





## Election Simulation Toolkit

Engaging students in the electoral process



# Election Simulation Toolkit





Our democracy depends on each of us taking part in federal elections. There are many ways to do this. Here are a few of them:

- Vote for a candidate
- Join a political party
- Work as an election officer
- Run as a candidate
- Volunteer to help a campaign

#### Inquiry question:

How can we take part in federal elections?

#### × Time needed



For younger students and language learners, we recommend at least 90 minutes.

## **Overall description**

This activity is designed for a social studies, politics, civics or citizenship class. It can be used in secondary and elementary classrooms. Here is an overview of the simulation:

- Students take part in a quick open-voting process to understand why a secret ballot is important.
- Then they take on the roles of political party members or election officers.
  They run an election on a community or school issue they care about.
- Students vote for a candidate, ballots are counted and a winner is announced.
- Finally, students reflect on what they learned about their role in the simulation and what makes elections fair.

This simulation is based on the procedures used for Canadian federal elections. The tools and information in the kit are as authentic as possible while still being classroom-friendly.

## × Competencies and skills

- Students will think critically about the many ways to take part in federal elections.
- Students will **work collaboratively** and **use problem-solving skills** to complete authentic citizenship tasks.

- Students will **apply citizenship skills**, such as respecting a range of opinions and considering what is good for the school or the community as a whole.
- Students will **communicate their thinking** in small groups, in whole-class discussion and in personal reflection.

## × Materials

- Ballot box
- Voting screen
- Polling Station Manual\*
- Role cards\*
- Poster\*
- A Look Back at the 2019 Federal Election video\*\*
- Election vocabulary (page 11)
- Activity: Does It Count? (pages 12-13)
- Candidate list (page 14)
- Speech template (page 15)
- Campaign research notes (page 16)
- Tally sheet (page 17)
- Ballots (page 18)
- Exit card (page 19)
- Optional materials (pages 20-25)

\* In your kit or online at electionsanddemocracy.ca

\*\* Available online at electionsanddemocracy.ca

## Instructions

### × Minds on

#### 5 min

Write the question "Do you want breakfast for dinner?" on the board. Explain that students will vote on this question. They will have only two answers to choose from: "yes" or "no."

Give students up to 1 minute to discuss their thoughts with each other. Encourage them to move around the room and speak with other students. The activity should feel a little chaotic. Do not give them any clarification on the question.

After 1 minute, explain that the class will now vote by moving to either side of the room: one side will be designated as "Yes" and the other side as "No."

Announce the winning side after the vote. Then ask:

- How did the process of this vote feel?
- Did it feel fair? Why or why not?
- What would have made it more fair?

Explain that in a real election, many processes are in place to help everyone participate fairly. Through this activity, students will explore a variety of ways to take part in federal elections.

### × Activity



#### Introduction

5 min

Explain that all Canadian citizens who are age 18 and older have the right to vote in federal elections. In your class simulation, everyone will be a citizen of your classroom. All students will also take on another role: as an election officer or as a member of a political party.

During this election, you (the teacher) will act as the returning officer. This is the person responsible for conducting the election in the electoral district where they live. Returning officers are eligible to vote, like any other citizen.

Ask students: "How could we improve our school or community?" Here are some ideas to prompt student thinking:

- Dress code
- Cafeteria options
- Library space or other common areas
- Athletic facilities
- Extracurricular activities
- Student government
- School day
- Course offerings
- Support for students

Write their ideas on the board, then choose two or three key issues together. Explain that students will work in small groups to understand one issue and propose solutions. This will be their party's platform.

Divide the class into groups:

- Election officers (two students): they will run the election, set up and run the polling station, count the ballots and report the results to the returning officer (the teacher).
- Political parties: groups of at least five students will work together to form a political party and campaign for election. You may have up to six political parties.

