



GRADES 6+

## The House of Representatives | Lesson Plan

What are the responsibilities of the House of Representatives?

Students will understand the unique role and significance of the House of Representatives within the U.S. legislative system, including its historical context, qualifications for membership, and distinct responsibilities compared to the U.S. Senate.

### Learning Objectives:

- Explore the history of how the House of Representatives was formed.
- Discover the qualifications of a member of the House of Representatives to be elected.
- List the roles and responsibilities of the House of Representatives within the legislative branch of government.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **House of Representatives:** the elected body of Congress that proposes and votes for laws and directly represents the will of the people
- **Legislative Branch:** the branch of government to which the House of Representatives belongs, along with the Senate
- **Bicameral:** containing two parts, such as Congress with an upper house (Senate) and a lower house (House of Representatives)
- **Speaker of the House:** the title of the leader of the House of Representatives

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.7, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.6, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.SL.5

**Academic Subject Areas:** Political Science, Civics, America

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The House of Representatives*.
- Fact Sheet: *Street Smarts: The House of Representatives*
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The House of Representatives* ([Download PDF](#))



scan to watch episode

## Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

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

1. Pose a question to your students, asking them to imagine they have to pick a classmate to represent them to the school principal. What qualities would they look for? What skills should this person have and why?
2. Explain that the House of Representatives serves a similar function on a larger scale: they're elected to represent the views of their constituents.
3. Ask students how familiar they are with the responsibilities of the House of Representatives. Distribute the Fact Sheet to the students and review the facts with them.
4. Display the *Street Smarts: The House of Representatives* worksheet on the classroom screen. Have students take turns reading statements and guessing the answers collectively or individually.

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

1. Explain that the students will watch a video and play a game to see how much they already know.
2. Play the educational video on the House of Representatives.
3. Pause the video after each segment to let students guess the answers to the content-related questions.
4. Continue playing the video to confirm whether the students' answers were correct.
5. Ask students to consider current events or issues that they care about. How might the House of Representatives play a role in these issues? This can help students connect the lesson to the world around them.

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

1. Invite students to discuss some of the most surprising or interesting facts they learned about the House of Representatives. This will serve as a recap and highlight what caught the students' attention.
2. Have students write down one thing they learned that they didn't know before and one question they still have. Collect these for insight into what to cover in future lessons or to address in the next 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.

# The House of Representatives | Fact Sheet

## Key Vocabulary:

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- **Legislative Branch:** the branch of government to which the House of Representatives belongs, along with the Senate
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## Historical Context:

- **Connecticut Compromise:** The House was created due to this compromise in 1787 to balance the interests of both large and small states.
- **Virginia and New Jersey Plans:** These were the two competing proposals that led to the compromise, with the Virginia Plan favoring large states and the New Jersey Plan favoring small states.

## Qualifications for Membership:

- **Age:** Must be at least 25 years old.
- **Citizenship:** Must have been a U.S. citizen for at least seven years.
- **State Residency:** Must inhabit the state they wish to represent.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Direct Election:** The House is the only federal body directly elected by the American people since its formation in 1789.
- **Frequency of Elections:** Members are elected every two years, making them more accountable to the populace.
- **Proposing Legislation:** One of the main roles is to propose laws ranging from tax legislation to federal budget allocations.
- **Additional Powers:** The House can conduct investigations, override presidential vetoes, and has the sole power to initiate impeachment proceedings against federal officials.

## Leadership:

- **Speaker of the House:** The Speaker is elected by the entire House and is usually from the majority party. They set the legislative agenda and assign House members to committees.
- **House Majority and Minority Leaders:** These are the leaders of the majority and minority parties in the House, responsible for planning their respective parties' legislative agendas.

## Interesting Facts:

- **First Speaker:** Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania was the first Speaker of the House.
- **Historic Members:** Joseph Rainey was the first African-American to serve in the House, and Jeannette Rankin was the first woman.