

University of Virginia Center for Politics



What Does the President Do?

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the qualifications and responsibilities of the President.

Objectives:

1. Students will identify the qualifications for the office of President of the United States.
2. Students will understand the responsibilities of the Presidency.
3. Students will analyze the roles of the President.

Key Words:

qualification oath eligible
Constitution

Materials:

1. Biographies of past presidents and presidential candidates. It may be helpful to schedule a trip to the media center or computer lab.

Procedure:

1. Discuss who is eligible to be for President of the United States. This is determined in a section of the Constitution, which established our form of government over 200 years ago. It says, "No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States."

- a. You must be a citizen of the United States who was born here, not in another country.
 - b. You must be 35 years old.
 - c. You must have lived in the United States for 14 years.
- Ask to students to identify reasons they think the Framers of the Constitution established these requirements. What was different about our country 200 years ago? What is the same? Are these still good requirements?
 - Have students name famous people who are eligible to run for the presidency.
 - Research the biographies of presidential candidates to determine their eligibility.
 - Have students name requirements they would add.



2. Discuss the Presidential Oath of Office. It reads,

I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

- When are other times when people take oaths?
- According to the oath, what is the president responsible for doing?
- Have students rewrite the oath of office. What do they think it most important for the president to do?

3. What is the role of the President? The president's job means that he or she has several different roles to fill. Explain that there are lots of jobs like this. For example, teachers instruct students but also meet with parents, plan activities, help with projects around the school, and work to acquire new skills and training.

- Break the students into groups. Have them work in a group to create a skit in which they will demonstrate how the President fulfills each role.

Head of the Executive Branch

The President plays a large role in making our laws. His job is to approve laws that Congress creates. When the Senate and the House of Representatives approve a bill, they send it to the president. If he agrees with the bill, he signs it and the law goes into effect. If the President doesn't like the bill, he can refuse to sign it. This is called a veto. The President cannot write bills but he can suggest bills to Congress.

Head of State

The president meets with leaders of other countries and can make treaties with them. The senate must approve any treaty before it becomes official.

Chief of Government

The president oversees all of the government agencies such as the FBI, CIA, Department of Education, Department of Defense, etc.

Head of the US Military

The President can authorize the use of troops overseas without declaring war. To officially declare war, he must get approval of Congress.

Extensions:

1. Ask students what it would be like to be President. What role would they be best at? Why? Which seems the hardest?



2. Discuss the role of the Vice-President.
3. If a President cannot write a bill, what could he do if he wanted a specific law?
Elicit from children in a discussion.