

Lesson 2

Rights and Responsibilities



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What rights do I have as a Canadian?
- 2 What responsibilities go along with my rights?

PURPOSE

To be effective citizens, Canadians need to understand their rights and responsibilities.

In this lesson, students explore the rights they have at school as an entry point to a discussion about rights and freedoms in a democracy. Students review the categories of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, including fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, official languages of Canada and minority language education rights. Through a scavenger hunt activity, students navigate the Charter itself and improve their understanding of its application. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the responsibilities that go along with their rights.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- describe the rights and responsibilities they have at school and why they are important;
- provide examples about how the Charter impacts their life and why it is important;
- explain why the Charter has different meanings for different people and groups;
- make connections between responsibilities and rights and freedoms.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Supplies/Needs: piece of paper for each student, Slide Deck 2 and/or 'Democratic Principles' video (both optional), copies of 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada.

Starter

1. Review the idea of a 'right' and provide an example. Rights are things that we are morally or legally allowed to do or have. For example, you have the right to learn and receive an education.
2. Using a 'Snowball Fight' strategy, have students consider the rights they have at school.
 - a) Provide each student with a piece of paper and ask them to write down one example.
 - b) Ask students to crumple their paper into a "snowball" and throw it across the room.
 - c) Have students find a snowball and write down another example on the piece of paper. It should be different from the first example.
 - d) Afterwards, have students throw their snowballs one more time and retrieve one.
 - e) Invite students to share the examples from the snowball they found and create a list on the blackboard or whiteboard.
3. Explain the concept that rights come with responsibilities. A responsibility is a duty, obligation or an expectation of how you should act.

Next, review your school's code of conduct. Ask students to connect the specific student responsibilities back to the list of rights created by the class, making additions where necessary.

4. Have a whole class discussion.
 - Why should you be aware of your rights?
 - Why is it important to know your responsibilities?

Activities

1. Distribute Activity 2.1 ('Anticipation Guide') to assess current knowledge about rights and freedoms in Canada.

2. As a class, review the seven categories of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html). You can use either Handout 2.2, Slide Deck 2 and/or the 'Democratic Principles' video to support this review.
3. Ask students to complete a scavenger hunt (Activity 2.3) using the Charter highlights (Handout 2.2). The purpose is to help students interpret the Charter and understand what it means for different groups. Give students time to complete it independently and then share their responses in pairs or small groups.

Consolidation

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to consider the responsibilities that go along with each right using Activity 2.4. Afterwards, review as a class.
2. Have a closing discussion about rights and responsibilities, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:
 - Why is it important to be a responsible member of a community? How does being a responsible student contribute to the school community?
 - Which rights and responsibilities in Canada do you think are most essential and why?
 - Why are the principles of equality and diversity important? How are they reflected in the Charter?

Extended Learning

Individually, in pairs or in groups, ask students to create their choice of a pamphlet or poster aimed at informing newcomers to Canada about their rights.

Sample criteria:

- Choose three rights you think would be most important for newcomers to Canada to be aware of
- Create an eye-catching title that will attract the attention of your intended audience
- Use symbols that will help explain the rights for people who are English Language Learners
- Headings should be meaningful and appropriate for the chosen rights

Assessment For Student Learning

Ask students to answer the following question in their learning journal.

Question: Of the rights listed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which would you consider the most important to you and your life?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

All citizens living in a democracy have civil and political rights, which are usually articulated in a legal document as part of a constitution, such as a **bill of rights**. This document limits the powers of government, explains the freedoms that are guaranteed to all people and protects people from a government that might abuse its powers.

A **right** is a legal entitlement or something that we are morally or legally allowed to do or have. Rights are often fought for and claimed (in courts or through protests) and less often simply granted. With all rights come responsibilities.

A **responsibility** is a duty or obligation. It is something you should do in order to respect and maintain certain rights.

In Canada, our rights are protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Canada's Charter is widely admired around the world and

is the constitutional document most emulated by other nations.

The Charter has seven distinct categories:

- **Fundamental freedoms** include the freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression including freedom of the press and other media; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association.
- **Democratic rights** include the right of every Canadian, 18 years of age or older, to vote in an election, to be a candidate in an election, the requirement that governments hold elections at least every five years, and the requirement that elected representatives meet at least once per year.
- **Mobility rights** include the right of every Canadian to choose to live and work in any province or territory in Canada. Canadians also have the right to live in, leave or re-enter Canada whenever they choose.
- **Legal rights** include the guarantee that Canadians, when arrested, must be told of their right to see a lawyer and must be tried within a reasonable amount of time. Canadians are also guaranteed the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- **Equality rights** include the right of any Canadian not to be discriminated against on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical ability.
- **Official language rights** include the right of all Canadians to use either English or French in communications with Canada's federal government.
- **Minority language education rights** include the rights for French or English minorities in every province and territory to be educated in their own language under certain conditions.