

Lesson 13

The Voting Process



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Is it important to vote?
- 2 How does the voting process work?

PURPOSE

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

In this lesson, students review essential information about voting in federal elections. Afterwards, they practice voting and counting ballots through a mock vote. In the *Consolidation* activity, students demonstrate their knowledge of voting by creating an instructive pamphlet, poster or video, which can be shared with a parent, guardian or someone new to voting, encouraging them to vote.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain the importance of being an active and engaged citizen;
- describe how to participate in federal elections;
- demonstrate effective communication skills to share information and messages about voting, using words and graphics.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Be sensitive to issues at home that may challenge perspectives around voting and democratic participation, such as religious reasons or traditions followed by certain groups.
- Recognize and acknowledge barriers that inhibit individuals or groups from voting (e.g., negative history, socio-economic class, language, newcomers).
- Supplies/Needs: 'Why Voting Matters' video, Slide Deck 13, ballot papers (copies of 13.1), Student Vote *Election Manual*.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada.

Starter

1. Explain to students that the purpose of the Student Vote Canada 2019 program is to give students a chance to practice voting so that they will be more prepared to vote in the future. The Student Vote results are also released publicly and through the news media. This allows young people to have a voice in the election and have their perspectives shared with the parties and politicians.

Watch the 'Why Voting Matters' video at studentvote.ca/canada.

2. Through a whole class discussion, answer the following questions.
 - Which skills do you practice regularly? (e.g., sports, music, languages)
 - Is it important for students to practice voting? Why or why not?
 - Why should young people have the opportunity to share their opinions?
 - Is voting in elections important? Why or why not?
3. Through a whole-class discussion, ask students which methods they think are most effective in reaching voters and why.
 - 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. Using Slide Deck 13, discover some of the key aspects of voting in Canadian federal elections.
 - Who is qualified to vote?
 - Who organizes federal elections?
 - Where do I find information?
 - How many ways are there to cast a ballot?
 - How do I mark my ballot?
 - What are the roles of election workers?
2. Have students practice voting by holding a mock vote with your class. Create a simple ballot with a fun question and three to four options for choices (e.g., favourite sport, food, movie, TV show or musician/ band). Templates are provided in Activity 13.1.
3. Show students how to fill out a ballot correctly. Students can use a checkmark, X, or any other mark as long as it clearly indicates their choice. Remind students that they can only vote for one option, otherwise, it will not count.
4. Distribute the ballots and invite each student to go behind the voting screen one at a time to mark their choice. Afterwards, ask them to re-fold their ballot to ensure privacy and place it in the ballot box.
5. Review the ballot terms 'valid' and 'rejected'.
 - **Valid:** A ballot that is properly marked for one candidate.
 - **Rejected:** A ballot that cannot be counted because the choice was not clear or more than one option was selected.
6. Divide students into small groups and ask them to review and count the ballots from the mock vote. One person should show the ballot to the rest of the group and as a group they should decide whether the ballot would be deemed 'valid' or 'rejected'. One person should be selected to tally the votes.
7. Add up the results from each group and announce the results.
8. Have a closing discussion and answer any remaining questions about the voting process.
 - Do you think voting is easy?
 - Do you feel ready to vote in the Student Vote election? Why or why not?
 - What other questions do you have about voting?

Consolidation

1. Show students some sample outreach material that Elections Canada has produced to increase awareness about when, where and how to vote. The materials can be found on the 'Spread the Word' page on the 2019 general election website (www.elections.ca) or a few materials have been included in Slide Deck 13.
2. Have students demonstrate their knowledge by creating a poster, pamphlet or video about how to vote or why it is important to vote. It could be designed for a parent, guardian, or someone new to voting. This poster can be done informally in a notebook, or as a larger assessment opportunity. An image of selected student posters could be shared through social media, to increase awareness and encourage voter turnout.

Ideas for possible content:

- Lists the qualifications for voting in federal elections;
 - Where to find information about when and where to vote;
 - Different ways to vote;
 - The steps to cast your ballot;
 - Reasons for voting.
3. Co-create criteria with your class. Refer to the Elections Canada outreach material from Step 1 as mentor text. Sample criteria for a poster/pamphlet is below.
 - Headings are meaningful and appropriate;
 - Graphics or symbols are used to help explain the process (if applicable);
 - The tagline and/or graphics are used to capture interest.

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) 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) 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) 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) 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.