



The Electoral College | Lesson Plan

Why does the U.S. use the Electoral College to elect its president, and how does this system affect our elections?

Students will gain insights into the Electoral College's mechanisms, including how electors are selected, the significance of achieving a majority of electoral votes, and the procedures followed when no candidate secures a majority.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the components and functions of the Electoral College, including the number of electors required to win the presidency.
- Describe the process by which electors are chosen and the steps they follow to cast their votes for president and vice president.
- Explain the rationale behind using the Electoral College instead of a direct popular vote for electing the president.
- Analyze the potential scenarios in which the House of Representatives would determine the president if no candidate achieves a majority in the Electoral College.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Electoral College in reflecting the democratic principle of "one person, one vote" and its impact on presidential campaigns and voter engagement.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Electoral College:** A group of people appointed to vote for the president and vice president of the United States, representing the votes of their respective states.
- **Majority:** More than half of the total. In the context of the Electoral College, a candidate must win a majority of the 538 electoral votes available to be elected president, which currently stands at 270 votes.
- **Electors:** Members of the Electoral College who are chosen by their state to vote for the president and vice president based on the popular vote outcome in their state.
- **Popular Vote:** The total votes cast by citizens in a general election, as opposed to the electoral votes cast by electors in the Electoral College.
- **Contingent Election:** A procedure used when no presidential candidate wins a majority in the Electoral College. The decision of electing the president is passed to the House of Representatives.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Political Science, Civics, America

Scan to watch episode:



Materials Needed:

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

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)**Warm-Up:** (20 minutes)

1. Briefly explain that the Electoral College is a unique system used to elect the U.S. president, not a physical college.
2. Describe an analogy for students: Imagine your school decides to elect a class president not by the total number of individual votes from students but through a system similar to the Electoral College. Each classroom represents a state. Each classroom (state) is assigned a certain number of votes, not exactly proportional to the number of students but influenced by it. Students in each classroom vote for who they want as class president. Instead of counting all votes equally across the school, the winner in each classroom earns all the “electoral votes” for that classroom. This is similar to how most states awarded their electoral votes on a winner-takes-all basis.
3. After presenting the scenario, discuss with students how this system might influence candidates' strategies. For example, candidates might spend more time in larger classrooms to secure their votes, similar to candidates focusing on swing states or states with large numbers of electoral votes.
4. Briefly explain that the Electoral College is a unique system used to elect the U.S. president, not a physical college.
5. Define 'Electors' as individuals appointed to vote in the Electoral College, representing their state's voters.
6. Discuss the number 270, explaining that it is the majority of 538 total electoral votes needed to win the presidency.
7. Clarify that while citizens vote for president, they are technically voting for a slate of electors who pledge to vote for that candidate.
8. Introduce the concept of a contingent election, which occurs if no candidate reaches a majority in the Electoral College, leading the House of Representatives to decide the election.
9. Explain that today, students will watch a game-show-style video to learn about the Electoral College and its importance.
10. Give each student a copy of the “Street Smarts: The Electoral College Worksheet.”

Watch and Learn: (20 minutes)

1. Play the video. Pause after key points to discuss and ensure comprehension.
2. As students watch, have them fill out the worksheet, which includes sections on identifying electors, understanding the majority requirement, and the role of the popular vote.

Wrap-Up: (15 minutes)

1. After the video, quickly go over the worksheet responses with the class to ensure understanding and correct any misconceptions.
2. Engage the students in a discussion about why the Electoral College was created and how it affects the fairness and outcome of presidential elections.
 - Questions might include: Does the Electoral College give all states fair representation? How might the Electoral College influence where presidential candidates campaign?
3. Call to Action: Encourage students to consider how understanding the Electoral College affects their perception of the voting process and their responsibilities as voters.
4. Collect the completed worksheets to assess understanding and engagement.
5. Consider a follow-up assignment where students can write a brief essay or opinion piece on whether the Electoral College should be maintained or abolished, supporting their views with information from the lesson.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (20 minutes)

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