Distribute the Polling Station Manual, the role cards and materials to the election officers and political party members. Explain that students will work in their small groups, using their role cards and the other materials to guide them as they prepare for the election. Using a timer will help students manage their time.

#### 1. Preparing the campaign

#### 15 min

As the returning officer, you announce the official start of the election campaign. Give the election officers and political party members their instructions to get them started.

#### **Election officers**

Appoint two election officers to run the election. To make sure the electoral process is fair and secure, explain that they must be non-partisan (not affiliated with any party).

Before the campaigning begins, have the election officers affirm the solemn declaration. It is included in the Polling Station Manual.

Give the election officers the Does It Count? activity. They will sort the sample ballots to figure out which ones should be accepted, then check their understanding using the information in the Polling Station Manual.

**Tip:** You can also set up this activity as a learning station for the other students to do after they vote.

The election officers then set up the polling station, as shown in the Polling Station Manual. As the returning officer, you are responsible for making sure that they have all the materials they need and have space to work. If you like, you can give each of them an Election Officer name tag to wear.

#### **Political party members**

Instruct the political party members to divide the role cards among their groups. They will need to select a candidate for election who will deliver a campaign speech and answer questions from voters. The rest of the party members help the candidate write their speech, prepare for questions from voters and create campaign materials.

Circulate to assist and supervise the political parties as needed until the campaign starts. Write a numbered list of the candidates and their political parties on the board to help with the voting process later.

All students are voters: they will need to show their ID before they can vote. (Students can show their student ID or you can hand out the optional voter ID cards and have students make their own ID.)

#### 2. Campaigning

(10 min)

Before you begin the campaign, review the classroom norms together. Highlight that students need to keep their questions focused on the issues and proposed solutions. To maintain a safe classroom environment, we recommend that students do not ask candidates personal questions.

Each candidate delivers a short speech in front of the entire class. Use a timer to make sure each speech is no longer than 1 minute. Voters can ask the candidates questions. (Students are often enthusiastic about asking questions; you may need to remind them to be respectful.) If you wish to complete the whole activity in one class period, use a timer to limit the questions and answers to 1 minute per candidate.

#### 3. Voting

#### 15 min

Before they vote, read the following statement to your students:

The ballot is secret. Consider all the candidates and vote for the person of your choice.

You do not have to support your own party or candidate if you feel another has done a better job in the campaign. If you are the candidate, you can vote for yourself.

Anything can happen in an election campaign, but remember that the elected candidate will represent everyone in the class.

Election officers run the election. They vote first to demonstrate the process to the rest of the class, using the poster. Explain that election officers usually vote at advance polls that are held days or weeks before election day. Then the remaining students vote. They line up at the polling station and present their ID to the election officers, who cross their names off the voters list. After students vote, they collect their exit card and complete it individually while their classmates vote. They can also use this time to do the Does It Count? activity if you have set up this learning station in the classroom.

Once all students have voted, the election officers count the ballots and report the results to the returning officer.

As the returning officer, you announce the results of the vote and invite the winning candidate to give an acceptance speech.

Congratulate all students on their efforts.

#### × Consolidation

#### 10 min

Ask students to imagine running an election for the whole population of Canada. How might it be different from or similar to your class activity?

Show the video *A Look Back at the 2019 Federal Election.* 

**Ask:** How is the voter's experience in a federal election similar to and different from your experience in our classroom election?

Have students Turn and Talk with a partner to discuss these questions, then invite them to share some of their ideas with the class:

- Do you think our election was fair?
- · What do you think made it fair or unfair?
- How might our election have been different if more students in our school had voted?

To maintain a safe and supportive classroom environment, encourage students to focus on the issues and procedures, not on the candidates or other students. For example, you can ask them to think about how the vote was kept secret.

Give them a few more minutes to complete their exit cards. Collect them at the end of the activity.

