

The What and Who of Elections

Source: Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government

American citizens can choose their leaders, decide on their laws, or change their laws by voting. Citizens vote during an election. The winners of an election are called public servants and their job is to help make and carry out laws while in office. In the United States, elections are held for many public offices.

The people Americans elect for president, senators, and representatives are public servants and work for the federal government. The president is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, while senators and representatives are members of Congress. They make decisions for the whole country by making or changing laws that affect everyone in the United States. These are all important jobs and that's why Americans vote for the people who will represent them.

In order to vote, you must be a U.S. citizen who is at least 18 years old. In most states, you must also register to vote. Every state has its own laws about registering, and it's important to learn your state's rules before voting.

You may cast your vote in a booth at a polling place. You may also mail in your vote; this is called an absentee ballot. A group of people called election officials then count everyone's votes. Everyone has one vote and can only cast one ballot. That is why votes are so important.

This is the election process used by the United States to make sure that every citizen has a chance to take part in the government and help choose the people that will serve as their leaders.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is voting?

- A the process that public servants use to help make and carry out laws while in office
- B the process that the president uses to make decisions for the whole country
- C the process that U.S. citizens use to choose leaders, decide on laws, or change laws
- D the process that states use to teach U.S. citizens about laws

2. What does the author describe in this text?

- A how and why U.S. citizens vote for their leaders
- B how and why people decide to become public servants
- C how citizens in different states can register to vote
- D how the process of voting has changed over time

3. Senators, representatives, and the president have very important and powerful jobs.

What evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?

- A U.S. citizens vote for public servants during an election.
- B Senators and representatives are members of Congress.
- C They can make or change laws that affect everyone in the U.S.
- D Senators, representatives, and the president are all public servants.

4. Based on the text, why might U.S. citizens decide to vote in an election?

- A to make decisions for the whole country about important issues
- B to become public servants and work for the federal government
- C to prove that they are at least 18 years old
- D to have a say in who represents them in the government

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A The process of voting in the U.S. has changed over time in many ways.
- B Citizens of the U.S. vote during elections to choose the people that will serve as their leaders.
- C In order to vote, you must be a U.S. citizen who is at least 18 years old and is registered to vote.
- D The winners of an election are called public servants, and they help make and carry out laws.

6. Read this paragraph from the text.

“You may cast your vote in a booth at a polling place. You may also mail in your vote; this is called an absentee ballot. A group of people called election officials then count everyone’s votes. Everyone has one vote and can only cast one ballot. That is why votes are so important.”

Why might the author have used the words “you” and “your” in this paragraph about voting?

- A to make readers feel like they can take part in the voting process
- B to suggest that the author cannot take part in the voting process
- C to force readers to make a choice between voting at polling place or mailing in their votes
- D to make readers feel like the voting process does not have anything to do with them

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Jobs of the president, senators, and representatives are all important jobs _____ Americans vote for the people who will represent them.

- A before
- B but
- C even though
- D so

8. The President is elected to be a public servant and work for the federal government. What are two other groups of people that are elected to work for the federal government?

9. The president, senators, and representatives make decisions for the whole country by doing what?

10. Why might it be important for citizens to vote for the people that will serve as their leaders? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
