



GRADE 6+

## The U.S. Senate | Lesson Plan

What are the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. Senate?

Students learn why and how the U.S. Senate was established, discover how senators are elected, and list their qualifications and responsibilities.

### Learning Objectives:

- Explore why the U.S. Senate was established alongside the U.S. House of Representatives.
- List the qualifications of American citizens who may be elected as U.S. Senators.
- Identify how senators are elected and what their responsibilities are.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Senator:** an elected representative of the Legislative Branch who proposes and votes for laws for a six-year term of service
- **17th Amendment:** Constitutional amendment changing the power to elect senators from state legislatures to the popular vote of citizens
- **Filibuster:** blocking legislation by delaying or preventing a vote on a bill, resolution, amendment, or other measure
- **Majority Leader:** the leader of the majority party in the Senate who serves as the spokesperson for his party's position on the issues, determines legislative strategy and has a major role in committee assignments
- **Minority Leader:** the leader of the minority party in the U.S. Senate

**Educational Standards:** History, Civics, Government, Western Civilization, American Values

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate*.



Scan to watch video.

- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate*. ([Download PDF](#))

## Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

### Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Ask: *What do you think would happen if I had a balance and put a brick on one side and a feather on the other? Why would that happen?* Allow students to share answers.
2. Say: *One side of the balance would drop because the object was heavier on that side than on the other side. The side with the lighter object would be lifted.*
3. Say: *When the Founding Fathers first conceived how the U.S. government should function, they had concerns about balancing the interests of larger and smaller states. They feared that larger states, like the brick, would dominate the government's interests and leave the smaller states, like the feather, largely unrepresented.*
4. Say: *How much do you know about the U.S. Senate? Let's find out.*
5. Display a copy of *Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate Worksheet* on a screen in the classroom.
6. Have a student read each statement aloud and attempt to answer them as a class. Invite students to share out loud (or do this part independently).

### Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. State: *Let's play a fun game and see how many answers we got right.*
2. Watch the video.
3. Pause after each question and allow students to try to answer.
4. Play the video to reveal if they were correct or incorrect.

### Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. Collect as a formative assessment or discuss in class.

## Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 mins.)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.