#### How is the vote kept secret?

- All ballots are identical, so no one will know who filled out which ballot
- The voting screen lets voters vote in private
- By folding the ballot, voters hide the mark they made in the circle
- Voters place the ballot in the box themselves
- All the ballots are placed in the same ballot box and mixed together

## \* Optional extension activities\*

- Invite another class to watch the speeches, ask questions and vote. You may want to add a second polling station.
- Extend the campaign period and have students practise media and language arts skills by creating campaign materials such as videos, logos, posters, signs and buttons.
- Students can use the election results to practise math skills such as graphing, fractions or percentages.
- Students can create an infographic to show the results to other classes.
- Students can write a reflection or paragraph about their experience.
- Starting with their exit card reflections, have students discuss in small expert groups what they learned about their role and what they would do differently next time. Then jigsaw the groups so all students can learn more about all of the roles.
- \* These activities will extend the campaign longer than one class period.

## × Teaching tips

- For younger learners (grades 4 to 8) or language learners, we suggest the following adaptations:
  - Extend the activity to 2 hours or two class periods
  - Pre-teach the vocabulary using the Election vocabulary handout provided
  - Invite another adult—such as a parent, educational assistant or teacherlibrarian—to help students with reading through the materials and writing the speeches
  - Choose election officers with strong language skills
  - Give students extra time to review the documents before the activity
  - Use text-to-speech software such as Google Read&Write to read role cards aloud to students from our website

- Discussion protocols are a helpful way to engage all students and provide support for academic conversations. Turn and Talk is used in this activity as a simple talk protocol. Students share their ideas with a partner before being asked to share with the class. This gives time and space for exploring ideas and gives all students the opportunity to have their voice heard.
- If students are not engaging in conversations before or after the Minds On voting activity, use these questions to prompt more discussion: What did you mean by breakfast? What did you mean by dinner? Why did you vote that way? Is this a good way to make decisions on a larger scale?
- Use a timer to help students manage their time, especially during the Preparing the campaign stage. This leaves enough time for voting, counting the ballots and completing the exit cards.

0

You can find lots of background information about the electoral process—accessibility, eligibility and much more—at **electionsanddemocracy.ca/canadas-elections**.

For official information, especially during a federal election campaign, go to **elections.ca**.





