



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
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# How to Write a Crisis Note

# MUNCH

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## *The Purpose of this Guide*

The purpose of this guide is to inform you on the expectations of the MUNCH in regards to how to write an effective crisis note. This guide will also offer some additional insight into what a crisis committee actually is. However, to learn more about Model UN in general, it would be prudent to read all of the other training guides offered by MUNCH.

## *What is a crisis committee?*

A crisis committee is a small Model United Nations committee, consisting of approximately 15-25 delegates. A General Assembly can have 100+ countries debating to resolve issues such as an Ebola outbreak, mistreatment of prisoners in penitentiaries, renewable energy, etc. On the other hand, crisis committees can be historical, current day, or even based in fantasy. Usually, delegates in crisis committees represent some sort of cabinet, convention, or symposium.

## *Crisis Committee Mechanics*

A crisis committee can be slightly more challenging than a GA or GAP at MUNCH. However, all of the additional elements in a crisis that aren't found in GAs or GAPs only add excitement. In a GA or GAP, delegates prepare for two to three topics that they are informed of in their background guide. For a crisis delegate, the process of preparation is a bit different. A crisis committee's background guide will provide the historical and chronological context a delegate needs to participate in committee. They will be given a character/figure they need to represent and research. Once you arrive to committee, you will debate with others in the committee to find solutions for the conflicts you find most pressing. However, you will also be thrown crises in the form of news updates or live reenactments that you must respond to. Since you did not prepare for these crisis updates ahead of time, the crisis committee will challenge you to think on your feet.

Now comes the additional element: crisis notes! Once committee begins and delegates are given the first crisis update, you may find yourself publicly debating the topic of the crisis update presented. However, deep down, you may feel that you would rather privately investigate the matter. Maybe you don't trust your fellow delegates. Maybe something said in the crisis update leads you to suspect that there is more in play than meets the eye. This is when you write a crisis note.

A crisis note is a way for you to covertly push your secret agenda in a crisis committee, without letting the other delegates know what you are up to. You can write crisis notes and work on your covert plans, and debate publically in committee through moderated caucuses at the same time. To write a crisis note at MUNCH, you will use the "two-pad" system.

Upon your arrival at MUNCH, your adviser will receive 2 legal pads for each crisis delegate. When you come to committee, bring these legal pads with you! Write the name of the person/country you are representing on the first page of BOTH of these legal pads in big letters. When you wish to write a crisis note, you will flip to the first empty page, and write your note. Once you have written your crisis note, you will pass your entire legal pad to the front of the room. **DO NOT rip pages out of the legal pad.** Each committee has a Crisis Director with several staffers, and their sole purpose is to respond to your crisis notes and provide the committee with crisis updates. Every 15-20 minutes, a crisis staffer will come to your room to take any legal pads with crisis notes that have not been responded to, and they will return pads that have been responded to. This is how you work on your personal crisis arc; you write a note, send it to the crisis staff, they respond, you get your note back, you repeat. The benefit of a two-pad system is that once you have sent one of your pads out of the room, you can write another crisis note in the meantime in the second pad so that it is ready when the crisis staff comes back to collect more notes. Keep in mind the following:

1. You can only have ONE legal pad of crisis notes out at a time. If the crisis staff sees that they have both of your pads, it will assuredly take them longer to respond to all of the crisis notes.
2. Try to keep each crisis note within a page. The longer your crisis note, the longer it takes for crisis staff to read and respond adequately.
3. With that in mind, be patient. Your crisis staff has maybe a total of six individuals responding to the notes of over 20 delegates at a time. MUNCH will try its best to

- keep the turnaround time for crisis notes to 15-20 minutes. However, we ask you keep your crisis notes to a page to avoid the crisis staff from getting backed up.
4. You are more than welcome to bring your own legal pads to MUNCH. However, all pads for all delegates must be left with MUNCH overnight, so we can ensure that delegates are not writing notes outside of committee. Furthermore, each delegate can only have a maximum of two crisis pads.
  5. Private directives and joint private directives can be written in these pads and sent to crisis. To learn more about these, read our **Directives and Resolutions** guide.

