

Chapter Summary

Voting And Elections

Lesson 1 *Who Can Vote?*

- Constitutional amendments gave African Americans, women, and people aged 18 and up the right to vote. Today, most citizens may vote.
- In most states, people who have been convicted of serious crimes are denied the right to vote while in prison. In addition, people with certain mental illnesses may lose their eligibility.
- Citizens must register to vote by filling out a form. They should prepare to vote by becoming informed about candidates and issues.
- Voters cast their ballots at a designated “polling place.” In many states, citizens may cast their ballots before election day during a period of early voting. Absentee ballots are available for people who will not be able to get to the polls.
- Voter turnout rate in the United States is often under 50 percent. Studies show that this is due to apathy, busy schedules, or failure to register.

Lesson 2 *Elections and Campaigns*

- Parties hold primary elections to choose candidates who will run in the general election.
- General elections include national, state, and local elections. These take place on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. National elections are held in even-numbered years and presidential elections are held every four years.
- Voters are sometimes asked to vote on issues. Initiatives are laws proposed by citizens. Referendums allow voters to accept or reject a law passed by state or local legislatures.
- In presidential elections, voters choose electors to represent their state. The party that wins the popular vote gets the state’s electoral votes. In this winner-take-all system, the candidate who wins the popular vote may actually lose the election.
- Candidates for office run campaigns to win votes. Campaigns may include candidates’ appearances at community events, debates, speeches, and interviews. Campaigns pay for advertisements, bumper stickers, and yard signs. Campaigns are primarily funded by donations.