## **Materials**

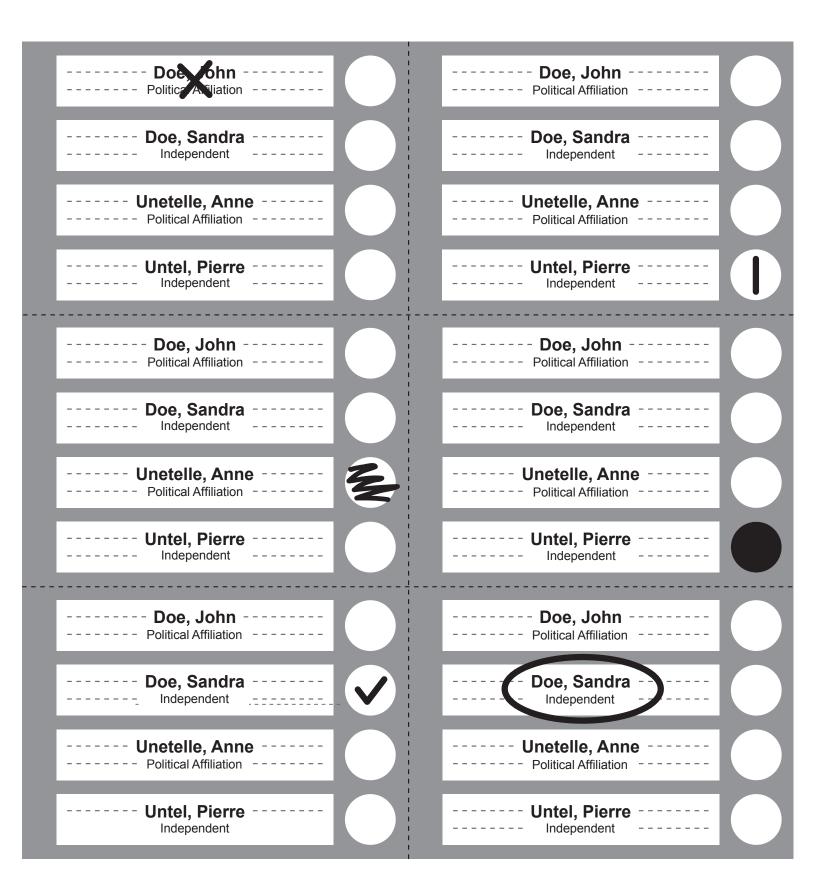
To be photocopied

## × Election vocabulary

Ballot	A piece of paper used to vote in an election.	Elections Canada o
Ballot box	A box with a narrow slot on top into which voters place their ballots.	#
Campaign	The time before an election when political parties an explain their ideas and try to convince people to vot In a federal election, the campaign lasts for 36 to 50	e for them.
Platform	A political party's platform describes how it would w important issues.	ork on
Political party	A group of people who share ideas and goals. The p is to have its candidates elected, form a governmen changes to help the country do well.	
Polling station	The place where you go to vote.	
Returning officer	The person in charge of organizing the election in a	n electoral district.
Voter	A Canadian citizen who is at least 18 years old on e	lection day.
Voting screen	A cardboard barrier behind which voters mark their ballot in secret.	Elections Canada o

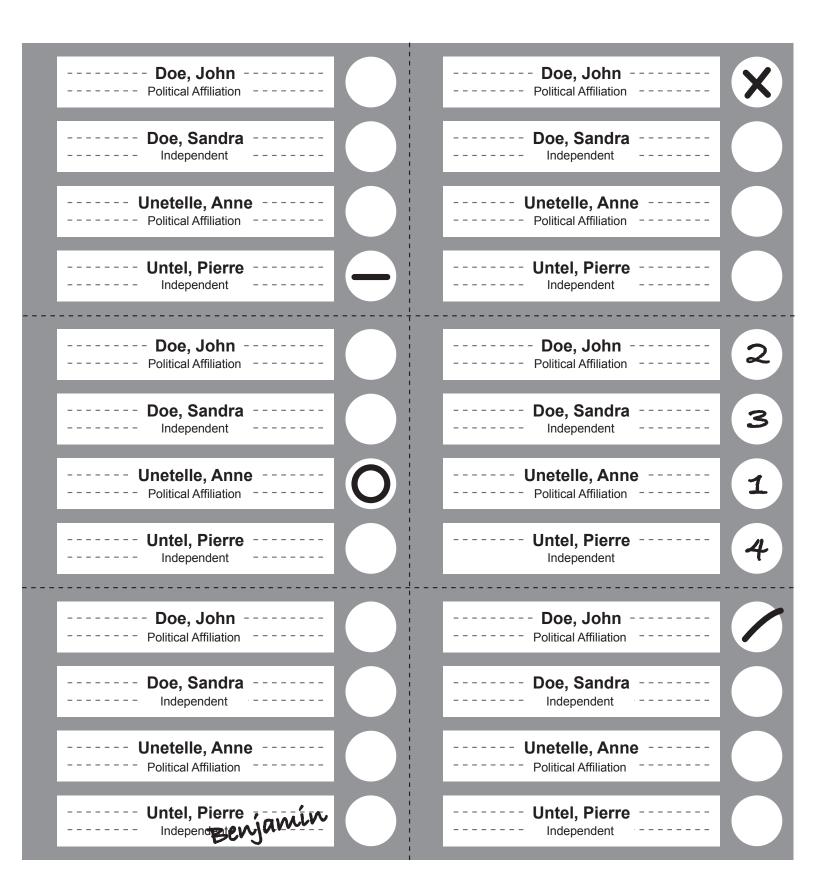
## **×** Activity: Does It Count?

