

Module 9A: The Duties of Citizens

A

Do you know the responsibilities of a U.S. citizen? In pairs or small groups, discuss these sentences. Write a, b, or c on each line. Then check your answers on page 119.

a = things you must do

b = things you should or may do

c = things you mustn't or shouldn't do

1. Oppose the Constitution of the United States.
2. Protect your own rights and respect the rights of others.
3. Obey the laws of the nation, state, county, and city.
4. If you disagree with a policy or law, write your representative or senator to try to change it.
5. Serve in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force if there is a draft.
6. Join the armed forces in peacetime.
7. Serve on a jury if the court calls you and you are not excused.
8. Stop work temporarily to do jury duty.
9. Pay income taxes on time or pay the penalties.
10. Refuse to report all your income so that your tax bill will be lower.
11. Register to vote.
12. Learn about the candidates (people running for office) and issues (topics of discussion) before every election.
13. Discriminate against women, blacks, or members of national groups.
14. Attend community or public meetings.
15. Stay away from your children's school and refuse to help them with their homework.
16. Volunteer (work without pay) in the community.
17. Speak only your native language.
18. Take English classes at a local school or adult school.

B

In groups, tell the duties and responsibilities of U.S. citizens. You can use this sentence pattern.

As a citizen, you

have to
mustn't
ought to
shouldn't

_____.

C

Which sentences do you agree with? Check them. Then in groups, choose one sentence and talk about it for one minute. Your classmates will agree or disagree and tell the reasons for their opinions.

1. If you don't agree with a law, it is your responsibility to try to change it.
2. There should be no military draft, and only volunteers should serve in the armed forces.
3. Everyone should serve on a jury even if it is difficult to leave work and take the time for jury duty.
4. Everyone cheats on income tax because it is unfair.
5. You should not try to lower your tax obligation because tax money is necessary to improve your community and the country.
6. If citizens don't vote, the system of the U.S. can't be truly democratic.
7. You can make an important difference in your community if you attend public meetings.
8. Discrimination is against the law because members of all races, religions, and nationalities are equal.
9. You should join the PTA (Parent-Teachers Association) at your children's school.
10. You can volunteer to help at a hospital, church, school, or community organization even if your English is not very good.
11. It is important for all citizens and residents of the U.S. to know English well.
12. You can learn English better if you get involved in community activities.

Answers to Exercise A

1. c 2. a 3. a 4. b 5. a 6. b 7. a 8. a 9. a 10. c 11. b 12. b 13. c 14. b 15. c 16. b 17. c 18. b

D

Citizens and residents of the U.S. sometimes write their opinions in “Letters to the Editor.” These appear in local newspapers, and other readers may write answers. In small groups, discuss these “Letters to the Editor” and write answers to them.

1.

Dear Editor:

Many states are changing their laws, even their constitutions, to make English the official state language. Why do they want these “English only” laws? People use English all over America! Of course, everybody should learn English, but I’m afraid that these new laws will discriminate against me and my people. My native language is important to me. I want to use it when I pray and when I have meetings with friends from “the old country.” I also put bilingual signs in my store, and I want my children to continue to get bilingual help in school. I know my English will never be good enough to understand voting or tax documents, so I want the government to continue to prepare these papers in two languages. I believe that a great nation should have plenty of room for different cultures and languages.

2.

Dear Editor:

Why should I pay my taxes honestly? My neighbor makes dresses, and she doesn’t pay tax on her earnings from them. I am a waitress and I don’t want to report my tips. What does the government do with all that tax money? The city hasn’t repaired our street. Gangs, not the police, are controlling our neighborhood. There are not enough teachers in my daughter’s school. After I pay my tax bill each year, I have no money left to buy health insurance. When my daughter broke her arm last year, my husband and I had to spend \$3000 of our own money because the government didn’t give us any help.

E

In your local newspaper, find a letter of interest about a national, state, or local issue. Read and discuss it as a class. You might want to write an answer together and send it to the newspaper.

