



The Executive Branch | Lesson Plan

What is the role of the Executive Branch and how is it structured?

Students learn about the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the Executive Branch of the United States. They'll join Uncle Sam as he quizzes kid contestants about the topic and complete a fun follow-along worksheet.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the roles and powers of the U.S. President as outlined by the U.S. Constitution, focusing on the Executive Branch's responsibilities.
- Explain the process and significance of the Electoral College in presidential elections.
- Identify the constitutional requirements for a person to become President of the United States.
- Analyze the impact of the 22nd Amendment on the presidency and how it shapes the tenure of U.S. Presidents.
- Evaluate the role of the President's Cabinet and its influence on national governance and policy-making.

Key Vocabulary:

- **The Executive Branch:** A branch of the U.S. government which consists of the President, Vice President, and Cabinet. Its main responsibility is to enforce the law and lead the country.
- **The President:** The senior leader of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government. This person is the highest-ranking government official in the United States. He is considered the leader of the country and, often, "the most powerful man in the world."
- **Veto:** The act of a president to reject a bill passed by Congress.
- **Cabinet:** A group of trusted senior advisors who oversee different government departments.
- **Electoral College:** A group of electors given power by the Constitution to elect the President of the United States.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Political Science, Liberty, Freedom

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Executive Branch* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Executive Branch* (Click [Here](#))

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm Up: (10 mins.)

1. Begin the class with a quick true/false knowledge check for facts about the Executive Branch of the government. Give each student a "True" and "False" card that they can hold up. Read each statement to the class:
 - The President can declare war on other countries. (False; only Congress has the power to declare war, but the President can direct military actions.)
 - The President appoints members of the Cabinet to help advise on various things like defense and education. (True.)
 - The President can make laws. (False; the President can sign bills into law or veto them but cannot write them.)
 - The President serves as the Commander in Chief of the military. (True.)
 - The President has the power to dissolve Congress and call for new elections. (False.)
 - The President can negotiate treaties with other nations. (True; but the Senate must ratify them.)
2. Transition to an introduction to the Executive Branch. Explain that this branch is responsible for enforcing laws and implementing national policy. Briefly introduce key vocabulary to the class on the whiteboard.
3. Explain that "Commander in Chief" is a special role of President of the United States. This title grants ultimate authority over the military forces of the United States, as well as directing military operations and national defense strategies.
4. As "Chief Executive," the President enforces federal laws and appoints federal officials, including Cabinet members and Supreme Court justices, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The President also has the power to issue executive orders, which are directions to manage the federal government's operations.
5. As "Chief Diplomat," the President manages international relations, negotiates treaties with other countries, is again subject to Senate approval, and represents the U.S. abroad.
6. Explain that these powers are granted to the President by the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution also defines the requirements someone must meet in order to become president. They must be a natural-born citizen of the U.S., at least 35 years old, and have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.
7. Mention the term limits. According to the 22nd Amendment, ratified in 1951, a president can serve a maximum of two 4-year terms.
8. Explain that the Electoral College controls how the President is elected. Each state has a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress, and most states awards the electoral votes to the candidate who wins the popular vote in that state.
9. Hand out the "Street Smarts: The Executive Branch Worksheet" and prepare the episode for display.

Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. Watch the video *Street Smarts: The Executive Branch*. Pause after key segments to discuss and relate to warm-up topics.
2. Ask students to fill out their worksheets as the video progresses. Utilize pauses to address specifically:
 - What are the main roles and responsibilities of the President of the United States?
 - Why is the President referred to as the Commander in Chief?
 - What qualifications must one meet to become President?
 - What is the purpose of the Electoral College?
 - Can the President make laws?
 - What are the term limits of the presidency?
 - How does the President's role as Chief Diplomat affect U.S. relations with other countries?
 - Who are the President's Cabinet members, and what role do they play in the government?

Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Summarize the main points covered in the lesson.
2. Briefly discuss how U.S. Presidents have inspired Americans to safeguard liberty and promote justice throughout this young nation's tenure as a country. Ask students to share something new they learned in the lesson.
3. Conclude by reminding students of the profound impact that each individual can have on the fabric of the nation. Let them know that each one of them carries the spirit of our nation's Founders - a spirit of innovation, resilience, and commitment to liberty and justice. As future leaders and voters in this republic, they have the power to uphold the values we cherish.

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.