

Which Election?

**Understanding federal,
provincial/territorial, and
municipal/local elections**



This resource was developed in collaboration with all provincial and territorial electoral agencies, and with Elections Canada.



Which Election?



Big Idea

Citizens vote in elections at federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal/local levels. These elections are run by different organizations, under different conditions, and elect different parliaments, legislatures, and councils. There are opportunities for citizens to be involved in elections at all levels of government.

Inquiry questions:

What kinds of elections do we have in Canada?
How can I engage in the process?

Overall description

In this activity, students are asked to reflect upon their own experience with dividing tasks. The students watch two short videos to learn about how government responsibilities are divided and the impact these divisions have on elections in Canada. Students then deepen their understanding by completing activities at different learning stations to explore the three levels of government and the differences between elections at each level. Finally, students consolidate their understanding through both class discussion and personal reflection. They are also encouraged to explore how they can actively engage in the electoral process.

Time needed

60 minutes

Competencies and skills

- Students will work collaboratively: demonstrating respect, integrity, and open-mindedness
- Students will gather information relevant to their own electoral communities
- Students will examine maps to better understand elections at all three levels of government in Canada
- Students will connect headline news topics to the appropriate level of government and think critically about the topics that they care about
- Students will reflect on their learning, and consider how they can engage in elections at all three levels
- Students will practise a variety of online search skills to arrive at the appropriate information

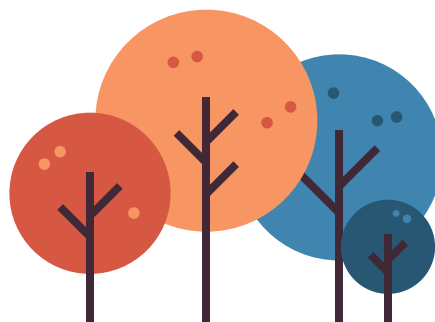
Materials

Downloadable material included in the teacher's guide

- Station reflections handout
- Station instructions, for each station
- Activity sheets for each station
- Station materials:
 - Station 2 – Headline news cards and reference sheet
 - Station 3 – Maps of the electoral districts of your school
- Videos: *Three Levels of Government* and *Three Levels of Elections*, available online at electionsanddemocracy.ca

Additional material

- Projector
- Electronic devices, such as computers or tablet with internet access (at least 2)



Setting up

Before class begins, download the printed materials needed for this activity. You may need to prepare two sets of materials, so that the groups are kept to an appropriate size. Arrange the stations appropriately, so that each group has at least one digital device with internet access at each station.

- **Station reflections handout** – one copy for each student in your class
- **Station 1 – Can you vote if ...?**
 - Post the instructions on the wall
 - Prepare one copy of the student activity sheet
 - Ensure that students will have access to the Internet
- **Station 2 – Which level of government?**
 - Post the instructions on the wall
 - Prepare one copy of the student activity sheet for each group
 - Cut apart the headline news cards and place them at the station
 - Print the reference sheet and place it at the station
- **Station 3 – Where am I?**
 - Post the instructions on the wall
 - Prepare one copy of the student activity sheet for each group
 - Give students access to the relevant electoral maps for your school. (Links to the relevant maps, at each level of government, are provided in the background information section of this resource.)
 - Ensure that students will have access to the Internet to search for their elected representatives' contact information

Note: If Internet access is not available in class, you will need to print the relevant information for Stations 1 and 3:

- Station 1: Information on ways to vote from the election agencies' websites
- Station 3: Relevant contact information from the elected representatives' websites



Instructions

Minds on

10 minutes

Ask students to think about a time when they had to work together in a group, whether at school, at home, or in their community.

Ask: Did you have to divide up the tasks among different people? How did you decide who did what?

Have students turn and talk with a partner, and then share their thinking with the class.

Ask: How do you think the task of governing Canada is divided?

Invite students to turn and talk with a partner, to see what they know. Write their responses on the board under the titles federal, provincial/territorial and municipal/local.

Next, show the *Three Levels of Government* video. Tell students to look and listen for the different responsibilities found at each level.

Ask: What responsibilities did you observe in the video?

Have students turn and talk again with a partner. Then, invite partners to share their observations with the class and add to your lists on the board.

Explain that it is especially important to know what each level of government is responsible for during an election. Also explain that the same voter can vote in elections at each level of government. Because voters elect different governments with different responsibilities, they need to understand what election they're voting in, the responsibilities of their elected representatives at each level, and where to turn if they have questions.

Now have the students view the second short video, to explore how elections work in Canada.

Activity

40 minutes

Understanding the three levels of elections

Show the *Three Levels of Elections* video. After the video, ask students to turn and talk with a partner to share something they have learned, or a question they have now. Then ask partners or groups to share their learning and/or questions with the class and write their responses on the board.

Explain that they will be learning more about elections and the three levels of government through the learning stations. Students will return to their questions at the end of the lesson to see whether any have been answered.