Cut apart, prefold and initial the ballots for the election officers.



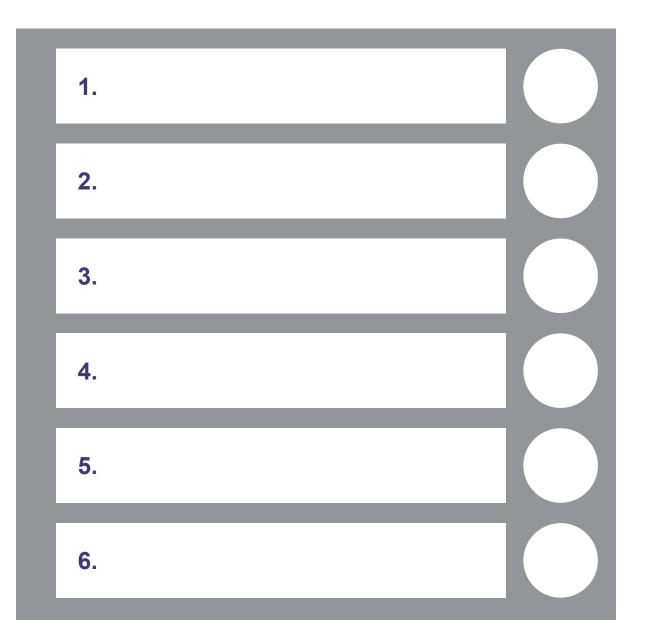
## **×** Activity: Does It Count? Continued...

Cut apart, prefold and initial the ballots for the election officers.



## × Candidate list

To help voters mark their numbered ballots, write the names of the candidates and political parties next to the number that corresponds to them on the ballot below. Tape this sample ballot inside the voting screen.



Candidate

Speechwriter

### × Speech template

Use this template to write a 1-minute campaign speech to convince voters to vote for you.

My name is	and I represent		
		(party name)	

Our party believes that ... (describe the issue)

This matters because ... (give some reasons, using your research)

Our idea to improve our school is ...

This will help by ... (give one or two examples)

If elected, we will make sure that ...

Vote for us and we will work hard to ...

End with your campaign slogan, if you have one.

#### Acceptance speech

Thank you to everyone who supported me in this election and to all the other candidates for their great campaigns. I promise to work hard to create solutions to \_\_\_\_\_\_ and to represent you and your ideas as the honourable member from \_\_\_\_\_\_.

(our class)

## × Campaign research notes

Use this guide to take point-form notes.

Our party's name:	Our	partv's	name:
-------------------	-----	---------	-------

Our chosen issue:

What other students think about the issue:

Notes on the other parties' platforms:

What could we do with this information?

What questions might the voters ask our candidate?

What answers could we give?

#### **Election officers**

## × Tally sheet

Use this tally sheet to help you count the ballots.