The two-pad system is efficient because it allows for your crisis notes to be organized. Since you don't have a million loose notes all over the place with small scribbled responses, you can always flip through your pads to remember how your crisis arc is going, and your crisis staff can also flip through if they need to remember your crisis arc.

## *A Good Crisis Note*

Good crisis notes are detailed and organized. They are creative and interesting. They ask for things that are realistic given your position and portfolio powers. They build up towards your goals. So, for example, if your position is the Director of Parks and Recreation in Pawnee, Indiana, in a committee revolving around small-town politics, don't attempt to immediately overthrow the American federal government in the span of a single crisis note. It's unrealistic, and quite impossible given your power and influence. However, by writing a series of crisis notes that work towards establishing important connections, investigating certain mysteries, acquiring funds, securing protection for your assets, developing technologies, etc., you may find that over time you secretly have more power than several others in committee.

**Here is another example.** I am a student attending MUNCH, and I am in a crisis committee revolving around the civil rights movement in Birmingham, 1963. I am given the role of Allison Winthrop, a school teacher. As a delegate I have prepared for my role and gotten in the mindset of what it was like to be an African-American female school teacher in Alabama in 1963. I have read the background guide. But five minutes into committee, a crisis update was given, notifying the committee about the state of high tensions in the community. The end of the crisis update mentioned something about rumors of secret meetings occurring somewhere in town for people interested in

desegregation in public schools. That sounds perfect! As Allison Winthrop, I am very interested in attending those meetings, however I remember that I am a public school teacher, and if my attendance at such a meeting was discovered, I could be risking my safety. I decide that I wish to send a friend to an interest meeting, so as a delegate, I choose to do the following: in a moderated caucus, I make it clear that although I support the desegregation of public schools, I will not attend a secret meeting somewhere in town. However, I will write a CRISIS NOTE to the crisis staff in the form of a letter to my best friend, asking her to find out whatever she can and meet me for dinner to discuss what she learned. Here I have found a creative workaround to a problem, I have convinced other delegates of something while secretly doing another thing no one else has knowledge of, and I have created a made-up best friend for my crisis note, establishing a relationship I can use later in another crisis note. It is the responsibility of the crisis staff at this point to send you a response to your letter, and they will play the role of your best friend and give you some information you requested as well.

This is essentially how crisis works. Delegates secretly acquire knowledge and resources to work towards a personal goal they wish to achieve by the end of the conference. However, it is important to be descriptive in your crisis notes! Here is why; on the following page, we have an example of a good crisis note. In this scenario, pretend that you are the Minister of Health in your committee, and you are writing to a confidant you made up, named "Rogan." This note is an example of a good crisis notes because it provides a back story with detailed instructions for a plan. There is a greeting, and a signature at the end. Of course, the note could definitely contain more details, but you may find that executing your plans in segments reduces the chance of the crisis staff giving you a response indicating that you have only partially succeeded.

Following the good crisis note is an example of a bad crisis note. In this example, pretend that you have the position of Barack Obama in your committee. As you can see, this note has countless faults. The note is very small, and lacks any detail. The delegate did not write why they wanted to send 2,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, they did not describe where in Afghanistan, and they addressed the letter simply to the US Government.

If you have more questions about how crisis work, it would be a great idea to email your Chair or Crisis Director. You will have access to their email once your committee's background guide is up on the MUNCH website in early January.

## EXAMPLE OF A GOOD CRISIS NOTE

Dear Rogan,

To adjust for the challenges posed by our current crises, I need you to oversee the following changes to properly address the unique health challenges posed to our offices:

1. Set up camps across the country to house internally displaced persons from the resulting conflict, and route all sanitation, medicine, and food aid provision through our offices,
2. To ensure that our troops have the proper level of ability to administer field medicine, place 1 field medic for every 50 troops in the field.
3. Reach out to the United States State Department requesting vaccinations and medical professionals to combat Spattergroit before it becomes a major international health crisis and destabilizes the region. Allow them to place advisors in our camps if they are willing to commit to aiding us.

Best,

Minister of Health

## EXAMPLE OF A BAD CRISIS NOTE

To: The US government

From: Barack Obama

Send 2,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.

Example adapted from Best Delegate

<https://bestdelegate.com/the-three-crisis-notes-to-send-at-the-beginning-of-any-model-un-crisis-committee/>