Module 9B: Voting

A

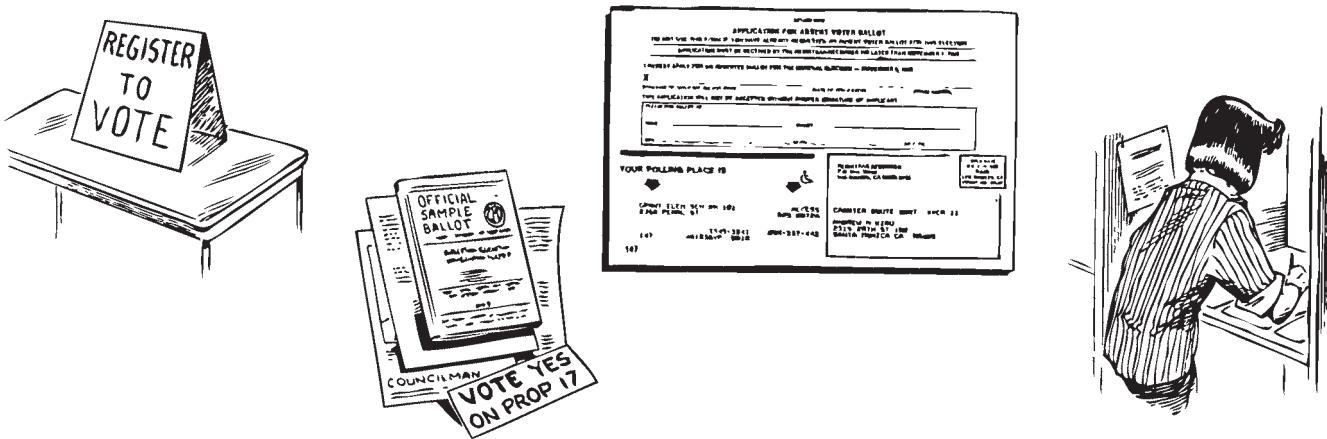
Work in groups. Discuss these questions about elections in the U.S. Decide on the answers and then check them on page 123.

1. What are the primaries?
 - a. the first general elections of new states
 - b. party elections in individual states
2. Who do voters choose in a closed primary election?
 - a. Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates of their own political party
 - b. the mayor, city council members, sheriff, and district attorney
3. What happens at the national convention of a political party?
 - a. Local officials reform the politics of all opposing parties.
 - b. Elected delegates nominate candidates for President and Vice President and decide on a party “platform” (political position).
4. How often and when is there a national election?
 - a. Congress decides the date of a national election.
 - b. every four years on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November
5. How often and when do state and local elections take place?
 - a. The dates vary from state to state, but they are often at the same time as national elections.
 - b. every two years on February 28 or 29
6. What is the “electoral college” process?
 - a. a system of indirect voting for President and Vice President
 - b. a group of professors and teachers in political schools
7. How many “electors” does each state get in the electoral college?
 - a. The number of electors depends on the size (area) of the state and the date of admission to the Union.
 - b. The number of electors for each party is equal to the number of that state’s representatives and senators.
8. After citizens vote in a national election, how does the electoral college process work?
 - a. The Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates of the party with the highest number of votes in each state win all the electoral votes of that state.
 - b. The candidates of each party win electoral votes in proportion to the popular vote (the percentage of votes they have received in the whole country).
9. Can the electoral process be changed?
 - a. No, because all the states are satisfied with it.
 - b. Yes, but only with a Constitutional amendment.

B

Work in pairs. Look only at this page. To answer your partner's questions about voting, find the information and tell it to your partner. He or she will take notes.

