MIR 2017 Writing Guide

The McGill International Review (MIR) is a student-run IRSAM publication dedicated to high-quality research in international relations and affairs, featuring both a daily online website and an annual academic journal. Check out our blogs, featured stories, videos, and more at **https://mironline.ca**! The MIR Editors-in-Chief will be hosting a workshop on political journalism, in both online and academic platforms. Come check it out!

How Do I Structure My Writing?

Too often, writers begin their work without knowing where they want to end up. Crafting a cohesive paper or article requires precision and constant attention to detail, wherein each constituent element services your central idea in some way. Utilizing a *consistent*, formal tone throughout and retaining a level of professionalism demonstrates careful consideration of a complex issue's many facets and disparate perspectives. Here is an ideal structure that we suggested to the McGill International Review Staff.

➢ **Introduction**
The introduction provides a broad outline of your argument, with a clear thesis statement and brief reference to the supporting points you will touch on later in the piece. Make sure it answers all the five W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and transitions nicely into the How, which is fleshed out more fully in the body.

➢ **Body**
The body is where you convince readers of your argument's validity and relevance. Think of each paragraph as a self-contained mini-essay, where the topic sentence introduces a new point or further develops a previous one by providing additional evidence. In strong analytical pieces, the writer strikes a coherent balance between exposition and explanation, laying out the pertinent facts and background information while contextualizing what they mean and building towards a point.

➢ **Conclusion**
The conclusion is a neat summation of your overarching themes and, if applicable, a brief prognosis for the future of your subject matter. End on an insightful thought that epitomizes your motivation for writing the piece, whether it be an article or an academic

paper. This can be more of a normative statement than a simple reiteration of your thesis. As one of our senior editors is fond of saying, if you don't picture a mic drop at the end, you've done something wrong!

Is This a Good Source?

In Model United Nations research, school work and journalism, you should adopt one simple doctrine: cite, cite, cite! However, even experienced writers and editors often find it difficult to determine what are good sources. Here are our best tips:

➢ **Context is key.**
Any daily news publications, government agencies, journal article or primary documents are great sources. Websites like *The Huffington Post, Jacobin, The Intercept, Reason* and *Vice*—which frequently employ alternative journalism styles, oscillate between polemical opinion pieces and more rigorous approaches, and may even carry an explicit political agenda—are risky, but they can still be reliable depending on the situation.

➢ **Zimdars is your best friend!**
Melissa Zimdars, a communications professor at Merrimack College in the United States, started a journalism project with her graduate students that compiles a regularly-updated list of over 1000 *False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and Satirical "News" Sources* as well as a list of reliable news and political websites. She also provides a list of tips to determine whether a source is credible. Article titles and domain names, "About Us" descriptions, writing style, aesthetic design of the site, and social media activity can all be useful tip-offs for any given organization's ulterior motives. You can check out the website here!