

# Lesson 12

## The Voting Process



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How do I vote in federal elections?
- 2 Is voting a duty or a choice?

### PURPOSE

The right to vote comes with the responsibility to vote in an informed and purposeful manner.

In this lesson, students share their views and opinions about participating in the voting process. Students review essential information about eligibility and when, where and how people vote in federal elections. Afterwards, students reflect on the election issues, party platforms, leaders and the local candidates and what will influence their decision on Student Vote Day. In the *Consolidation* activity, students discuss whether voting is a duty or a choice.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- assess the importance of participating in elections;
- explain the requirements and steps in order to participate in the voting process;
- evaluate which factors will influence their voting decision;
- demonstrate respect for others' perspectives.

## Starter

1. Why do people vote? Ask students to share their views and opinions about participating in the voting process through a whole class discussion.
2. Watch the video 'Why Voting Matters' with your students to listen to different reasons why students believe voting is important.
3. Have a follow up conversation in small groups or as a whole class. Guiding questions:
  - Which opinions shared in the video resonate the most with you?
  - Over the course of the Student Vote activities, has your opinion changed about whether voting is important?
  - What is the impact of high or low levels of voter participation?
  - Do you think it is important that students practice voting before they turn 18 years old? Why or why not?

## Activities

1. Explain to students that voting in federal elections is done by secret ballot. Voters mark their ballot behind a privacy screen and their choice is concealed afterwards. Using 'Think-Pair-Share', have students reflect on one or more of the following questions:
  - Why is secrecy important?
  - What could happen if elections were held publicly?
  - Why is it important to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process?
2. Using Slide Deck 12, discover key aspects of the voting process in Canadian federal elections. Guiding questions:
  - Who is qualified to vote in federal elections?
  - What is the list of electors?
  - Where do I vote?
  - How do I vote? How do I mark my ballot?
3. Remind students that voting is more than just marking an 'X' on a ballot. It requires research, critical thinking and reflecting on your perspective and opinions.
4. Ask students to reflect on the election issues, party platforms, leaders and the local candidates by filling out Activity 12.1.
5. Divide students into groups of five and have one student share their response to one specific question (questions 1-5) and provide time for group discussion. For the final question, invite all group members to share their thoughts.

6. Afterwards, facilitate a class discussion and allow students the opportunity to share their views. Some students may jump at the chance to share their opinions and even try to persuade others to adopt their choices. Others may opt for silence and prefer to keep their politics private.

### TEACHER NOTE

This is a great opportunity to reinforce the choice for privacy and the importance of being respectful towards others with different points of view.

## Consolidation

In this phase, students practice articulating viewpoints about voting.

1. Arrange students into pairs. One student will take the position, 'voting is a choice,' and the other student will take the position that 'voting is a duty.'
2. Ask students to brainstorm statements that support their position on Activity 12.2.
3. Afterwards, have students share their thinking with their partner, taking turns speaking, listening and recording their discussions. Direct students to listen carefully to their partner's ideas and use point form to record their partner's ideas on the back of their brainstorming sheet.
4. Ask volunteers to share their statements and discussions with the whole class.
5. End with a class discussion about which statement they agree with most.

### TEACHER NOTE

Alternatively, you could debate the statement: 'voting is a right' or 'voting is a responsibility'.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

You are eligible to vote in a Canadian federal election if:

- You are a Canadian citizen,
- You are at least 18 years of age on election day,
- You can prove your identity and address.

In order to cast a ballot in the election, you must be registered to vote.

If you are an eligible elector, your contact information will be added to the **National Register of Electors**. The National Register of Electors is used to create the **list of electors** for each election.

If you have moved, recently become a Canadian citizen, will be voting for the first time or are a student living away from home, you may not be correctly registered. You can visit the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)) to check, update or complete your registration. Or you can register at your local Elections Canada office or at your polling place when you go to vote.

Each **riding** is divided into defined geographic areas called **polling divisions**. Eligible voters residing within each polling division vote at the **polling place** designated for their area.

If you are qualified to vote and your name is on the list of electors, you will be sent a **Voter Information Card (VIC)** in the mail. The voter information card tells you when, where and how to vote. You can also find out by visiting the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)) or calling 1-800-463-6868.

Voters may choose to vote in one of the following ways:

1. On election day
2. On an advance voting day
3. At an Elections Canada office (Returning Office)
4. By mail

To find out specific dates and times for voting, visit the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)) for up-to-date information.

To vote, you need to prove your identity and address. You have three options:

1. Show one piece of government-issued ID with your photo, name and address;
2. Show two pieces of ID. Both pieces must have your name, and one must also have your address;
3. If you don't have ID, you can still vote if you declare your identity and address in writing and have someone who knows you and who is assigned to your polling station vouch for you. The voucher must be able to prove their identity and address. A person can vouch for only one person.

Visit the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)) for a list of the different pieces of ID and proof of address that are accepted.

The voting process works as follows:

1. An election worker greets you and shows you to the right table. If you need help, ask an election worker.
2. Show your proof of identity and address.
3. An election worker checks your name on the list of electors and gives you a folded ballot.
4. Go behind the voting screen, mark your ballot and refold it to keep it secret.
5. Return your ballot to the election worker. They will remove the tab so that your ballot cannot be traced back to you.
6. Put your ballot in the box.

Voting across Canada is done by **secret ballot**. This ensures the privacy of each voter's choice. No one except the voter knows the choice that was made. It is illegal to take a photo of a marked ballot.

A **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running in your riding and their political party affiliation, where applicable. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot to mark your preference. As long as you clearly mark the ballot for one candidate, your ballot is valid. This includes a checkmark, X, shading in or another marking.

A **rejected ballot** is a ballot that cannot be counted due to a deliberate or accidental unrecognizable choice. This can include marking the ballot for more than one candidate even if different symbols are used, ranking the candidates, leaving the ballot blank, writing your name or anything on the ballot.

A **spoiled ballot** is a ballot that has been kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn, and exchanged for a new ballot. The **election worker** marks the ballot as spoiled and sets it aside.

When preparing to vote, you can consider reasons to support a candidate for MP, a political party or leader, a specific policy idea and/or an entire party platform. Voting requires that you do your research and devote the necessary time. You will know you are ready to vote when you feel confident in your ability to make a choice.

Elections Canada is the official source for all information about federal elections in Canada. Find out more information at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).