



Which system of voting is best?

Lesson 2

Are elections the best way to decide who runs the country?

**Lesson 2:
Which system of voting is best?
Key Stage 3**

<p>Overview</p>	<p>Students learn about three voting systems used in democracies – first past the post, single transferable vote, and proportional representation. To apply their learning, they take part in a simulated vote count using each system. Based on what they have learnt, they then write a short report advising the Prime Minister on whether the current system should be changed and take part in a class discussion and vote on related questions.</p>
<p>Citizenship skills and concepts</p>	<p>Concepts: democracy, fairness, legislation Skills: interpreting data, analysis, evaluation</p>
<p>Essential teaching guidance</p>	<p>Timings for each task are given as guidelines. Please use your professional judgement when deciding how to deliver the tasks, depending on time available and your students' needs.</p> <p>This lesson covers three voting systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First past the post – the traditional system of voting used in the UK. This was introduced for some seats in 1884, after the third Reform Act, and was fully introduced in 1950 after the 1948 Representation of the People Act. In the first past the post system, each elector votes for one candidate, their vote is counted, and the person with the most votes wins. This is the simplest way to elect someone and is favoured as ‘one person, one vote’. However, often people win with less than 50% of the vote and in ‘safe seats’ it can feel like your vote is wasted. • Single transferable vote – this allows electors to vote in preference order. If your first choice is eliminated early, you can move on to your second choice. This means no vote is wasted, but it can be complicated to count and take a long time. • Proportional representation – this is the most complicated system, which requires electors to vote in a ‘list’. The proportion of votes received for each party on the list then becomes the proportion of seats the party wins (e.g. if 10% of the electorate votes for ‘A’, then ‘A’ wins 10% of seats. Critics feel this is a complex system that can result in minor

	<p>or extreme parties winning seats.</p> <p>In preparation for this lesson, copy and cut up the information cards and voting slips provided. You may want to laminate these so you can reuse them. If you wish, you could provide ballot boxes for the students to use in Task 2.</p> <p>Be mindful of the diverse viewpoints that may arise during this lesson. Develop an open classroom climate in which students feel safe when discussing sensitive and contentious issues and topics, and ensure you are in line with your school policies on such matters. You may find the ACT guidance on Prevent and Controversial Issues and ACT guidance on Political Impartiality in Citizenship helpful.</p>
<p>Learning questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What voting systems are used to elect candidates in democracies? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of different voting systems? • Should we keep the first past the post voting system in the UK?
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Slide presentation for the lesson</p> <p>Worksheet: Systems of voting (for Task 1)</p> <p>Resource: Voting system information cards (for Task 1)</p> <p>Resource: Voting slips for counting (for Task 2)</p> <p>Glossary of key terms</p>
<p>Differentiation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate the worksheet ‘Systems of voting’ by providing more scaffolding prompts. • The opportunity for peer support during the information gathering and vote counting tasks will help students to manage the complexity of the voting systems. • Prompt questions for the written task (Task 3) support students to chunk their written work into clear sections. • Use differentiated questioning – who, what, when, where, how and why – to create a range of accessible questions. • Use different levels of discussion tasks to support students, for example sharing opinions, analysing, solving a problem, or persuading. • Consider using no-hands-up questioning to encourage students to engage with the learning and reduce the likelihood of students being passive. Ensure sufficient ‘think time’ is provided before selecting a student or before moving on to another student to get the answer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When reviewing knowledge gained by the class, use targeted review questioning to stretch students. Give them an opportunity to develop ideas by bouncing a question around the room. ● Scaffold feedback – use prompting, recasting, eliciting, correcting, commenting on student language, and promoting learning through discovery. ● Use choral (whole class) responses for new terminology or to address misconceptions. ● Use hinge questions to ensure the class understands an important area of knowledge or concept before the lesson can progress. ● Give different levels of support, for example paired work, scaffolding frameworks, one-to-one, TA supported, model answers.
<p>Assessment opportunities</p>	<p>This lesson provides opportunities for formative assessment through live marking and feedback. As students are engaged in counting, it is a chance to observe, reteach and model practice.</p> <p>The written task (Task 3) includes a self-assessment checklist that students can use to support them in critically examining their own work.</p>

