

Civics and Government for Future Voters Grades 5 - 8

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These free lesson plans are provided for your grade 5 - 8 classroom by the Office of the Secretary of State.

Each lesson involves group work and builds on the previous lesson. The final lesson involves taking a position on an issue and defending that position. Subjects covered, an overview and the EALRs are listed as well as the materials you'll need and an estimated time to complete.

We really want to hear from you! If you have a classroom experience involving these lesson plans, or if you have a suggestion, send us an email at voteroutreach@sos.wa.gov .

The Importance of Voting Lesson 1 of 5

Grades	5 - 8
Subjects	Fairness, decision making, voting
Overview	Engaging students in discussion about how to make decisions as a way to help them with higher order thinking skills.
EALRs	1.2.2; 1.4.1
Material needed	Student handout on page 4
Time required	30 - 45 minutes. Students should complete activities 1 and 2. Activity 3 is optional.
Discussion	<p>Tell students that the class will be involved in a project about the importance of voting. Inform students that they will be working in groups of five (if feasible) on the voting project, with each team having a specific subject to cover. Tell them also that each team will have the following members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A Manager to keep everyone on task;2. A Scribe to take notes so good ideas are not lost;3. A Reporter, who will inform the class about the group's progress;4. Participants, who are all other students that share their ideas and give feedback on ideas. <p>Have a discussion about fair decision making. Ask students to determine the "fairest" way to form the groups/teams. Generate alternatives and ask them to vote on the fairest method. Note: The fairest way might not be the way students would like it to be. If they have difficulty deciding what is meant by fair, let them know that this is why we have elections. People have different ideas about a lot of things, and in our country, differences are often settled (or at least softened) by voting.</p>
Activity 1	<p>Have the groups discuss the following questions. Handout on page 4.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some people vote regularly. Others vote rarely, if at all. Why is this?2. People ages 18 - 24 vote least. If people in this age group want to be treated as adults, why don't they vote?3. If voting is so important, should people be fined or punished in some way for not voting?4. What happens when only a few people vote?5. What would encourage more people to vote?

The Importance of Voting Lesson 1 of 5

Activity 2

Ask groups to come up with a single statement about the importance of voting. They will write this statement on their handout. Share the following examples with your class.

1. Everyone should vote.
2. Voting is everyone's duty.
3. If you don't vote, don't complain.
4. Voting isn't just a right, it's a responsibility.
5. Voting is cool.

Throughout the project, students will be sharing their beliefs and viewpoints on the importance of voting and will be eliciting similar information from others. One thing to look for is how students' beliefs, viewpoints, and interest levels change as they get further into the project. For example:

- o "Until I got into this project I didn't understand the importance of school board elections."
- o "I didn't know that because of the way people voted our county has a different sales tax than some other counties."
- o "Until I started interviewing people I thought all adults voted."

Activity 3

Have each of the five groups report its position statement and ask them to discuss how they learned to handle conflict, cooperate, and depend on each other to perform their assigned task.

Ask students to describe one important thing they learned, and how it will affect their future voting behavior. Doing this orally will have a greater impact than doing it in writing. Students can hear each other (which is reinforcing), and the teacher can make summarizing remarks along the way, e.g., "So at least four of you are going to encourage your parents to vote more often," or "Many of you are looking forward to the day you can register to vote."

During the project, use language such as "When you are a voter," "After you become a registered voter," and "When you become an active citizen-voter." The purpose here is to reinforce the idea that every student will someday be voting.

At the conclusion of the lesson, ask students to provide examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and nations.

The Importance of Voting Lesson 1 of 5

Group Name

Manager

Scribe

Reporter

Participants

Group Discussion

1. Some people vote regularly. Others vote rarely, if at all. Why is this?
2. People from ages 18 - 24 vote least. If people in this age group want to be treated as adults, why don't they vote?
3. If voting is so important, should people be fined or punished in some way for not voting?
4. What happens when only a few people vote?
5. What kind of campaign would it take to encourage more people to vote?

Position Statement

Come up with a single statement about the importance of voting. Your teacher will give you examples. Write your position statement below. Your Reporter will share this position with the class.