- All U.S. citizens (both sexes and all races) over the age of eighteen can vote, except criminals and the mentally ill.
- The right to vote is the most important right of U.S. citizens, as well as the most important responsibility. All votes have equal value. If citizens don't vote, the system of democracy can't be truly representative.
- It depends on state law. For example, California requires ninety days' residence in a county and thirty days' residence in a precinct (voting district) before you can vote there.
- No, you don't. No state may give you a literacy (reading and writing) test or charge you a poll (voting) tax before you vote.
- You can get a voter registration form at many public locations, such as post offices and libraries. You can also call the county clerk or Registrar of Voters to get a form. Fill it out and send it in.
- You can inform yourself about the candidates from T.V., radio, newspapers, and advertising mail. You can also get brochures, pamphlets, and newsletters from the headquarters of political parties.
- If you can't get to the polling place, you can get an absentee ballot from the Registrar of Voters.
- The back of your sample ballot (voting booklet) will tell you your polling (voting) place.
- No, you don't. You can register as a party member if you want to, but you can also write "no party" on the voter registration form.
- To vote, go to your polling place, give the volunteers there your name and address, and get a ballot. All voting is secret. Read the instructions carefully to vote.



C

Answer the questions with information from these ballot parts.

**DEMOCRATIC
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE Vote for One	AL GORE	Democratic	2  <input type="radio"/>
	PAUL SIMON	Democratic	3  <input type="radio"/>
	JESSE JACKSON	Democratic	4  <input type="radio"/>
	LYNDON LAROUCHE	Democratic	5  <input type="radio"/>
	MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS	Democratic	6  <input checked="" type="radio"/>

1. What kind of election (primary or general) was this ballot for? _____

For which party? _____

2. Who did the voter vote for? _____

Vote for One Party	MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS , for President	Democratic	2  <input type="radio"/>
	LLOYD BENTSEN , for Vice President		
	RON PAUL , for President	Libertarian	4  <input type="radio"/>
	ANDRE V. MARROU , for Vice President		
	LENORA B. FULANI , for President	Independent	6  <input type="radio"/>
	B. KWAKU DUREN , for Vice President		
	JAMES C. GRIFFIN , for President	American Independent	8  <input type="radio"/>
	CHARLES J. MORSA , for Vice President		
	GEORGE BUSH , for President	Republican	10  <input type="radio"/>
	DAN QUAYLE , for Vice President		

3. What offices were these candidates running for? _____

4. How many political parties had candidates on the ballot? _____

5. Who was the Democratic candidate for President? _____

For Vice President? _____

6. What party did Ron Paul and Andre V. Marrou belong to? _____

7. What year was this election? _____ Who won? _____

Answers to Exercise A:

1. b 2. a 3. b 4. b 5. a 6. a 7. b 8. a 9. b

Module 9C: Election Issues

A The Power of the People

If enough citizens strongly oppose an elected government official, they can start a movement for a recall (removal from office). First, they have to gather the required number of signatures on a petition. Then they “campaign” to present their views to the people. Finally, the voters decide on the recall issue at an election.

In a similar way, by collecting enough signatures on a petition, citizens can put an initiative (proposed law) on the ballot. The state legislature can also present a ballot measure directly to the voters in the form of a referendum. Occasionally a referendum, such as a protest against an unfair law, comes directly from the people. An initiative or referendum appears on the ballot in the form of a “proposition” or “state measure” and can cover only one issue. It needs a majority of votes to pass.

B Match the words with their meanings. Write the letters on the lines.

1. ___ an initiative	a. the voting booklet or card
2. ___ a petition	b. usually, a measure presented to the voters by the legislature
3. ___ a recall	c. a state or local measure on the ballot
4. ___ a referendum	d. removal of an official from office
5. ___ the ballot	e. a signed request or demand
6. ___ a proposition	f. a measure begun by action of the people

C Write T for true and F for false. Correct the false sentences.

1. ___ If a politician wins an election, there is no way for the voters to remove him or her from office.
2. ___ To put a recall or an initiative measure on the ballot, the voters must get the support of all major political parties.
3. ___ Citizens can protest an unfair law through a referendum.
4. ___ A proposition on the ballot needs the approval of all registered voters to pass.

