

Lesson 7

The Voting Process



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Is voting important?
- 2 How do I vote in federal elections?
- 3 What are some barriers to participating in the voting process?

OVERVIEW

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

In this lesson, students share their views about participating in the voting process. Students review essential information about voter eligibility and when, where and how people vote in federal elections. Afterwards, students learn about the barriers some face to electoral participation, and reflect on whether any may influence their decision to vote in the future. In the *Consolidation* activity, students respond to the question: does voting matter?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate the importance of participating in elections;
- explain the requirements and steps in order to participate in the voting process; and,
- analyze barriers to electoral participation.

Starter

1. Why do people vote? Ask students to share their views 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?

Activities

1. Explain to students that voting in federal elections is done by secret ballot (Slide Deck 7, slides 3-4). Voters mark their ballot behind a privacy screen and fold their ballot to conceal their choice.

Using 'Think-Pair-Share', have students reflect on one or more of the following questions:

2. Using Slide Deck 7 (slides 5-14), 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. Provide copies of Activity 7.1 and ask students to answer each question as honestly as they can. Afterwards, give them a few minutes to discuss their responses with a partner.
4. Review some key research findings about voting and the barriers to electoral participation using Slide Deck 7 (slides 15-18).
 - There are many different barriers to voting, including motivational barriers and access barriers. Motivational barriers have been found to be most significant.
 - Motivational barriers include low levels of political knowledge and interest in politics, lack of perceived importance, cynicism and lower sense of civic duty.
 - Access barriers include not knowing when and where to vote, lack of personal identification, challenges getting to the polling station, and language and literacy skills.

5. Independently or with a partner, have students reflect on how many zeros they recorded on the voting survey (Activity 7.1) and which barriers could affect their decision or ability to vote in the future.

TEACHER NOTE

Encourage students to take the survey home and have a discussion with their parents.

Consolidation

Organize a ‘Speakers Corner’ activity where students work in groups to create a 30 second response to the question: Does voting matter? One person in each group presents. Afterwards, have a quick class vote by hands on the winner.

If this activity is being done in a blended or remote learning setting, consider using a tool such as Flipgrid, and have students record their video response.

TEACHER NOTE

Flipgrid is a website that allows teachers to create "grids" to facilitate video discussions. Each grid is similar to a message board where teachers can pose questions, and their students can post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display.

Assessment

Using a ‘Quick Write’ strategy, have students reflect on the barriers to voting using one of the prompts below. Provide students with 3-5 minutes to write a response on a piece of paper or within their learning journal. Inform students that they will be assessed on their ideas and content, not grammar or organization, so they should write freely.

- The most significant barrier to voting is... because....
- If someone said <Select an undesirable attitude towards voting>, I would try to convince them otherwise by saying....

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, language learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the election system.• Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face.
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.



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.

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 (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.
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.