- v. If unfriendly, the Chair asks for a second and, providing there is one, the body moves into Structured Debate on the amendment.
- vi. The author of the amendment will be offered the first two-minute pro speech and the author of the bill will be offered the first two-minute con speech.
- vii. General Debate on the amendment begins. General Debate will last no longer than two pro-con sequences of speeches of one minute each.

All speeches and questions during debate on an amendment must pertain to the amendment only and not the main motion in general. A delegate may not introduce a secondary amendment (an amendment to an amendment). As in General Debate, debate of an amendment concludes with a motion for the previous question on the amendment. If passed, the committee then votes on the amendment only. After a vote on the amendment, the committee returns to General Debate on the main motion.

## 10. Motion to Lay on the Table/Take from the Table□

If an issue of pressing importance arises during the discussion of any substantive matter, the assembly may temporarily dispose of the matter under discussion by successfully moving to lay the matter on the table. A delegate may not interrupt a speaker to table a matter. This motion requires a two-thirds majority and the Chair's approval for passage. Motion to Lay on the Table is frequently used if the committee session time ends before completing debate on a bill, allowing for debate on the bill to finish in the next committee session.

If passed by a majority of the delegates, the motion to take from the table immediately reintroduces the tabled matter. A motion to take a bill or resolution from the table is only appropriate when no other main motion is being considered. Both motions require seconds.

## 11. Motion for the Previous Question□

The motion for the previous question ends debate on a topic. One member may speak against the motion, and it requires a two-thirds majority for passage. A vote on the issue at hand immediately follows the passage of the motion for the previous question. After a motion for the previous question passes, but before a vote is taken on the

bill/resolution, delegates may move to divide the question. Point 12, below, describes the proper procedure for making such a motion.

#### 12. Motion to Divide a Question□

After a Motion for the Previous Question has been passed, a delegate may move to divide the question. The mover shall specify the manner of division, and the Chair will ask for a second. Debate consists of two one-minute speeches, one pro and one con. The mover shall be offered the pro speech. Passage requires a majority vote. Delegates may not divide out legislation's preambulatory or enactment clauses.

If the Motion to Divide passes, each part of the bill as specified by the motion shall be voted on separately. If all parts fail, then the bill fails. If all parts, or some meaningful combination of parts, pass, then the approved parts are voted on as a whole.

#### 13. Motion to Consider a Bill/Resolution□

This motion brings up a specific bill or resolution for debate. It requires a second. If the bill's author is present, the author becomes the bill's sponsor and is entitled to all the privileges granted to the sponsor elsewhere in these rules. If the bill's author is not present, debate on the bill or resolution will normally be postponed; however, under extenuating circumstances, the Chair may allow another delegate to sponsor the bill. Regardless of which of the two methods was used to select the sponsor, the sponsor then has the option to begin debate on the bill. If the sponsor chooses not to begin debate, then a different bill or resolution must be considered (barring, as always, an override from the Chair). If the sponsor chooses to begin debate, the Motion to Consider is voted on. Passage requires a 1/3 vote. The sponsor must give the first pro speech. Objections to consideration are not allowed.

#### 14. Motion to Introduce a Bill/Resolution□

This motion allows bills not found in the Delegate Guide to be the subject of a Motion to Consider. Passage requires a second.

#### 15. Motion to Recess□

The motion to recess suspends proceedings until the next session (as stated in the conference schedule).

#### 16. Motion to Rise□

The Chair may only accept a motion to rise at the end of the last session. It closes proceedings at the end of the conference.

### 2.3 Sample Committee Session

This is a sample transcript from a YMC committee session with debate on one bill. This transcript includes the most common proceedings of a committee and does not include all that may be included in committee sessions. In addition, more speakers are likely to be involved than detailed here.

**Chair:** \*bangs gavel\* I call this session to order. Are there any points or motions on the floor at this time?

**Delegate A:** \*raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate A.

**Delegate A:** Motion to Consider “[Bill Name]”.

**Chair:** That motion is in order. I will grant two minutes for the Delegates to read the bill.

\*Two minutes elapse\*

**Chair:** Delegate A, you may now give your four minute authorship speech.

**Delegate A:** Thank you, Madame Chair. Today, it is of the utmost importance for this committee to consider the rising issue of ..... \*speech continues for 3.5 minutes\* I yield the remainder of my time to points or questions.

**Chair:** Are there any points or questions for the speaker?

Delegate B: \*raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate B.

