



# The U.S. Senate | Lesson Plan

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

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Students will 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:** CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

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

## What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate* (Click [Here](#))
- Whiteboard and markers

## Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Start the class by introducing a game or a role-play scenario involving two teams with unequal numbers. One team has more members than the other, mimicking the imbalance between larger and smaller states. Have students briefly compete in a simple task or debate a simple issue to see how numbers influence outcomes.

Scan to watch episode:



- Allow each team to vote on a school issue, such as more homework, uniforms, or a longer school year. Explain that each team must vote in unison.
2. Following the activity, discuss how the team with more members had an advantage (or not) and relate this to why the U.S. Senate was structured with two senators per state, regardless of the state's size. This sets a tangible context for why balancing representation in Congress is crucial.
  3. Ask students what they know about the U.S. Senate and how they think it might differ from the House of Representatives in terms of state representation.
  4. Distribute the "Street Smarts: The U.S. Senate Worksheet" and go over it briefly, setting expectations for what they will learn about the Senate's role, the election process, and responsibilities.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Instruct students to complete the worksheet independently as a review of the lesson's content.
2. Decide whether to collect the worksheets for assessment or use them as a basis for a class discussion to reinforce the learning objectives.

**Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)**

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