D**An Example of a Ballot Initiative**

The goal of Proposition 99 (state of California, 1988) was to raise the cigarette tax from \$.10 to \$.35 per pack and to add taxes to other tobacco products. Revenue from this tax would go to the following: 45% for medical care to the poor, 20% to help people to stop smoking, 5% to study diseases caused by smoking, 5% to protect wildlife and parkland, and 20% for any of the above programs.

Opponents of Proposition 99 believed that doctors and hospitals would receive most of the tax money, not poor people. They said that the measure would unfairly tax one group of citizens, smokers. They also warned that the tax would cause people to smuggle cigarettes (bring them illegally) from other states.

Supporters said that the 25-cent tax was not high and that smokers should pay the high costs of disease and fire damage caused by cigarettes. They did not believe that an additional cigarette tax would lead to smuggling because the taxes in nearby states were already higher than those in California.

E**List arguments for and against Proposition 99. (You can add opinions of your own.) Then mark your “vote” on the ballot.**

For

1. tax - not high

2. _____

3. _____

Against

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

99**CIGARETTE AND TOBACCO TAX. BENEFIT FUND. INITIATIVE.**

Imposes additional cigarette and tobacco tax for medical care, health education, other purposes. Fiscal Impact: Raises state revenues of approximately \$300 million in 1988-89 (part-year) and \$600 million in 1989-90 (first full-year). State administrative costs are estimated at \$500,000 in 1988-89 and \$300,000 in subsequent years.

159**YES** ➔ **160****NO** ➔

F**An Example of a Referendum**

In 1988, the California legislature presented Proposition 84, a bond referendum, to the people. (A bond is a way for the government to keep borrowed money for a long time. Private buyers purchase the bonds, and the government pays back the money with interest from tax revenues.)

Proposition 84 asked for \$300 million in bonds to help solve the problem of the homeless (people without places to live). Here is the measure that appeared on the ballot:

84 HOUSING AND HOMELESS BOND ACT OF 1988. This act provides for a bond issue of three hundred million dollars (\$300,000,000) to provide funds for a housing program that includes: (1) emergency shelters and transitional housing for homeless families and individuals, (2) new rental housing for families and individuals including rental housing which meets the special needs of the elderly, disabled, and farmworkers, (3) rehabilitation and preservation of older homes and rental housing, and (4) home purchase assistance for first-time homebuyers.	107 YES → <input type="radio"/> 109 NO → <input type="radio"/>
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Supporters of the measure said that it would get homeless people off the streets. It would help many people rent apartments and buy homes. The money would also create jobs and improve the economy.

Opponents of Proposition 84 said that the government should not try to solve the homeless problem with tax money. Instead, it should make it easier to build new housing with more lenient building laws. It should also change city zoning laws to open more space for low-income housing.

G**Write the words from the ballot measure in F.**

The goals of Proposition 84 were:

to build emergency (1) **shelters** for (2) _____ people; to provide new (3) _____ housing for people with special needs, such as (4) _____, (5) _____, and farmworkers; to make possible the (6) _____ and (7) _____ of older homes and rental housing; and to help (8) _____ purchase homes.



List arguments for and against Proposition 84. (You can add opinions of your own.) Then mark your “vote” on the ballot in F.

For

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Against

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Election Issues

Candidates for election should present their opinions on the issues so that citizens can base their voting decisions on those views. Here are some issues from a recent election:

- Should abortion (ending a pregnancy) be legal?
- Should there be public health insurance for all U.S. residents?
- Should tax money go to the development of fuel sources of energy other than coal and oil?
- Should it be illegal to smoke in all public places?
- Should the government test everyone in the U.S. for AIDS?
- Should the government cut down on defense spending to have more money for education, health care, and protection of the environment?



Work in groups of six to ten. Choose one of the national issues in I. Then divide your group into two smaller equal groups. One of these small groups will list reasons to answer the question *yes*, and the other will list reasons to answer the question *no*.

Have a “political debate” on the issue for the class. One “speaker” from the “yes” group will tell the class an argument, a student from the “no” group will tell an opposing argument, and so on. Then the class will discuss and vote on the issue.

Repeat the activity with another issue and another group of “debaters.”