**Delegate B:** Why does the speaker believe that 20 million dollars must be allocated for this initiative?

**Delegate A:** The success of this legislation is dependent on its receiving sufficient funding to...

**Chair:** Are there any other questions for the speaker?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the rest of the speaker’s time is absorbed and the speaker is thanked.

**Delegate A:** Thank you, Madame Chair. \*returns to seat\*

**Chair:** Are there any points or motions on the floor at this time?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the Chair will now entertain a four minute con speech on this bill. Are there any speakers?

**Delegate B:** \*raises placard\*

**Chair:** The Chair recognizes Delegate B.

**Delegate B:** Thank you, Madame Chair. While I agree with the intentions of this bill, I am worried that... \*continues for 3 minutes\*. I yield the remainder of my time to the Chair.

**Chair:** The speaker is thanked. Are there any points on the floor?

**Delegate C:** \*raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate C.

**Delegate C:** Motion to Caucus.

**Chair:** That is out of order at this time. Only points and speeches are in order during Structured Debate. Are there any points on the floor?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the Chair will recognize a speaker for a two-minute pro-speech.

**Delegate D:** \*raises placard\*

**Chair:** The Chair recognizes Delegate D.



**Delegate D:** Thank you. \*speaks for two minutes\*

**Chair:** \*bangs gavel\* The speaker's time has elapsed. The speaker is thanked.

**Delegate D:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

**Chair:** Are there any points on the floor at this time?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the Chair will recognize a speaker for a two-minute con-speech

\*Delegate E raises placard, is called on, speaks for 1.5 minutes and yields time to the Chair\*

**Chair:** The Chair absorbs the remainder of the speaker's time and the speaker is thanked. We will now move into general debate. Are there any points or motions on the floor at this time?

\*Delegate B, having passed a written amendment on a scrap piece of paper to the Chair, raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate B.

**Delegate B:** Motion to Amend.

**Chair:** Delegate B proposes the following amendment: \*reads amendment aloud (*ie* Change section 2 to read...\*) Does the author find this amendment friendly or unfriendly?

**Delegate A:** Unfriendly.

**Chair:** Is there a second for considering this amendment?

**Delegate C:** Second!

**Chair:** We will now move into structured debate on the amendment. The Chair recognizes Delegate B for the first pro-speech.

**Delegate B:** Thank you, Madame Chair. In order for me to support this bill, I believe that it needs to be amended so that... \*speaks for two minutes\* \*chair bangs gavel\*

**Chair:** The speaker's time has elapsed and the speaker is thanked. Are there any points on the floor?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the Chair will recognize the author of the bill to give the first con-speech.

**Speaker A:** Thank you, Madame Chair. When I wrote this bill I considered [section with proposed amendment] very carefully, and I believe that this amendment will be detrimental to the bill as a whole for the following reasons \*speaks for 1.5 minutes\* I yield the remainder of my time to the chair.

**Chair:** The speaker is thanked. Are there any points on the floor?

\*Delegate E raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate E.

**Delegate E:** Point of Information.

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate, state your point.

**Delegate E:** How much is the current US budget for the Department of Education?

**Chair:** According to my quick research, the budget for fiscal year 2016-2017 is .... Are there any other points at this time?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, the Chair will recognize a two minute pro-speech in favor of this amendment. Are there any speakers?

\*Delegate C raises placard\*

**Chair:** Delegate C, you have the floor.

Delegate C: Thank you Madam Chair. I believe this bill must contain the amendment at hand because ... \*speaks for two minutes\*

**Chair:** The speaker's time has elapsed and the speaker is thanked. Are there any points at this time?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, a two-minute con-speech is now in order. Are there any speakers?

\*Delegate F raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate F.

**Delegate F:** Senators, it is imperative that we turn down this amendment because... \*speaks for two minutes\*

**Chair:** The speaker's time has elapsed and the speaker is thanked. Are there any points or motions at this time?

\*Delegate E raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate E.

**Delegate E:** Motion to the previous question on the amendment.

**Chair:** We have a motion to the previous question on the amendment. Is there a second?

**Delegate B:** Second!

**Chair:** Okay, we will now vote on whether to move to the previous question on the amendment. Remember, this is not a vote on the amendment itself, just whether to end debate on the amendment. We need a two thirds majority and you may not abstain. Make sure to raise your placards high. All those in favor of moving to the previous question on the amendment.

\*15 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those opposed.

\*5 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** The previous question is so moved. We will now vote on the amendment. You may abstain in this vote. All those in favor raise your placards high.

