Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students apply their state’s requirements for registering to vote. Students learn when and how to register, how to complete a voter registration form, and when and how to reregister.

Suggested Grade Level

Elementary (Grades 5–6)

Estimated Time to Complete

50 minutes

Lesson Objectives: After completing this lesson, students will be able to

- explain general voting requirements,
- understand the voter registration requirements and process in their state, and
- complete a voter registration form.

Vocabulary

- absentee ballot
- felony
- independent voter
- mentally incompetent
- parole
- register
Materials Needed

**Teacher Resources**

- State Voting Qualifications (Teacher Resource 3)
- Who Can Register to Vote? (Teacher Resource 4)

**Student Handouts**

- Building Our Vocabulary (Student Handout 2)
- Who Can Register to Vote? (Student Handout 4)
- Voter registration forms from your secretary of state’s website or the National Mail Voter Registration Form (Student Handout 5)
- Quick Reference Guide or Voter Information Guide downloaded from your secretary of state’s website

**Before the Lesson**

A week or two before Lesson 3, renew communication with the registrar of voters’ office. Prepare for the lesson by obtaining the following materials and information:

- Voter Registration Forms (one per student)
  - You can obtain voter registration forms from the registrar of voters or you can download, print, and photocopy the form from your secretary of state’s website. Another alternative is to use the [National Mail Voter Registration Form](#).

- Quick Reference Guide or Voter Information Guide (one per student)
  - This can be obtained from the registrar of voters or from your secretary of state’s website.

- Determine the date for the simulated election (Lesson 5). The simulated election can be timed to coincide with or precede the general election.

- Determine whether someone from the registrar’s office will visit your classroom for the simulated election.

- Research your state’s requirements for registering and voting. You can find this information on your secretary of state’s website. You will use this information in Teacher Resource 4.

- Determine who can vote by absentee ballot in your state.

- Review and photocopy all Lesson 3 student handouts and teacher resources.
Lesson Procedure

1. Beginning the Lesson: Why Do States Control Voter Registration?

Begin the lesson by informing students that citizens must register to vote.

• Ask students to refer back to the U. S. Constitution’s suffrage amendments studied in Lesson 2 and ask whether any of those amendments address a citizen’s need to register to vote.

• As an introduction to the concept of registration, ask students whether they have a guaranteed right to attend school.
  o Then ask them if they had to register to attend school.
  o Remind them that although they have the right to attend school, there is a procedure that must be followed to realize that right.

• Inform students that because the Framers did not include anything about voter registration in the Constitution, states assumed the power to establish voter registration qualifications; therefore, the necessity arose for the Constitution’s suffrage amendments to enfranchise more U.S. citizens.

2. What Are the Requirements to Register to Vote?

Student Handouts 2–5 and Teacher Resources 3 and 4 are required for this part of the lesson.

Distribute Student Handout 4 to each student. Inform students that in today’s lesson they will learn about rules for registering to vote and make a list of the rules on this handout.

• On the screen or board, project the first half of Teacher Resource 4: Who Can Register to Vote in the United States? The first half of Teacher Resource 4 indicates voting requirements for all citizens of the United States.
  o Ask different students to read the registration requirements and instruct the class to take notes on Student Handout 4.
  o Students might need help with vocabulary terms felony, independent voter, mentally incompetent, parole, and register. Definitions for these terms can be found in Teacher Resource 1: Quick Vocabulary.
    ▪ Add the definitions to the vocabulary chart.
    ▪ Have students fill in the definitions in Student Handout 2: Building Our Vocabulary.

• Show students the second half of Teacher Resource 4. Indicate your state’s additional requirements for voter registration.
3. Applying Information: Registering to Vote

A voter registration form (Student Handout 5) is required for completion of this part of the lesson. You can obtain a voter registration form from your secretary of state’s website. Inform the students that in most states, voter registration must be completed a few weeks before an election. Tell students the voter registration deadline in your state.

- Distribute a voter registration form to each student.
- Review the registration form step by step with students.
- Assist them in completing the form.
- Collect all the registration forms.

4. Is My Voter Registration Good for the Rest of My Life?

Inform students that there are a number of reasons why they might have to register to vote again.

- Ask students whether they would have to register again if they change their address.
  - They might respond that they will have to reregister.

- Ask students whether they would have to register again if they change their name.
  - Ask students to give reasons why people change their name.

- Define and explain the term absentee ballot to the students. The term is defined in Teacher Resource 1: Quick Vocabulary.
  - Add the definition to the vocabulary chart
  - Have students add the definition to Student Handout 2: Building Our Vocabulary.
  - Ask students to think of voters who qualify to use an absentee ballot. Here are some examples of possible responses:
    - College students who cannot get home to vote
    - Military personnel who cannot get home to vote
    - Adults who cannot get to the election polls because of work
    - Physically disabled adults

- Also inform students that some states remove people from the list of registered voters if they do not participate in elections. This means that if you fail to vote for too many elections in a row, you may have to go through the effort to reregister.

- Ask students whether a homeless person can register to vote given that they have no permanent address?
  - The voter registration form for some states asks for either a mailing address or cross streets. This would allow homeless people to register to vote.
5. Concluding the Lesson: Would Our Registration Forms Be Accepted?

- Ask students whether the class would meet the state’s deadline for registering to vote if you mailed the forms today.
- Ask students whether all the rules to register to vote were followed.
  - They should answer that they do not meet the age requirement.
- If everyone in the class were eighteen years old, would the registration forms be accepted?