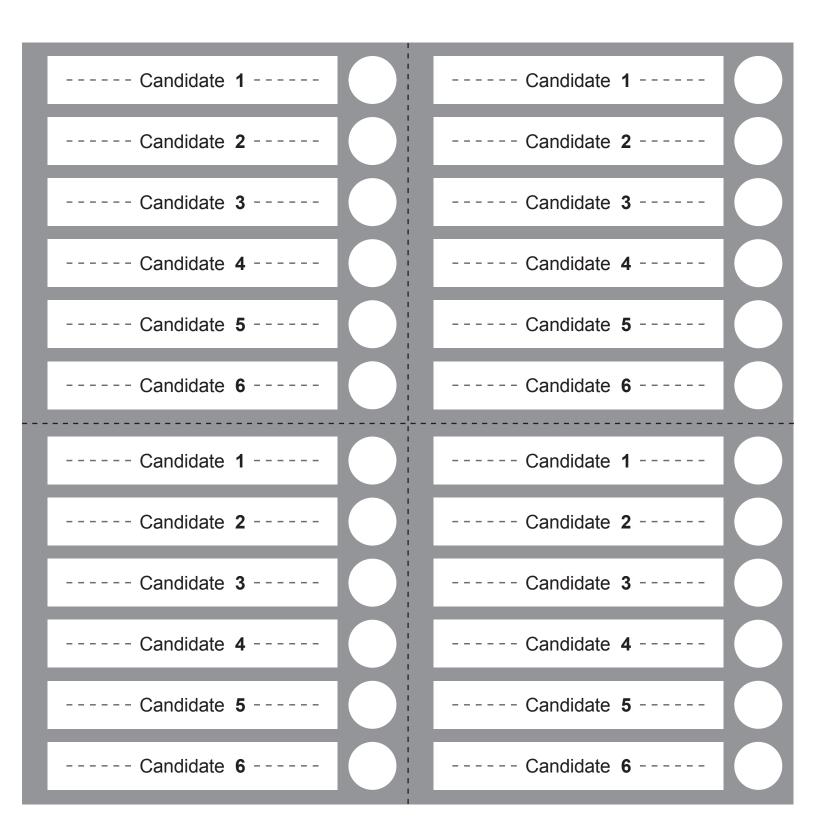
- Write the candidates' names beside their number.
- One election officer unfolds the ballot and reads aloud the candidate's name.
- The other election officer makes a tally mark for that candidate.

Candidate 1:					
5	10	15	20	25 30	Total:
Candidate 2: 5	10	15	20	25 30	Total:
Candidate 3: 5	<b>10</b>	15	20	25 30	Total:
Candidate 4:5	10	15	20	25 30	Total:
Candidate 5: 5	<b>10</b>	15	20	25 30	Total:
Candidate 6: 5	<b>10</b>	15	20	25 30	Total:
Rejected ballots 5	5: 10	15	20	25 30	Total:
Winning candid	ate:			_	
We certify that t	the results of the	e polls are as s	stated above	5.	

Signature of election officer

#### × Ballots

Copy the number of ballots you will need for your class. If there are fewer than six candidates, you may cut the ballots down to the required size.



### × Exit card

- 1. What did you learn about your roles in today's simulation?
- **2.** Do you think our election was fair? How do you think the process helps to keep the election fair?
- 3. What questions do you have now?

### × Exit card

- 1. What did you learn about your roles in today's simulation?
- **2.** Do you think our election was fair? How do you think the process helps to keep the election fair?
- 3. What questions do you have now?





## **Optional materials**

To be photocopied

## × Voters list

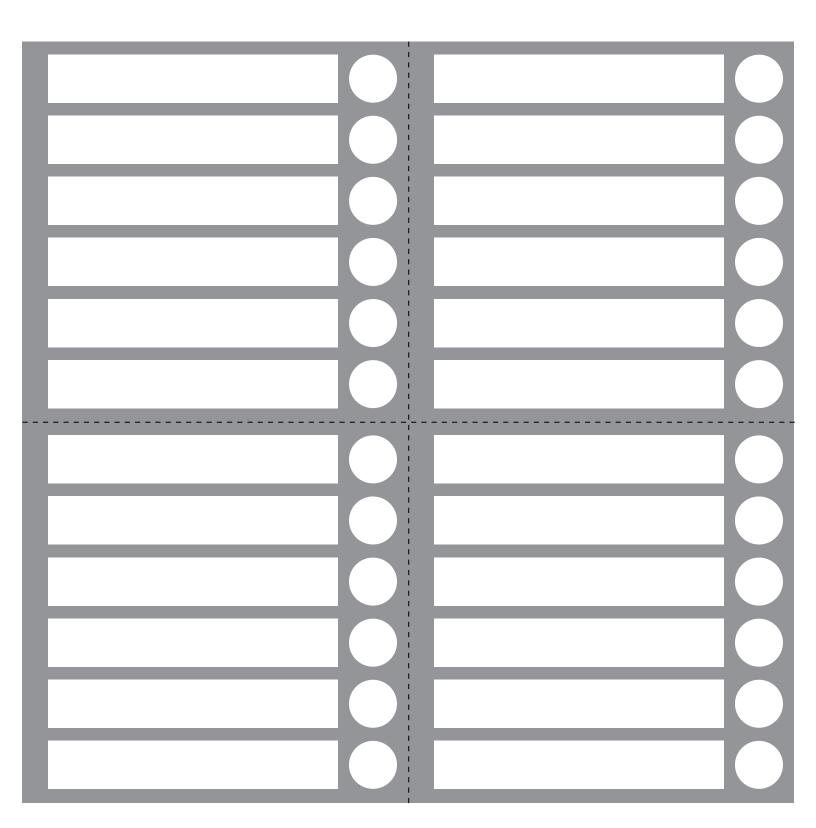
Electoral district – Name of school:

Polling station – Class name:

#	Name of voter
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	

Elections \* &Democracy

## × Blank ballots



## **×** Voter identification card

Identification card	Identification card
Name:	Name:
School:	School:
Class:	Class:
Identification card	Identification card
Name:	Name:
School:	School:
Class:	Class:
Identification card	Identification card
Name:	Name:
School:	School:
Class:	Class:

## × Election officer name tags

Elections Canada Election officer
Name
Elections Canada Election officer
Name

**\*** Elections Canada Civic Education Assessment Rubric

Task: Election Simulation Toolkit

Student name:			Group:		
	Absent / Incomplete	Level 1 (Below expectations)	Level 2 (Approaches expectations)	Level 3 (Meets expectations)	Level 4 (Exceeds expectations)
Understanding Content (e.g., ideas, opinions, concepts, relationships among facts)		Demonstrates limited understanding of content	Demonstrates some understanding of content	Demonstrates considerable unders- tanding of content	Demonstrates thorough understanding of content
Understanding Context(s) (e.g., relationship of content to big ideas, such as "fairness," "democracy," and "inclusion vs. exclusion;" themes; frameworks)		Demonstrates limited understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates some understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates considerable understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates thorough understanding of context(s)
Applying Critical Thinking Skills (e.g., analyzing, evaluating, inferring, interpreting, revising, refining, reviewing, reflecting, forming conclusions, detecting bias, synthesizing)		Uses critical thinking skills with limited effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with some effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Using Collaborative Group Learning Skills (e.g., communication skills, questioning, active listening, problem solving, focus on task, level of engagement, teamwork)		Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with limited effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with some effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with considerable effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Demonstrating Civic Disposition (e.g., respects diversity of opinion, recognizes that rights come with responsibilities, considers what is good for society as a whole)		Expresses few civic dispositions	Expresses some civic dispositions	Expresses many civic dispositions	Expresses a considerable number and range of civic dispositions

Comments:

#### Learn more

If you and your students enjoyed this lesson, we encourage you to use Elections Canada's other educational resources. These cross-curricular materials can be taught in a variety of subjects, including history, geography, social studies, civics and math.

All resources are available in English and French, and there are versions for language learners.

Visit <u>electionsanddemocracy.ca</u> to browse our complete list, download or order. You can also contact us using the information beside.

#### Contact us

To share comments or ask questions, or if some of your kit components are missing, write or call us:

Email: info@elections.ca Telephone: 1-800-463-6868 TTY: 1-800-361-8935 Fax: 1-888-524-1444

#### Follow us

Learning is social and so are we! Join our community of educators on Facebook and Twitter (@democracyCA) and share with us your experiences of teaching about elections and democracy.

#### Permissions

All rights reserved. Any part of this publication may be used and reproduced for educational purposes. Please acknowledge Elections Canada.





EC 99663 (12/2020)

