**Voting Matters to Me**

The Why, Who, and How of Voting

A Four-Lesson Unit

**Designed for high school students to inspire**

**them to become life-long voters**

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# Lesson Two: Essentials of Voting

This lesson covers critical information about voting and Minnesota election law. It can stand alone as an informative lesson on elections, or provide content applied in the precinct polling place simulation in Lesson 3: Voting as Easy as 1-2-3.

Grades: 9-12

Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies

9.1.1.1.1 Demonstrates skills that enable people to monitor and influence state, local and national affairs.

9.1.1.1.2 Demonstrate the skills necessary to participate in the election process including registering to vote, identifying and evaluating candidates and issues, and casting a ballot.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to understand information on why people vote, who votes and how people vote. Eligible students will be given an opportunity to register to vote.

MATERIALS

Teacher Materials

* Essentials of Voting PowerPoint

Video

* [It’s Election Year, Minnesota!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgitJk7IE9A&feature=youtu.be) (2 minutes)  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgitJk7IE9A&feature=youtu.be
* [Vote Early, Vote Absentee!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5k4xay2Yvc&feature=youtu.be) (1 minute 30 seconds)  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5k4xay2Yvc&feature=youtu.be

Student Handouts

* Handouts included in this packet:
  + Who? What? How? Graphic Organizer
  + Essentials of Voting Vocabulary and Quizlet
  + Voter’s Bill of Rights
  + Sample Ballot from 2014 General Election
* Handouts to download:
  + Students can register to vote online at mnvotes.org;
  + To download and print a paper voter registration application, visit: <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=4222>

DURATION

1 class period (about 50-60 minutes)

PROCEDURE

1. **Introduction Activity**

Have students begin completing a graphic organizer on voting based on their current knowledge about voting answering:

* Why do people vote?
* Who votes?
* How do you vote?

1. **Instruction Activity** Show Essentials of Voting PowerPoint made by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. There are 31 slides that review why voting is important, who can vote, how to vote in Minnesota, rights of voting and key things to remember.

* Students can complete the graphic organizer as they listen.
* Hand out election vocabulary terms as resource during PowerPoint.
* Hand out registration forms, sample ballots, and Voter’s Bill of Rights to supplement the PowerPoint.
* View videos
  + It’s Election Year, Minnesota!” (2 minutes) — Animated, fast-paced video provides voters with an overview of the voting process. Also available in Hmong, Somali and Spanish
  + "Vote Early, Vote Absentee!" (1 minute 30 seconds) — Animated video provides voters with details of the absentee voting process.

1. **Collect Completed Registration Forms —** If using paper forms, you can with the voter’s permission, mail or drop off the form on their behalf. Make sure the student understands the eligibility requirements for voting before signing. Applications must be received by the Office of the Secretary of State, or by the voter’s county auditor, within 10 days of when the voter signed and dated the application.
2. **Closure** - Review the last slide: Key Things to Remember. Do they have all of the key things on their graphic organizer? Summarize voter eligibility, the process of voting and voter rights. The voting simulation will demonstrate how the voting process works!

ASSESSMENT

Completion of Voter Graphic and possibly voter registration and sample ballot.

Class can do the election vocabulary quizlet at http://quizlet.com/45297243/minnesota-election-vocabulary-flash-cards/alphabetical

## Essentials of Voting PowerPoint

Double-click on the image below to open the PowerPoint Presentation



## Who? What? How? Graphic Organizer

## Voter’s Bill of Rights

1. You have the right to be absent from work for the purpose of voting in a state or federal election without reduction to your pay, personal leave, or vacation time on election day for the time necessary to appear at your polling place, cast a ballot, and return to work.
2. If you are in line at your polling place any time before 8:00 p.m., you have the right to vote.
3. If you can provide the required proof of residence, you have the right to register to vote and to vote on election day.
4. If you are unable to sign your name, you have the right to orally confirm your identity with an election judge and to direct another person to sign your name for you.
5. You have the right to request special assistance when voting.
6. If you need assistance, you may be accompanied into the voting booth by a person of your choice, except by an agent of your employer or union or a candidate.
7. You have the right to bring your minor children into the polling place and into the voting booth with you.
8. If you have been convicted of a felony but your felony sentence has expired (been completed) or you have been discharged from your sentence, you have the right to vote.
9. If you are under a guardianship, you have the right to vote, unless the court order revokes your right to vote.
10. You have the right to vote without anyone in the polling place trying to influence your vote.
11. If you make a mistake or spoil your ballot before it is submitted, you have the right to receive a replacement ballot and vote.
12. You have the right to file a written complaint at your polling place if you are dissatisfied with the way an election is being run.
13. You have the right to take a sample ballot into the voting booth with you.
14. You have the right to take a copy of this Voter's Bill of Rights into the voting booth with you.

