



Forming a Team

What it actually takes to put a team on the road, in order, with the real registration costs and the deadlines that bite.

This is for a teacher or faculty member who has decided to try a competitive simulation and has no team, no budget line and no idea what the first phone call is. The steps are the same at a high school and at a college. What differs is which association you join, how much it costs, and who signs.

Step 1. Pick the format before you pick the conference

The format decides everything that follows: how many students you need, what they have to learn, and how much the season costs. Four honest starting points, in rough order of how easy they are to begin:

- **Model Arab League** is the cheapest serious option at the college level, a flat \$45 per delegate at a regional conference, and the National Council on US-Arab Relations publishes the plainest instructions anywhere for a brand new program. Minimum five students per country. High school conferences run about \$25 per delegate.
- **Mock trial** has the most generous terms for new programs in any of these families. At the college level a first-year school pays \$225 to register and the first regional team is free, against \$550 plus \$125 for a returning school. High school mock trial runs through your state organization instead, and the ladder is state first.
- **Model United Nations** has the most conferences and the widest range of prices, from about \$136 a student at American Model United Nations to about \$549 a student at National Model United Nations in New York. The conference hotel, not the fee, is what makes that difference.
- **A policy competition** rather than a negotiation. The Schuman Challenge charges no registration fee at all and pays travel and lodging for semi-finalists, and the NASPAA simulation is entirely virtual. If the budget is the obstacle, start here.

The mistake that costs the most: choosing a conference because a colleague mentioned it, then discovering in January that the format needs eighteen students and you have six.

Step 2. Find out what your institution already has

Before asking for money, find out whether some of this exists already. Three questions, and all three are commonly answered yes:

- Is there a student organization budget? Most competitive teams at both levels are funded as student organizations rather than out of an academic department, which means the money is requested through student government on student government's calendar.
 - Has anyone here ever done this? A lapsed program is far easier to restart than a new one is to found, and the association may still have the school on file.
 - Will it carry credit? Indiana University runs a preparation course with a one-credit simulation attached, which is the cleanest model: the students get credit for the work, and the course gives you contact hours to prepare them in.
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Step 3. Join, in the order the association requires

This is where new programs lose a season, because two of the bodies will not let you register students until an earlier step has cleared.

Mock trial, college

1. Submit the annual school registration form and pay. The school registration fee is also your license to use the case in practice and in sanctioned competition.
2. You do not choose your regional. The association assigns it, and assignments are posted just before Thanksgiving. **Do not book travel before the assignment lands.**
3. Teams are six to ten students.

Moot court, college

1. Send a school authorization letter on the association's template, signed, ideally before the end of August.
2. Only after the letter is approved can you pay the membership fee.
3. Only after you have paid can you register teams, and registration opens in timed waves with per-tournament caps, first come first served.
4. Students cannot do any of this themselves. Only the people named on the approved letter can register a team.
5. Each student may compete in only one regional, and the \$200 per team fee is nonrefundable.

Model Arab League, either level

1. Gather at least five students.
2. Register online with country preferences, up to a year ahead. The council makes the final assignment and a staff member gets in touch.
3. Assign one or two delegates to each council the conference is running, so every council has your country in it.

Model United Nations, either level

There is no association and no membership. A faculty advisor registers the delegation directly with each conference, pays a school fee plus a per-delegate fee, and requests country preferences. **The rate is set by when your payment arrives, not by when you submit the form**, at several of the larger conferences.

Step 4. Budget the lodging, not the fee

Registration is almost never what breaks a budget. Built only from published figures, before travel and meals:

Several of the large Model UN conferences either require the conference hotel or penalize staying elsewhere: one charges \$150 per school per night off site, another \$20 per delegate per night, and one Model NATO hotel charges \$75 per person per day to attendees who sleep elsewhere. Check this before you price a cheaper hotel down the street, because the penalty is often larger than the saving.

Step 5. Recruit more students than you need

- Expect attrition between signing up in September and travelling in February. Recruit above the minimum rather than exactly to it.
 - Take students who have never done it. Competitive teams calcify quickly into the same four confident speakers, and the research on who benefits is clear that an unstructured team gives the floor to whoever was already comfortable taking it.
 - **Structure the speaking rather than encouraging it.** Assign roles and turns. Telling quiet students to speak up does not work, and at least one published attempt to close a participation gap by encouragement alone made the gap worse.
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Step 6. Prepare them, and do not improvise it

Every association publishes the rules its conference runs on, and most publish a procedure guide short enough to hand to a student. Use those rather than writing your own. The documents worth

having before the first practice:

- The rules of procedure for your conference, and a one-page order-of-precedence table if one exists. American Model United Nations publishes both in its handbook.
 - The association's own procedure guide. The National Council on US-Arab Relations has a seven-page one, plus a guide for delegates coming over from Model UN.
 - For mock trial, the rulebook and the association's tailored rules of evidence, plus the judge presentation deck, which is the single best artifact for showing students exactly how they are scored.
 - A position paper or brief template, and the deadline it is due. At several conferences the paper is a condition of award eligibility.
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Step 7. Debrief afterward, on purpose

The drive home is not a debrief. The evidence that a simulation teaches anything durable is strongest where a structured debrief followed, and competitive teams are the group most likely to skip it, because the awards ceremony feels like an ending. Scripts for this are free at politicalsimulations.com/the-debrief.

The calendar, so you know what you have already missed

Dates and fees were verified against each association's own pages on October 17, 2026 and change every year. The current list, with a link to every association, is at politicalsimulations.com/competitive-sims.