



The Office of Vice President | Lesson Plan

What are the responsibilities of the Vice President of the United States?

Students will understand the constitutional role, electoral process, and key responsibilities of the Office of Vice President of the United States, recognizing its importance in the U.S. government structure.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the changes in the electoral process for the Vice President from the original system to the current system under the 12th Amendment.
- Describe the constitutional duties of the Vice President, including their role as President of the Senate and the first in the line of succession.
- Recognize instances where the Vice President has assumed the Presidency and understand the constitutional provisions that facilitate this transition.
- Understand the significance of the Vice President's role in ensuring governmental continuity, particularly through historical precedents.
- Explain the significance of the 25th Amendment in defining the procedure for presidential disability and succession.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Vice President:** The second-highest executive officer of a government; the officer next in rank to a president who serves as president in the president's absence.
- **Natural Born Citizen:** A person who is entitled to U.S. citizenship by birth or at birth, either by being born "in" the United States or under its jurisdiction.
- **25th Amendment:** An amendment to the U.S. Constitution that, among other things, establishes procedures for filling a vacancy in the office of the vice president and for responding to presidential disabilities.
- **Electoral College:** A body of electors established by the United States Constitution, which is formed every four years for the sole purpose of electing the president and vice president.
- **25th Amendment:** An amendment to the United States Constitution that addresses succession to the presidency and establishes procedures for filling a vacancy in the office of the vice president, as well as responding to presidential disabilities.

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

Materials Needed:

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Office of Vice President* (Watch [Here](#))

Scan to watch episode:



- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Office of Vice President* (Click [Here](#))
- Copies of relevant sections of the Constitution relevant to the vice presidency
- Copies of the 12th and 25th Amendments to the Constitution

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Begin by discussing leadership and responsibility. Ask questions such as, "What characteristics should a leader possess?"
2. Distribute copies of the Constitution that include information about the office of vice president. Have students read and highlight the qualifications and responsibilities the office covers.
3. Discuss the Framers' intentions behind these provisions.
 - Succession to the presidency
 - Presiding officer of the senate
 - Check on presidential power
 - Political stability and unity
 - Qualified government official
4. Have students read and highlight relevant sections for the 12th and 25th Amendments. Ask students to summarize what they have learned orally.
5. Distribute the "Street Smarts: Office of Vice President Worksheet" and have them fill out what they know.
6. Let them know they will have an opportunity to play along with contestants in the Street Smarts game-show-style video next.

Watch and Learn: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the "Street Smarts: The Office of Vice President" video. Encourage students to take notes on key points related to the vice president's roles discussed in the video.
2. Pause the video at strategic points to engage students in what they have learned and check for understanding. Encourage students to check their responses against the video.

Wrap-Up: (15 minutes)

1. After the video, facilitate a class discussion with questions such as, "How does the role of the Vice President serve the principles of checks and balances?" and "What impact does the 25th Amendment have on the stability of governance?"
2. Conclude by reflecting on the importance of understanding these roles not just as historical facts but as living elements of our civic structure that affect current and future governance.
3. Collect the completed worksheets to assess understanding and participation. Evaluate student participation in discussions for understanding and engagement.

Optional Extension Activity:

Assign a project where students research a vice president who assumed the presidency and analyze their impact in terms of constitutional interpretation and national direction. There are nine U.S. Vice Presidents who assumed the presidency, either due to the death, resignation, or incapacitation of the sitting president. These transitions have provided various challenges and opportunities for new leadership, each unique in its constitutional and political implications. Students can research these figures to understand how each navigated their unexpected ascensions to power, the decisions they made, and how they are interpreted today in terms of their constitutional and national impacts. They are:

- John Tyler (1841) - Assumed presidency after the death of President William Henry Harrison. Tyler was the first to set the precedent that a Vice President becomes President for the remainder of the term, not just an acting president.
- Millard Fillmore (1850) - Became President after the death of Zachary Taylor.
- Andrew Johnson (1865) - Assumed the presidency after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.
- Chester A. Arthur (1881) - Became President following the assassination of James Garfield.
- Theodore Roosevelt (1901) - Assumed the presidency after the assassination of William McKinley.
- Calvin Coolidge (1923) - Became President upon the death of Warren G. Harding.
- Harry S. Truman (1945) - Assumed the presidency after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Lyndon B. Johnson (1963) - Became President following the assassination of John F. Kennedy.
- Gerald Ford (1974) - Became President after Richard Nixon's resignation, the only Vice President to assume the presidency as a result of resignation.

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.