Learning stations

30 minutes

Explain that students will now deepen their learning at the three learning stations around the room. They will work together in teams, and they will have 10 minutes at each station.

At each station, place the station instructions on the wall or on the desk.

Note: Depending on the size of your class, you may need to set up multiples of each station.

Students then complete the activities at each station to add to their understanding of elections at the three levels of government.



Station 1 – Can you vote if ...?

At this station, students will learn who qualifies as an elector at each level of government. Students read a real-life scenario about accessibility, voter registration, and/or the different ways to vote. Then, they work together to research online if the person described in the scenario can vote. Each group should complete the handout collaboratively, completing as many questions as they can within the time limit. At the end of the time, they should leave the handout at the station for the next group to continue to complete.

Station 2 – Which level of government?

At this station, students work together to sort the headline news cards into federal, provincial/territorial or municipal/local responsibilities. Then, students create a list of the topics that they care most about and sort the topics on that list into the three levels of government. Afterwards, groups identify one topic at each level that is important to them and explain how they could get involved.

Station 3 – Where am I?

At this station, students explore the idea that every citizen belongs to more than one electoral district. They examine federal, provincial/territorial and municipal/local maps to compare their electoral districts across the three levels. Then, they write down the names of their current elected representatives and how they can be contacted at each level.

Consolidation

10 minutes

Have students return from the final station. Distribute the station reflections handout and give them a few minutes to complete it. Ask if some of their questions from the minds on activity were answered. Lead a brief discussion to address their initial questions. Direct their attention to the inquiry questions:

- What kinds of elections do we have in Canada?
- How can I engage in the process?

Ask which of their reflections are most helpful in answering these inquiry questions.

Invite students to share their most helpful thoughts with a partner or small group and to write one final reflection about why they chose them. These reflections can be collected at the end of the class to monitor or assess students' learning and metacognition.

Teaching tips

- Turn-and-Talk is used in this activity as a simple talk protocol. This is a helpful way to engage all students and to provide support for academic conversations. Students share their ideas with a partner. Then, they share them in a small group or with the whole class. This gives time for thinking, builds confidence, and ensures that all students have the opportunity to have their voices heard.
- Learning stations have students moving from one station to another in teams. This protocol provides an opportunity for students to move around the room and

can result in more engagement by providing novel experiences at each station. It also keeps students accountable to the work they're completing, and to each other; because students must respect time limits and work together to complete each station.

- Station 1 can be done using printed materials, if necessary; however, this station is intended to help students practise Internet search skills, such as checking URLs and using good search terms. It is also intended to show students how electors can find voting information during a real election.
- The station reflections handout engages students in metacognition. Teachers can get feedback about what students have really learned and what questions they have. These insights can help teachers plan meaningful instruction based on student needs and interests. Students can use exit cards to build their understanding over time and to see their own growth as learners.
- Sentence stems such as "One thing I learned is ..." are useful, especially for language learners, since they help to model sentence structure. They are also helpful for reluctant or struggling learners, as they are more invitational than a question, which can be perceived to have a right or wrong answer.
- In Station 2, students can resolve differences of opinion by consensus or majority rule. Remind students of classroom norms, such as listening and respect, to help them resolve conflicts.



Materials

To be photocopied

Station reflections handout

After you have completed the activities at each station, take a few minutes to discuss and write down your reflections.

Station	One new thing I learned is...	One question I have now is ...	One thing I could do now is ...
1 Can you vote if ...?			
2 Which level of government?			
3 Where am I?			

1. Circle up to three of the reflections that you wrote in the chart that you think are most helpful in answering the inquiry questions:

- What kinds of elections do we have in Canada?
- How can I engage in the process?

2. Explain why you chose those reflections in the space below.

Station 1

Can you vote if ...?

Station instructions

- 1 Complete the following **chart** together as a group.
Find as many answers as you can in the time given.


- 2 Use your **Internet search skills** to find the answers as if you were a real voter with that question.


- 3 Make sure that you are at the right **election agency** to find the answer.


- 4 Leave the chart here for the next group to continue to complete.

Station 1 – Can you vote if ...?

Student activity sheet

Complete as many squares as you can!

Who runs my elections? Write in the names and websites of your election agencies so that you can check if you are on the right page:

	Federal elections	Provincial/ territorial elections	Municipal/ local elections
Name	Elections Canada		
Website	elections.ca		

Situation	Federal elections	Provincial/ territorial elections	Municipal/local elections
Your grandparent is in a wheelchair. Is their polling place accessible?			
Your family just moved to this community two months ago. Can your parents vote?			
Happy birthday! You are now 16 years old. Can you register to vote?			
Your dad forgot his wallet at home, but he does have a prescription bottle with his name and address on it. Can he use that as identification to vote?			
Your mom wants to work in the election. Can she still vote?			
Your family will be away on Election Day. Can your parents still vote?			

Station 2

Which level of government?

