

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Recommended books



- [America Votes](#) by Linda Granfield (ages 6-9)
- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa D. Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [E Is for Election Day](#) by Gloria M. Gavriss (ages 3-6)
- [Grace for President](#) by Kelly DiPucchio (ages 6-9)
- [I Voted: Making a Choice Makes a Difference](#) by Mark Shulman (ages 3-6)
- [If I Ran for President](#) by Catherine Stier (ages 6-9)
- [President of the Whole Fifth Grade](#) by Sherrie Winston (ages 9-12)
- [Understanding Your Role in Elections](#) by Jessica Gunderson (ages 9-12)
- [Vote for Me!](#) by Ben Clanton (ages 3-6)
- [Vote for Our Future](#) by Margaret McNamara (ages 6-9)
- [What's the Big Deal About Elections?](#) by Ruby Shamir (ages 6-9)
- [Woodrow for President: A Tail of Voting, Campaigns, and Elections](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)

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Watch:

- [Why voting is important](#) (Kids Academy)
- [Voting](#) (BrainPOP)

Play:

- [Cast Your Vote](#): Election Day is coming, are you prepared to vote? (iCivics, free registration required)

Listen:

- [Who Makes the Laws?](#) (But Why? A Podcast for Curious Kids)



Our Democracy: We Vote!

Get kids thinking

What is a democracy? A democracy means "rule by the people." It is a form of government in which power rests with the people, either directly or through elected representatives. We choose our representatives through an election process.

Voting is the heart of our democracy. Every person over the age of 18 in the United States has the right to vote. It's your way of making your opinion count in what kind of laws our country makes and other things our government does. Voting is not only a right, but a **privilege** and a **responsibility**. Talk with kids about what those two words mean.

After reading some of the books about voting and elections together, ask kids:

- How often do we elect a President? Congressperson? Senator?
- What does every citizen need to do to be sure they can vote?
- Why do you think each citizen keeps their vote private?
- Does the candidate with the most votes always win?
- How does our Electoral College system work?

Supplies

- Index cards (4 x 6 inches) or white card stock (8-1/2 x 11 inches) cut to 8-1/2 x 5-1/2 inches
- Piece of poster board (11 x 17 inches or larger)
- Marker
- Popsicle sticks (2) or small wooden dowels (1/8-inch diameter or smaller)
- Duct tape or adhesive tape

Activity: Lightning YES or NO

Let's get started!

This is a fast-paced activity to demonstrate open voting to kids, and give them the chance to vote on lots of issues.

First, you'll assemble the two vote cards. Write YES on one card and NO on the other, tape a popsicle stick (or dowel) to the back. Tape the poster board to the wall with duct tape or painter's tape.

As a group, brainstorm 10 to 15 statements that can be quickly judged with a vote of yes or no. Have fun with this list — the suggestions can be serious or silly or fantastical, or a combination. For example:

- I like polka dots
- I wish I had a jetpack
- I like cooked peas
- I always give away some of my Halloween candy
- I like fish sticks
- I want to go to the Moon
- I wish I had eight legs like an octopus
- I like comic books more than movies

Write the issues on a piece of poster board.

Now that you have the complete list, it's time to start voting! Announce the first issue, hold up the YES sign and point to one corner of the room. Hold up the NO sign and point to the opposite corner. Tell the kids to go to the corner that matches their vote.

Designate one child from the YES and NO groups to call out the vote tally; write that down on the poster board. Continue with the quick yes or no votes until you've voted on all the issues. Together, look at the vote totals for each issue and see if there are any patterns in how people voted.

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Activity: Lightning YES or NO

Ask the kids:

- Did you think about changing your vote to be on the same side as a friend?
- Would you have voted differently if there had been secret ballots?
- Is a secret vote important sometimes? When?
- How did voting make you feel?

This is a great activity for summer youth groups (or families) to do often to decide on group activities, jumpstart a morning meeting, and to get kids moving and energized for the day.

It's also a good way for kids to see the direct relationship between their votes and their daily lives and how it feels to be actively engaged within a community.

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Activity: Representative Vote

Get kids thinking

Talk with kids about our form of representative democracy. In the U.S., citizens don't vote individually on every law. Instead, we elect representatives (Congresspeople and Senators) to vote on issues on our behalf. When we choose a candidate to be our representative, we hope that his or her votes in Congress will represent our point of view on the issues.

Supplies

- Ballot templates (included in this packet). Or make your own ballots with index cards or construction paper
 - Pens or markers
 - Shoe box or something similar to collect the ballots (you can cut a slot in the top)
 - Colored markers, paper, scissors, glue for decorating the ballot box (optional)
 - Poster board or large sheet of paper
 - Painter's tape or duct tape
 - Confetti (optional)
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Let's get started!

As a group, decide on what issue you want to vote on. Here are some examples:

- Friday dinner: pizza or hamburgers?
- Group activity: hide and seek or freeze tag?
- Make recess longer or let school out earlier?

Activity: Representative Vote

Let's use the group activity as the example: **As a group, should we play hide and seek or freeze tag?**

See if there is a volunteer who wants to be the election official, whose job is to count the votes and report the results. Next, identify two volunteers who will be your candidates — the candidates will take opposing positions:

- Candidate 1: *"I support hide and seek!"*
- Candidate 2: *"I support freeze tag!"*

The Tally Board. Have the election official write "hide and seek" in one column at the top and "freeze tag" in the other column at the top. Tape the poster to the wall with painter's tape or duct tape.

Speech! Each candidate makes a persuasive statement about why their choice is the best and why they deserve your vote. Encourage the other kids (the voters) to ask questions of each candidate.


Decision Time. The voters decide which candidate represents their view on the issue, and then they each cast their vote using a paper ballot. Candidates get to cast their ballots, too. Remind the kids that their votes are private.

Ask the kids: Is it important that your vote is private? Why or why not?


And the Winner Is ... Ask the election official to read off the votes, mark each vote on the poster, add up the votes — and announce the winner! Congratulate both candidates for their campaigns and thank the voters for participating in an important civic duty. (Cue the confetti ... and maybe have some ice cream or Popsicles on hand for celebrating).

If the issue you voted on is something you can do together, make a plan to do it!




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Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name



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Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name



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