\*12 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those opposed.

\*5 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those abstaining.

\*3 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** With a vote of 12 to 5 to 3, the amendment passes. We will now move back into general debate on the bill as a whole with the new amendment included. Are there any points or motions at this time?

\*No placards raised\*

**Chair:** Seeing none, are there any speeches?

\*General debate continues with multiple speeches\*

**Chair:** The speaker is thanked. Are there any points or motions?

\*Delegate C raises placard\*

**Chair:** Yes, Delegate C.

**Delegate C:** Motion to the previous question on the bill.

**Delegate D:** Second!

**Chair:** We will now vote on moving to the previous question on the bill. This is not a vote on the bill itself. All those in favor of moving to the previous question hold your placard high.

\*13 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those opposed.

\*7 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** The previous question is so moved. We will now vote on the bill. All those in favor raise your placards.

\*9 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those opposed.

\*8 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** All those abstaining.

\*3 Delegates raise placards\*

**Chair:** With a vote of 9 to 8 to 3 this bill does not pass.

## 2.4 Full Sessions

Each committee is part of a color coded House or Senate. The color of the House or Senate does not correspond to that body's political affiliation (for example, a delegate in the Blue House Judiciary committee should not feel limited to write legislation from the point of view of a Democratic delegate, and a delegate in the Red Senate Armed Services Committee need not write legislation from the point of view of a Republican.) Throughout the weekend, in addition to five committee sessions, delegates attend three Full Sessions which bring together all committees within each House or Senate. During this session, bills which have been passed during committee sessions are up for debate. Upon passage in Full Session, bills come to the President for signing into law. Full Sessions therefore give delegates the opportunity to debate topics in addition to those included in their committee.

Full sessions generally follow the same rules of procedure as those which apply to committee sessions. The following differences for full sessions should be noted:

- General debate speeches are limited to one minute in duration.
- Debate structure on amendments uses the following rules:
  - Structured debate consists of a two minute pro speech and a two minute con speech.
  - After these speeches, there may be a maximum of one pro speech and one con speech of one minute each.

## 2.5 Special Programs

The Special Programs at Yale Model Congress, the Supreme Court and the Presidential Cabinet, represent our commitment to providing delegates an immersive look into all three branches of American Government. Delegates wishing to apply into the Special Programs must fill out the applications on our website, [yalemodelcongress.org](http://yalemodelcongress.org).

Delegates in the Supreme Court have the opportunity to argue a case in front of the Court as an attorney, and to evaluate contemporary legal controversies before the Court. The Supreme Court at Yale Model Congress expects Delegates to come prepared to learn to formulate legal arguments, and to challenge one another as they work through the complex issues that can have dramatic consequences on the lives of everyday Americans. In addition to working through pre-set cases on their docket, Delegates in the Supreme Court will be asked to weigh in on the constitutionality of legislation passed in Full Sessions and adjudicate legal issues which may arise within the Presidential Cabinet.

The Presidential Cabinet targets experienced Model Congress delegates. The mission of the Presidential Cabinet is to set the agenda for the Presidency, evaluate the merits of passed bills, and to respond to any crises that might arise. When crises do arise, Cabinet members will need to respond appropriately and decisively. The Cabinet will need to take into account the implications of any action while considering the consequences of inaction. Prospective Cabinet members must have some familiarity with the current American political climate, as well as fairly strong knowledge of U.S. foreign policy.

### 3. Preparation

#### 3.1 Bills

Each delegate participating in a committee must write a bill and submit it through our website by the deadline, November 6, 2016. Bills must apply to the topics within the jurisdiction of the delegate's chosen committee. Bills contain a title, a preamble outlining the rationale behind the bill, and a body in which the stipulations of the bill are detailed. Please see the sample bill located on our website at [www.yalemodelcongress.org/advisors](http://www.yalemodelcongress.org/advisors) under Forms for help with bill writing. **Make sure to use the sample bill when writing your bill to ensure that it complies with YMC formatting and be sure to submit your bill as a word document.**

##### 3.1.1 Tips for Bill Writing

1) **Know the issues:** it's important to do some background research before picking a specific topic for your bill.

a. Take a look at your committee's official website (available from <http://www.house.gov> or <http://www.senate.gov>) to see the committee's jurisdiction and what issues its members are currently working on.

b. Read the news (including possibly the editorials) to understand the major issues facing the nation.

c. See what policies some think tanks are advocating by looking at their websites (see below).