Polling the Community Lesson 2 of 5

Grades	5 - 8
Subjects	Historical roots of voting
Overview	Discuss the roots of voting in our nation. Things were different!
EALRs	1.1.1; 1.4.1
Material needed	Student handout on page 6
Time required	45 - 60 minutes. Students should complete activities 1. Activity 2 is optional.
Discussion	<p>Tell your groups about the following 4 amendments to the U.S. Constitution but do not tell them when they were ratified, what number they are, or the order in which they were ratified. Ask your students to guess the 3 in order in which they were ratified</p> <p>An amendment prohibits the denial of the vote based on race. (15th) An amendment recognizes that women have the right to vote. (19th) An amendment prohibits poll taxes. This was civil rights legislation.(24th) An amendment established the voting age at 18 whereas it had been 21. (26th)</p> <p>Now introduce your students to the following information about the foundations of voting in our society. Discuss why we vote in our nation. This discussion will reveal the right answers to the introductory activity.</p> <p>The Declaration of Independence “..governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish...”</p> <p>The Washington State Constitution The 5th amendment guarantees Washington women the right to vote before the U.S. Constitution does the same for all women.</p> <p>The Voting Rights Act of 1965 This act specifically outlawed practices, such as literacy tests, that were used to keep African Americans from voting.</p>
Activity 1	<p>Ask students to use the handout on page 6 to generate a list of people they will poll about the historical importance of voting. This could include parents or relatives, friends, older students (especially high school students who are or are about to turn 18), any adult in the school, elected officials, business people, or government workers.</p> <p>Suggested Questions Do you vote? Did you know that women in Washington voted before women in many other states? Do you know what a poll tax was? Do you know what the voting age is? Do you know why Americans declared themselves independent from Great Britain?</p>
Activity 2	<p>Interdisciplinary Connection: Statistics</p> <p>Have students create charts, and graphs to show voting patterns or responses to their questions. E.g., “48 of the 132 people, or 36%, interviewed by our class said they weren’t registered to vote. Of the 84 who were registered, 50% voted in the last general election. Of the 48 who never registered, 12 were not U.S. citizens and so were not eligible to vote. All told, of the 12 people who were eligible to vote, 42% voted in the last general election.”</p>

Polling the Community Lesson 2 of 5

Group Name

Manager

Scribe

Reporter

Participants

Select People to Poll

Generate a list of people to talk to about the importance of voting as related to your group's topic. Write down the names of the people you'll interview.

Examples:

1. Older siblings, friends, or cousins
2. Parents
3. Aunts/Uncles
4. Parent's friends
5. Elected Officials

Poll Questions

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Conduct Poll and Take Notes

You are responsible for polling a selected number of the people, using the questions that the group has written. Your teacher will tell you how many people to poll. Keep a record of who you talked with and what they said so you can share their answers with your group.

Number of people to interview: _____

To Vote or Not to Vote Lesson 3 of 5

Grades	5 - 8
Subjects	Rights and responsibilities, democratic ideals
Overview	Voting is a democratic ideal that has real impacts on our community
EALRs	1.1.1; 1.2.1; 1.1.2; 1.4.1
Material needed	Student handout on page 8 Optional Activity 3 handout "Find your 1 thing" on page 9
Time required	30 - 45 minutes
Discussion	Discuss democratic ideals such as equality, the rule of law, representative government, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Depending on your students' knowledge level, you may want to discuss the four questions below before you release them to discuss in groups.
Activity 1	Ask groups to discuss the cause and effect relationships of voting or not voting. See hand out on page 8. For example, if the majority of people don't vote, what is the likely impact on the following? <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The democratic ideals of the U.S. Government?2. The way we make, apply and enforce laws?3. Guaranteeing the rights of all citizens?4. What it means to be a good citizen?
Activity 2	Give each group a handout with questions to explore using the chart on their handout. Students will need to duplicate the chart on another piece of paper so they have room to write their answers. You may want to have each group answer one or two of the questions and then share their answers, or you may have each group answer each question.
Activity 3	Talk with your students about how voting is one way to improve their community. There are many other ways. Brainstorm ideas then pass out the find your 1 thing handout from page 9.

To Vote or Not to Vote Lesson 3 of 5

Group Name

Manager

Scribe

Reporter

Participants

Explore Cause and Effect

Discuss cause and effect relationships of voting or not voting. If the majority of people don't vote, what is the likely impact on the following?

1. The democratic ideals of the U.S. Government?
2. The way we make, apply and enforce laws?
4. Guaranteeing the rights of all citizens?
5. What it means to be a good citizen?

