

Citizens, Not Spectators
Lesson 1: Becoming a Voter
Fall

Teacher Resource 1: Quick Vocabulary

Absentee ballot An election ballot, usually returned by mail, for a voter who cannot be present at the polls.

Abstain To refuse to exercise the right to vote.

Amendment A change to the U.S. Constitution or the constitution of a state. Voters must approve any changes to a constitution.

Apolitical To remain unconcerned with politics. No discussion or materials pertaining to politics or the ballots are allowed within a polling site. This includes buttons, banners, posters, and the like that mention a candidate or ballot question.

Citizen A person who is legal member of a nation, country, or other organized, self-governing political community, such as any of the fifty U.S. states.

Democracy A form of government in which power is held by the people. The people exercise their power either directly or through elected representative.

Direct Democracy A form of government in which the people themselves meet and make the laws that they decide are needed.

Felony A crime, such as murder, considered more serious than a misdemeanor and subject to more stringent punishment.

Independent voter A person who chooses to register to vote with no party affiliation. This choice is made on a registration to vote card. The decision to register as an independent voter does not register a voter with any third party, although these third parties are often referred to as independent parties. In some states registered independent voters cannot participate in primary elections.

Initiative A proposed law that voters can place on the ballot in some states. If the initiative is passed, it will become a law or constitutional amendment.

Popular sovereignty

Proposition

Referendum

Register

Registrar of voters

Registration list

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Student Handout 2: Who Can Register to Vote in the United States?

Directions: As your teacher explains the requirements to register to vote, make a list of these requirements. Your first list will be for all citizens of the United States, and the second list will include your state's additional requirements.

The U.S. Constitution sets requirements for voter registration and voting that must be followed by every state. You can register to vote if you meet all of these qualifications.

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
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Our State's Additional Requirements

Directions: Add your state's registration requirements here.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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Teacher Resource 2: State Voting Qualifications

This resource provides detailed information on state requirements for voting. Teacher Resources 3 provides an abbreviated list of general voting requirements and space to list your state's requirements. You can project Teacher Resource 3 on a screen or the classroom board.

Each state has its own laws about who can register and who can vote. Some states allow seventeen-year-old citizens to register as long as they reach their eighteenth birthday by the next Election Day. For your state's specific requirements, visit the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (http://www.eac.gov/voter_resources/contact_your_state.aspx) or your secretary of state's homepage.

Some states have sought to avoid potential election fraud caused by nonresident voting by establishing state residency requirements. A reasonable and durational state residency requirement may be acceptable if it adheres to the Supreme Court's decision in *Dunn v. Blumstein*, 405 U.S. 330 (1972) (see <http://supreme.justia.com/us/405/330/index.html>).

However, the U.S. Constitution sets requirements for voter eligibility that must be adhered to by every state. You will qualify to register to vote if you meet all of the following requirements:

1. You are a citizen of the United States.

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

-Fifteenth Amendment, Section 1

2. You are at least eighteen years of age by the date of any election.

“The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.”

-Twenty-sixth Amendment, Section 1

3. You are not imprisoned or on parole for conviction of a felony. (This requirement varies by state.) For more information, visit Justia.com :

<http://supreme.justia.com/constitution/amendment-14/92-voter-qualifications.html>

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Teacher Resource 3: Who Can Register to Vote in the United States?

Teacher directions: Project the lists below on a screen or the classroom board.

Who Can Register to Vote in the United States?

The U.S. Constitution sets requirements for voter registration and voting that must be followed by every state. You can register to vote if you meet all of these qualifications:

1. You are a citizen of the United States.
 2. You are at least eighteen years of age by the date of the election.
 3. You are not in prison or on parole because you have been convicted of a felony.
 4. You have not been judged by a court to be mentally incompetent to register to vote.
 5. You have registered to vote your state's required number of days to the election.
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Our State's Additional Requirements

Directions: Make a list of your state's registration requirements.