



The Office of Mayor | Lesson Plan

What is a mayor and how do his/her responsibilities contribute to the local government of a town or city?

Students learn about the role of a mayor, his/her responsibilities, and how he/she is selected (or elected) by commissioners or constituents in a city or town's local government.

Learning Objectives:

- List the roles and responsibilities of a mayor within the executive branch of local government.
- Compare and contrast the different types of mayoral governments, such as the commission system, mayor-council system, and council-manager system.
- Explore the mayoral election process, including term limits and responsibilities of the electors (or voters).

Key Vocabulary:

- **Mayor:** An elected (or selected) official in charge of running a town or a city.
- **Commission System:** The least common form of mayoral government, where the voters elect a group of commissioners, and one is chosen to serve as mayor.
- **Mayor-Council System:** A form of mayoral government where the mayor serves as the executive branch and the council serves as the legislative branch.
- **Council-Manager System:** The most common form of mayoral government, where the city council serves as a legislative body and runs overall administration, and the mayor is chosen on a rotational basis.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.7, CCRA.L.6, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.W.7, CCRA.W8

Academic Subject Areas: History, Civics, Government, Western Civilization, American Values

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Office of Mayor* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Office of Mayor* (Click [Here](#))
- Classroom whiteboard and dry-erase markers (or a technology solution if available)

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (10 minutes)

1. Begin with an overview to assess the class's understanding of the role of a mayor in a city or town. Consider asking if students know the name of their own city or



town's mayor and what his/her responsibilities are in the local government. Write the students' responses on the board.

2. Explain that there are three major forms of city government in the United States - The mayor-commission system, the council-manager system, and the mayor-council system. Here is a brief description of each:
 - Mayor-Commission System: This system divides the city's governance among elected commissioners, each of whom heads a specific department (such as public safety or finance) while also collectively making policy decisions as the city council. Typically, one of these commissioners is also designated as the mayor.
 - Council-Manager System: In this system, the city council hires a manager to execute laws and run the city's day-to-day operations, similar to how a CEO runs a corporation. The mayor is often a ceremonial leader with limited formal powers. This system is intended to separate politics from administration.
 - Mayor-Council System: One of the oldest forms of city government in the United States, this system divides functions between an elected council and an elected mayor, providing a clear separation of powers. Cities decide whether to have a strong or weak mayor, depending on specific needs.
3. Discussion Prompts:
 - What is the difference between local and federal levels of government?
 - Why is it important to have both a local and a federal government?
 - What types of issues might arise if local decisions were made by someone who did not live in the area?
 - What types of decisions might a mayor be asked to make on behalf of his/her constituents?
 - What qualities do you think a good mayor should possess in order to do his/her job well?
 - What do you know about the commission system, mayor-council system, and council-manager system?
4. Display a copy of the "Street Smarts: The Office of Mayor Worksheet" on a screen in the classroom. Explain that students will have the opportunity to guess some answers now and check to see if their answers are correct as they watch the video.

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. Conclude the lesson by engaging students in a reflective discussion about the role of a mayor and the significance of local government.
2. Prompt students to share their key takeaways from the lesson, focusing on what they learned about the responsibilities of a mayor and how local government functions.
3. Encourage students to consider how the concepts explored in the lesson relate to their own communities and civic engagement.
4. Consider collecting the worksheet as a formative assessment.

Extension Activity:

As a class or in small groups, list the qualifications for a person seeking to be a mayor. Considerations may include age, location, character qualities, and political experience. Ask students to give reasons why the qualifications they chose are important to the position.

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.