Station instructions

- 1** Read aloud each **headline news card**. Decide together which level of government you think is responsible for that topic. Sort the cards into three piles:
 - **Federal responsibilities**
 - **Provincial/territorial responsibilities**
 - **Municipal/local responsibilities**

- 2** Check your answers using the **reference sheet**.

- 3** As a group, make a list of **5 to 10 topics** that you care most about. Which level of government is responsible for each of your topics?

- 4** Discuss and reflect: What would your group like to see happen? Choose one topic at each level that your group cares about. How could you get involved?

Station 2 – Headline news cards

Cut apart the following cards to prepare this station.

Headline news card Garbage strike leads to raccoon problems in many neighbourhoods	Headline news card Should we eliminate nickels and dimes? Opinion	Headline news card Armed forces to help with response to spring flooding
Headline news card New high school to be built in growing community	Headline news card Community soup-tasting competition raises funds for youth programs	Headline news card Electrical fire forces evacuation of business
Headline news card Changes coming in university tuition fees	Headline news card Investment in public transit sparks renewal in downtown core	Headline news card Report proposes changes to media regulations
Headline news card Historic land deal signed with a First Nation	Headline news card Improvements announced for the Trans-Canada Highway in a national park	Headline news card Government to spend millions on upgrades to highways and roads
Headline news card Bad weather causes major mail delays	Headline news card Property taxes will increase to pay for new water treatment plant	Headline news card Funding increase for mental health care will cut wait times

Reference sheet – Responsibilities

Note: Some responsibilities are shared among different levels of government.

Federal government responsibilities	Provincial/territorial government responsibilities	Municipal/local government responsibilities
• Citizenship and passports • Criminal law • Currency • Federal taxes • Fisheries • Foreign affairs and international trade • Indigenous lands and rights • National defence • Official languages • Parks Canada • Postal service • Telecommunications policy • Veterans affairs	• Colleges and universities • Education • Hospitals and health care • Natural resources • Property and civil rights • Provincial/territorial law and courts • Provincial/territorial parks • Provincial/territorial road maintenance • Provincial/territorial taxes • Social services	• Animal control • Community centres • Fire protection • Land use planning (zoning) • Municipal/local parks • Municipal/local police • Municipal/local road maintenance • Public transit • Recreation and community facilities • Waste management • Water supply and treatment

Station 2 – Which level of government?

Student activity sheet

1. Sort the headline news cards into federal, provincial/territorial and municipal/local responsibilities first, then check your answers using the reference sheet.
2. Brainstorm: What are the topics we care about most in this group?
Make a list of 5 to 10 topics that are most important to you as a group.

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3. Sort our topics: For each topic you listed above, what level of government is responsible?
Label each issue with **F** (federal), **P/T** (provincial/territorial) or **M/L** (municipal/local).
4. Discuss, brainstorm and reflect:

	Federal	Provincial/territorial	Municipal/local
The topic we care most about			
What we would like to see happen			
How we could get involved			

Station 3

Where am I?

Station instructions

- 1 Examine the maps provided by your teacher:
 - **Our federal electoral districts in our province/territory**
 - **Our provincial/territorial electoral districts**
 - **Our municipal/local electoral districts**

- 2 Describe how the electoral districts are **similar** and **different**.

- 3 Complete the **organizer** on the station 3 activity sheet.

Station 3 – Where am I?

Student activity sheet

1. Examine the maps to be sure that you understand where your school is located.

How are your electoral districts similar and different? Write down at least three observations about their similarities and differences.

2. Complete the organizer as a group using the maps and the Internet.

	Federal	Provincial/territorial	Municipal/local
The name of our school's electoral district			
The title of the elected official who represents our school's area			
The name of the elected official who represents our school's area			
How we can contact our elected officials about a topic that is important to us			



Background information

For teachers

Station 3 – Where am I?

Maps of the electoral districts

Province/territory	Number of federal electoral districts	Links to federal electoral district maps	Number of provincial/territorial electoral districts	Links to provincial/territorial electoral district maps*
Alberta	37	Alberta	87	Alberta
British Columbia	43	British Columbia	93	British Columbia
Manitoba	14	Manitoba	57	Manitoba
New Brunswick	10	New Brunswick	49	New Brunswick
Newfoundland and Labrador	7	Newfoundland and Labrador	40	Newfoundland and Labrador
Northwest Territories	1	Northwest Territories	19	Northwest Territories
Nova Scotia	11	Nova Scotia	55	Nova Scotia
Nunavut	1	Nunavut	22	Nunavut
Ontario	122	Ontario	124	Ontario
Prince Edward Island	4	Prince Edward Island	27	Prince Edward Island
Quebec	78	Quebec	125	Quebec
Saskatchewan	14	Saskatchewan	61	Saskatchewan
Yukon	1	Yukon	21	Yukon
Canada	343	Elections Canada Maps Corner	780	

* Please note that some websites may provide information in only one official language.

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with all provincial and territorial electoral agencies,
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