<p>Do now / starter / entry task</p> <p><i>(10 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Election pictures</p> <p><i>Slides 2 to 4</i></p> <p>Share slide 2, which shows four images related to the previous lesson. Working in pairs, ask students to take it in turns to pick an image and talk about what it shows and its relevance to the topic of elections. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ballot box – general election, local election, first past the post, ballot paper ● Acropolis, Athens – democracy, people rule ● Winston Churchill – Prime Minister, “Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried” ● House of Commons – general election, MPs, government, opposition <p>Bring the class together to share their ideas for each picture.</p> <p>This task will encourage recall and allow for different levels of knowledge.</p>
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	<p>Share slides 3 and 4 and explain that in this lesson you're going to be learning about different systems of voting and considering whether we should change the system used in the UK.</p>
<p>Task 1 <i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Systems of voting</p> <p><i>Slides 5 to 10</i></p> <p>As a starting point for this task, gauge students' prior knowledge of voting systems by discussing the questions on slide 5. They should know that in UK general elections we use a first past the post voting system (this was covered in the previous lesson). Can they tell you about any other voting systems used in democracies?</p> <p>Divide the class into groups of three and give each a pre-prepared set of the three information cards about different systems of voting.</p> <p>Give each student a copy of the worksheet 'Systems of voting'. Working independently, ask them to read the information on one of the cards and record the key points on their sheet. They should then swap cards within their group and do the same for each, until their sheet is complete. Encourage peer support if students are finding this task difficult.</p> <p>If a group finishes early, they could spend time discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each voting system and start to formulate a view on which they think is best.</p> <p>Bring the class back together and give students an opportunity to apply their learning by showing them the examples of ballot papers on slides 7 to 9. Can they identify which voting system is which?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slide 7 – first past the post ● Slide 8 – single transferable vote ● Slide 9 – proportional representation <p>As students identify and talk about each system, encourage them to draw on the information from their worksheets about key features, advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>Slide 10 shows each ballot paper and the voting system it is associated with.</p>

<p>Task 2 <i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Simulating a count</p> <p><i>Slides 11 to 16</i></p> <p>To illustrate the complexities of different voting systems, this task gives students an opportunity to experience being vote counters.</p> <p>Give each team/table a set of the first past the post voting slips (you will need to have prepared these before the lesson). For added authenticity, you could put the slips into a ballot box.</p> <p>Share slide 11, which outlines the first task. Working in their teams, ask the students to count the votes. Remind them that if someone has voted for more than one candidate, their ballot paper will be invalid.</p> <p>Ask each group to nominate a returning officer to declare the results by reading out how many votes each candidate has. Do all the groups agree? The results are shown on slide 12.</p> <p>You could ask students to complete this task as a race, to promote pace and engagement. You could also use discussion of the results to identify misconceptions and as an assessment opportunity.</p> <p>Repeat this task for a single transferable vote election, following the instructions on slide 13. Again, the results are shown on slide 14.</p> <p>Finally, show the proportional representation vote results on slide 15. Can the students work out how many seats each party has won?</p> <p>Ask groups to provide feedback, then share and discuss the results on slide 16. Take time to identify and clarify any misconceptions.</p>
<p>Task 3 <i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Should we keep the first past the post voting system?</p> <p><i>Slides 17 & 18</i></p> <p>Ask students to use what they have learnt about voting systems in this lesson to write a short report advising the Prime Minister on whether the current first past the post voting system should be changed.</p> <p>Share slide 17, which outlines what their writing should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An outline of the current, first past the post system ● A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the first past the post system ● A comparison between the current voting system and another voting system they have learnt about today ● Advice on which they think is best, with reasons why