Clarify Through Writing

Make a chart like the following on a piece of paper large enough so you'll have room to write.

Issue	What might be the effect on the issue if the majority of the people didn't vote?	What might be the effect on the issue if the majority of people did vote?
The key democratic ideals of our country		
The traits of responsible citizenship		
Elected officials make our laws		
Our form of government		
Individual rights and responsibilities		
The good of the community		



find your thing

What does it mean to be a good citizen? Even one small action can make a big impact and encourage those around you. What is one thing you can do to make your world a better place?

Find your one thing and write it on the hand below. Cut out your hand and put it where everyone can see.

If we all lend a hand, together we can make a difference.

Examples: ***My one thing is...***

turning off the lights
donating one of my toys
washing the dishes one night a week
recycling my cereal boxes
helping my grandparents one weekend
volunteering at the library
using less water
carpooling to school
picking up trash on the playground
growing vegetables for hungry people

What is your one thing?



Glossary of Voting Terms Lesson 4 of 5

Grades	5 - 8
Subjects	Voting and elections
Overview	Students learn to speak the language of voting and elections.
EALRs	1.2.1
Material needed	Student handout on page 11
Time required	Two 30 minute sessions
Activity 1	Give students a list of vocabulary words on page 10 and ask them to create one set of flash cards for every two students (or three students if required). Cards can be made as homework or in class. Use 3 x 5 cards or regular paper cut into squares or rectangles. Students should practice until they know the words well.
Activity 2	Hold an in-class quiz show. Grade the show like an assignment or reward the winners with a few bonus points on their project.

Glossary of Voting Terms Lesson 4 of 5

Vocabulary Flashcards

Use this list of vocabulary words to create one set of flashcards for every two students or as directed by your teacher. Practice in your groups until you know these words well enough to use them in conversation.

General election— A regularly scheduled local, state, or national election in which voters elect officeholders or vote on measures.

— A political party that consistently receives a significant percentage of votes. The two major parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

Top 2 Primary—A form of primary where voters can vote for candidates from any political party. The two candidates who get the most votes in a race in the primary appear on the general election ballot regardless of political party.

Pick-a-Party Primary—A form of primary where voters must select the ballot for one major political party. One candidate from each major political party will appear on the general election.

Presidential Primary—When members of a political party vote to decide who will represent that party on the ballot for President.

President—The Chief Executive of the United States.

Representative—A member of the U.S. House of Representatives or of the Washington State Legislature.

Senator—A member of the U.S. Senate or Washington State Senate.

Congress—The national law-making body of the U.S., consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Legislature — The state law-making body, consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Governor—The chief executive of a state in the U.S.

Judge—A public officer authorized to hear and decide cases in a court of law.

Ballot—A slip or sheet of paper on which a voter marks his or her vote.

Vote by mail—When voters get their ballots in the mail, vote and mail them back to their county elections department.

Majority—A number of voters or votes constituting more than half of the total number.

Plurality—The excess of votes received by the leading candidate over those received by the candidate with the next most votes in an election in which there are three or more candidates.

Electorate—The body of persons entitled to vote in an election.

Polling place—A place where votes are cast in an election.

Campaign—The competition by rival political candidates and organizations for public office.

Elected official—A person who won a political office in an election.

Lobby—A group of persons who work or conduct a campaign to influence members of a law-making body to vote according to the group's interest.

Interdependence—Mutually dependent or depending on each other.

Political party—An organization to gain political power.

Social contract—Implied agreements by which people maintain social order.

Civic duty—The responsibilities of citizenship.

