



GRADES 6+

Elections in the U.S. | Lesson Plan

How do elections work in the United States?

Students learn about why we use elections to choose officials, how elections are conducted, and the purpose of different types of elections within the voting cycle.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the history of why the American people use elections to choose officials.
- Identify the process of how elections are conducted within the voting cycle.
- Distinguish the different types of elections and their purposes.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Midterm elections:** elections held halfway through a president's 4-year term, which mainly involve electing members of Congress
- **Primary elections:** first elections in an election cycle in which people choose their political party's candidates from whom the eventual winner will be chosen
- **26th Amendment:** Constitutional amendment which lowered the voting age of American citizens from 21 to 18

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

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: Elections in the U.S.*



Scan to watch video.

- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Elections in the U.S.* ([Download PDF](#))

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: Ice Cream Elections (10 mins.)

1. Ask: *What is your favorite flavor of ice cream? Why do you think it is the best?* Allow the class to share answers.
2. Ask: *If we were to choose our class' favorite flavor, what might we do to choose fairly? We might have an "ice cream election," right? Why would this way be fairer than if one person chose the flavor?* Allow the class to share answers.
3. Say: *How much do you know about how we use elections in the U.S. to choose our officials? Let's find out.*
4. Display a copy of Street Smarts: Elections in the U.S. Worksheet on a screen in the classroom.
5. 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.