## Essentials of Voting Vocabulary

**Quizlet link:** <http://quizlet.com/45297243/minnesota-election-vocabulary-flash-cards/>

**Absentee** - A method of voting before Election Day, in person or by mail, using an Absentee ballot (available 46 days before an election). Voters in the military and voters residing outside the United States must follow a special process for voting absentee.

**Address** - The numbers and names used to indicate where mail is to be sent. For voting purposes, this must be a place of residence, not a PO box.

**Automark** - A ballot-marking device that provides privacy and independence to voters who cannot, or choose not, to vote using a pen. It can display the ballot in large print or with a high-contrast background; it can read the ballot to the voter through headphones; and it allows the voter to select candidates through a keypad, touchscreen or sip-and-puff device.

**Ballot** - The piece of paper that the vote is written on.

**Ballot Counter** - The person or machine that counts votes.

**Ballot Marking** - When voters indicate their choices by filling in the oval next to the candidate of their choice.

**Delegate** - Someone who is picked to represent other people.

**Disenfranchisement** - When a person or a group of people are prevented from voting.

**Election Day Registration (EDR)** - The same as "Same Day Registration." In Minnesota and some other states, you are allowed to register at the voting site just before voting.

**Election Judge** - The person in charge of overseeing a polling place and making sure a fair election is conducted.

**Eligibility** - Meeting all of the requirements (such as age and citizenship status) to be able to vote.

**Endorsed Candidate** - A candidate who is publically supported by a political party, other people or organizations.

**Exit polling** - Surveys of voters, anywhere outside of the room being used as the polling place. An individual conducting an exit poll may only approach a voter after he/she has voted to ask him/her to participate in filling out an anonymous written questionnaire.

**Federal Election Commission (FEC)** - A federal agency with responsibilities related to campaigns for federal office.

**Felon** - Someone who has committed a felony (serious crime). In Minnesota, a felony is a crime punishable by a year or more of imprisonment. In Minnesota, a felon is able to vote after completing probation and parole (this is sometimes called "off-paper").

**Guardianship** - A legal arrangement where a court appoints a guardian to care for someone who is physically or cognitively impaired. People under guardianship have the right to vote, unless a court order revokes (takes away) their right.

**Misdemeanor** - A type of crime that is less severe than a felony. In Minnesota, this is a crime that is punishable by a sentence of 90 days or less. There are also "gross misdemeanors" and "petty misdemeanors." A person convicted of a misdemeanor can still vote.

**Municipality** - Any city or township.

**Parole** - When a prisoner is released from incarceration on the condition of good behavior. The person must complete his/ her parole before he/ she can register or vote.

**Political Party** - An association of individuals under whose name a candidate files for partisan office. (The current Major Political Parties in Minnesota are the Independence, Republican and Democratic-Farmer Labor parties. The current Minor Political Parties in Minnesota are the Grassroots and Libertarian parties. Other political party names may also appear on ballots for partisan offices.)

**Polling Place** - The physical location where voting takes place.

**Poll** - A place where votes are cast; also refers to a survey to assess public opinion or to forecast an election.

**Pre-registration** - Registering to vote before voting day. This can be done through the mail, online, or in person at an elections office.

**Precinct** - Also called an "election district." Each precinct contains one polling place. A city or county is often divided into many precincts.

**Primary** - An election at which voters choose the nominees for a general election.

**Probation** - An alternative to spending time in a correctional facility for a criminal offender. A felon on probation cannot vote, and it is a felony for a person on probation to register to vote in Minnesota.

**Recount** - A process where election officials review each ballot that was cast on Election Day to determine precisely the vote count between two candidates whose vote margin is extremely close.

**Referendum** - A ballot question posed to voters for them to decide. Often referendums ask voters to approve or reject taxes or funding for schools and local governments.

**Roster** - A list of voters registered in a precinct that contains additional information about each voter, such as current residence address and date of birth (DOB).

**Same Day Registration** - The same as "Election Day Registration." In Minnesota and some other states, you are allowed to register at the voting site just before voting.

**SSN** - Social Security Number

**Spoiled Ballot** - A ballot that has been filled out incorrectly (intentionally or unintentionally) and is therefore not counted.

**Turnout** - The percentage of eligible voters who voted in an election.

**US Citizen** - A person born in the United States of America or its territories, or a person who has completed the required steps for "naturalization." Only a US citizen of 18 years of age or older can vote in US elections.

**Voter Fraud** - Voting illegally, either intentionally or unintentionally. This includes voting more than once and voting when unqualified to do so. This is a felony.

**Voting Booth** - A booth or table where a person can cast their vote in secrecy.

**Voter Rolls** - A list of all registered voters in an area. Usually includes names and addresses.

**Vouching** - A way of proving residence in order to register on Election Day in Minnesota. A registered voter from your precinct can go with you to the polling place to sign an oath confirming your address.

**Write In** - When a person writes in the name of a candidate that is not listed on the ballot.

**Ward** - An area of a city that has been divided for some purpose of an election.

**Voter Suppression** - An attempt to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising the right to vote.

## Sample Ballot 2014 General Election Ballot



