

Electoral College

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to identify how the Electoral College process works.

Primary resources for starting this lesson:

- [Presidential Election Process](#)
(The usa.gov site is a great place to start for explaining the full election process. It opens with a video on “How to Become President of the United States” and includes a downloadable infographic showing steps to becoming president, from primaries and caucuses to the Electoral College.)
- [PBS LearningMedia](#)
(This engaging video tells about the history of the Electoral College and modern-day concerns about the Electoral College)
- [Library of Congress](#)
(This site has extensive resources about the presidential voting process, including the history and foundation of the Electoral College)
- [National Archives](#)
(This site is a good resource, with a history of the Electoral College, information on electors, FAQs, and links to more National Archives pages with information on U.S. elections and voting.)

Lesson:

1. Have the students answer the following discussion questions aligned with any of the resources listed above:
 - a. In your own words, explain what the Electoral College is.
 - b. What is an elector and what is his/her responsibility?
 - c. Explain the differences between the popular vote and the electoral vote.
 - d. Explain one issue that has occurred as a result of the electoral vote and the popular vote not coinciding.
2. Using [this link from the Library of Congress](#), have students research and answer the following questions in regard to the Electoral College.

Explain the role of an elector.	What are some potential flaws in the electoral college?

3. Have students log into PBS LearningMedia to use [this digital, interactive Electoral College map](#) that allows them to see results from previous elections and predict the outcome in 2020. Have students answer the following questions:
 - a. What was the first presidential election the state of Texas participated in?
 - b. During the 1860 election, which state holds the most delegates?
 - c. Why are there two election cycles during the 1864 election?

4. Now have the students play with the 2020 election cycle map by choosing which states may vote Republican or Democrat. Be sure to encourage students to look at the previous 2016, 2012, and 2008 election cycles to see if certain states historically vote for one party over the other. Discuss the role of “swing states” and why the dominant party might change from election to election.

5. Afterward, have the students answer the following reflection question:
 - a. *According to your map, which party do you predict will win the 2020 election? Please explain why you believe this party will win and be sure to support your answer based on the voting patterns of certain states during the 2012 and 2016 presidential cycles.*

7. Have students complete a self-reflection about the Electoral College:

Reflection Prompt:

Do you believe the Electoral College is an efficient and effective way to represent the country’s preference when choosing a president? Please explain why or why not, using what you’ve learned today.