2) **Pick a topic.** Some questions to help guide you:

a. What's most interesting or important to you?

b. What issue can you provide a unique proposal or interesting perspective on?

c. What has Congress ignored or avoided for political reasons, but is important and needs to be addressed?

3) **Research it**

a. The U.S. political system is a federal one: some powers are given to the federal government, and others to the states. What is the appropriate level of government to carry out your bill?

b. Think about what side effects or unintended consequences your bill might have. Does it create incentives for bad behavior?

c. Look for examples of where your policy has worked well (or not worked well): maybe some cities, states, or other countries have implemented pilot programs.

4) **Write the bill.** Here are some questions that need to be answered in the writing process (roughly in order):

- a. *What* will the bill do?
  - b. *Who* is going to implement it and enforce it?
  - c. *How* much will this cost, and how are you going to pay for it?
  - d. *When* will it go into effect? [Remember, there is no ‘emergency legislation rule.’ □All bills, except constitutional amendments, require a simple majority to pass, □regardless of when they go into effect.]
- 5) **Sell it.** Pick a title that clearly and briefly conveys what the bill will do, and use the □preamble to explain the research you conducted!

### 3.2 Debate practice

To prepare for success at YMC, it is a good idea for delegates to practice debating together. Delegations can use the bills written by their members as their agenda, and have delegates participate in debate as they would in normal committee. If a delegation is new to Robert’s Rules and therefore needs help running a practice debate, they should reach out to the YMC Board. The YMC Board is happy to Skype into a meeting of your delegation and act as the Chair and/or help an advisor learn how to Chair so they can help run practice debate with their students. When practicing debate, keep in mind the following tips:

#### 3.2.1 Speaking Tips

##### 3.2.1.1. General Tips:

- Be confident, speak loudly, try to avoid “um”s or “like”s and speak to the whole room, not to the Chair. Be as concise as possible.
- As debate goes on, try not to repeat what has already been said. Do your best to bring a new perspective to the conversation. Particularly in general debate, feel free to speak, even if you only use thirty seconds of your time, if you have something new to say. Remember you can always yield your time to the Chair.
- If you yield your time to questions at any point, be sure to answer questions concisely. If you do not know the answer to a question, you can admit that (*ie* by saying “I am not aware”), just make sure to answer with confidence. Don’t be afraid to yield to questions!
- Many speaking styles can be successful at YMC: a demanding and loud presence, a softer and more poignant style, a casual/conversational style, etc. As you practice and throughout your experience at YMC, feel free to explore what you feel comfortable with and find your own unique speaking style.
- Always be respectful to other speakers and the Chair.

##### 3.2.1.2 Authorship Speeches

- Authorship speeches are given by the author of a piece of legislation. They last four minutes and are the first speech of structured debate on a bill.
- Authorship speeches should be used as an opportunity to introduce the topic of the bill and outline its importance.
- The most successful authorship speeches will take delegates through the thought process of each major section of the bill, outlining why they are necessary for

overall success of the bill. This will eliminate later confusion and need for clarification on the bill's clauses.

- It is a good idea to speak for 3 minutes in an authorship speech to leave time for questions. Questions on an authorship speech are a time to make sure all delegates are clear on the bill, leading to stronger debate. At most, aim to speak for 3.5 minutes.

#### 3.2.1.3 Questions

- Asking questions is a good way to get clarification on a point made in a speech and also to challenge the argument made by a speaker.
- Questions should be addressed in the third person, i.e. "Would the speaker agree that....?"

### 3.3 Research

It is a good idea to go into YMC having some general knowledge on the topics discussed in your committee. As you did for writing your bill, visit your committee's official House/Senate website to see what legislation is being discussed. Read the news when you can leading up to the conference, or watch news channels.

A few weeks before the conference, bills that have been submitted will be posted on our website for review by delegates. You should take some time to look through the bills and do a bit of general research to familiarize yourself on the topics at hand.

As you begin your research, we encourage you to utilize a wide variety of sources. The websites of the [U.S. House of Representatives](#), the [U.S. Senate](#), the [Library of Congress](#), the [White House](#), and [Congress.gov](#) provide valuable information for delegates each year. Delegates should also consult news sources, including the [New York Times](#), the [Wall Street Journal](#), [Politico](#), [C-Span](#), [The Hill](#), [Real Clear Politics](#), [Roll Call](#), and the [Daily Kos](#).

Good luck, and have fun preparing for Yale Model Congress! Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the YMC Board. We look forward to seeing you in New Haven!