To Make a Better Community Lesson 5 of 5

Grades	5-8
Subjects	Local issues, persuasion, presentations
Overview	Students learn about the many elements of community that are affected by government. They develop arguments.
EALRs	1.1.2; 1.4.1
Material needed	Handout on page 14, research resources as appropriate for your class
Time required	20 minute discussion & student reports; Activity 3 may require several days.
Discussion	<p>Your students will develop arguments for one side of an issue and present these arguments to the class. They will use the vocabulary they learned in lesson 4, the cause and effect reasoning skills they used in lesson 3, and perhaps the data they gathered in lesson 2.</p> <p>After the arguments are presented, have the class hold an election. After the election, discuss the ramifications. When the votes are tallied, the winning sides will have been identified. Remind the students the point of an election isn't to win, it is to create a better society. People who vote are participating in the "discussion" of what is "better."</p> <p>The desired outcomes of this 5-part curriculum are that students will have learned ways to gather information, apply it to their community and create reasoned arguments.</p>
Activity 1	<p>Select issues for your class or let them pick. Assign each group a position on each issue. Be sure to assign both positions for each issue so conflicting positions are presented! It is best to pick an issue that is relevant for your community. Prepare a ballot question for each issue. Here are some examples:</p> <p>Issue: Water rights Position 1: More water should be released from dams to help salmon. Position 2: More water should not be released from dams because it hurts agriculture. Ballot question: Should more water be released from dams?</p> <p>Issue: Energy Position 1: Washington should build more wind farms. Position 2: Washington should not build more wind farms. Ballot question: Should Washington build more wind farms?</p> <p>Issue: Logging Position 1: Clear-cut logging is cost-efficient and should be allowed. Position 2: Clear-cut logging causes flooding and should not be allowed. Ballot question: Should clear-cut logging be encouraged?</p> <p>Issue: Transportation Position 1: Commuters should pay tolls on the roads they use. Position 2: Everyone should pay for roads via existing taxes and not pay tolls. Ballot question: Should commuters have to pay tolls?</p> <p>After topics and positions have been assigned, have your students develop arguments for their position. Use the student handout on page 13.</p>

To Make a Better Community Lesson 5 of 5

Activity 2	Have the groups' reporters present their arguments. Alternately, you may want groups to divide the work and present as a group.
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Activity 3	<p>Hold an in-class election and vote on an issue by secret ballot. To conduct a realistic election, use the following steps.</p> <p>Materials</p> <p>Mail-in Voter Registration Forms available from www.vote.wa.gov A manila folder or envelope that acts as the voter registration database A ballot for each student An inner security envelope for each student. A 3.5 x 6 remittance envelope works well An outer envelope for each student—letter size works well Ballot drop box</p> <p>Steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Require all students to register to vote. Show them how to fill out the form correctly. If you have questions about filling out the form correctly, call your county elections department. See www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx for contact information.2. Collect the forms with signatures and names in one manila folder. This folder is your mock "voter registration database."3. Distribute a ballot, a security envelope, and an outer envelope to each student. Use either fill in the bubble/box or complete the line ballots. Call your county elections department to find out which style your county uses. Instruct students not to use checkmarks because real ballot processing equipment can't read checks.4. Have students vote on the ballot and place the ballot in the inner security envelope. Students should not write on the inner security envelope.5. Have students place the security envelope in the outer envelope.6. Have students write their name and sign their signature on the outer envelope.7. Have students drop their envelopes into a ballot drop box.8. Assign students to the following jobs in the order listed below:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Signature Checkers--Some students will check the "voter registration database" to be sure the names and signatures match. Envelopes with mismatched names/signatures should not be opened. They should be set aside. Give the envelopes with matched signatures to the sorters.b. Sorters--Some students will separate the outer envelopes from the inner security envelopes. Only do this after signatures are checked. Place inner security envelopes with ballots in one stack and outer envelopes in another. Give the sorted inner envelopes to the counters.c. Counters--Some students will in pairs remove the ballots from the inner envelopes and tally them. If there are any questions about if a vote is "yes" or "no," you, the teacher, should act as the canvassing board and determine how the voter intended to vote.
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To Make a Better Community Lesson 5 of 5

Group Name

Manager

Scribe

Reporter

Participants

Develop Arguments for a Position

In your group you are going to develop arguments that support a position and then will present your position to the class. Your teacher will tell you how to determine your issue and position. Additionally, you are going to adopt the position that your class should care enough to vote on this issue. You will present arguments for this position as well.

You are going to develop arguments that will convince your class that they should vote a certain way.

Use this worksheet to develop and deliver your presentation. Remember, someone else is going to argue against your position on this issue!

1. Our group's issue
2. Our group's position on that issue
3. The ballot question (question we are going to have people vote on) for this issue is
4. Do we want voters to vote "yes" or "no" on this issue?
5. What is one reason the class should agree with our position? In other words, why will our position create a better community?
6. What is the second reason that the class should agree with our position? In other words, why will our position create a better community?
7. Read this closing statement to the class: "Vote (insert yes or no) to the question (insert ballot question here) because (insert group position here) !"