	<p>Once the students have completed their reports, share slide 18 and ask them to carry out a self-assessment against the success criteria provided. If you have time, you could give students an opportunity to improve their work.</p>
<p>Plenary / reflection</p> <p><i>(10 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Which voting system is best?</p> <p><i>Slides 19 & 20</i></p> <p>Discuss the questions on slide 19 as a class, encouraging students to reflect on everything they have learnt today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which voting system do they think is best in a democracy? • Do they think every vote counts in the UK? • Should the UK scrap first past the post for elections? <p>To conclude the lesson, take a class vote on which of the three voting systems they have studied students think is the best. You could do this as a simple hands-up vote, a secret ballot, or ask students to move to a particular part of the room to register their vote. If you have time, you could encourage them to advocate for their favoured voting system to try to persuade others to move positions.</p>
<p>Takeaway task</p>	<p>Ask the students to visit the Electoral Reform Society website at: https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/</p> <p>Ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pick a voting system they haven't learnt about in today's lesson • present its advantages and disadvantages • contrast it with a system they have already studied <p>Which system do they think is better? Why?</p>
<p>Additional teacher links & resources</p>	<p>A useful website for a range of resources and guidance on all aspects of voting, democracy and Parliament: https://learning.parliament.uk/</p> <p>A comprehensive overview of the first past the post system in Britain's history. This website also offers useful information on the range of other voting systems available and the arguments outlining the need for reform of the electoral system: https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/how-long-have-we-used-first-past-the-post/</p>

Systems of voting

For each system of voting, record the key information such as:

- How is the winner decided?
- What are the advantages?
- What are the disadvantages?

First past the post

Proportional representation

Single transferable vote

First past the post

A voter receives a ballot paper which asks them to vote for **one** party/person. They cannot vote for more than one person otherwise their vote is **invalid** and not counted.

During the count, the number of votes cast for each person is totalled. This results in one winner – the candidate with the most votes. Sometimes, the candidate can win with less than 50% of the vote, meaning that most people did not vote for that person and they still won.

This system of voting tends to favour the larger political parties like Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

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Proportional representation

The simplest way of doing proportional representation is to give voters a list of parties and ask them to vote for the one they prefer. All votes are counted and the number of seats are allocated according to the number of votes received. For example, North West England might have 10 MPs and people may vote for the Labour Party to take 6, the Conservative Party 2, and the Green Party 2. This would be decided by the proportion of the votes cast for each party.

A proportional representation vote is simple to count, but the proportion requires more complex working out and can take longer. There are disagreements over how to calculate proportions so that smaller parties are not disadvantaged. This system works best by picking a party, not a person, which can make people feel detached from their MP.

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Single transferable vote

The single transferable vote system allows people to number their candidates in preference order, e.g. from 1 to 5. To win, candidates need to reach a certain number of votes, called a ‘quota’. Once the quota is reached, the candidate is elected. Any ‘extra’ votes are moved to the next preference.

If no one reaches the quota in round one, the least popular person is eliminated and their votes are ‘transferred’ to the next preference. This continues until a winner is selected.

Voters can use this method of voting to block parties they dislike or to ‘lend’ a vote to a party they like but is not their first choice. In a single transferable vote system every vote is counted and matters. However, it is complicated, takes a long time to count, and there can be errors in the counting.

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Darling, Paul (Labour)	X
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	X
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	X
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Darling, Paul (Labour)	
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Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	X

First past the post – voting slips

Darling, Paul (Labour)	X
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	X

Darling, Paul (Labour)	X
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	X
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
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Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	X
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Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	X
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Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
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Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	X

Single transferable vote – voting slips

Darling, Paul (Labour)	1
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	2
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Darling, Paul (Labour)	1
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	1
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	3
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	2

Darling, Paul (Labour)	1
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	2
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Single transferable vote – voting slips

Darling, Paul (Labour)	1	Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	3	Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	1
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	2	Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)		Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	
Darling, Paul (Labour)	2	Darling, Paul (Labour)	1
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	1	Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	3	Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	2
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)		Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	

Single transferable vote – voting slips

Darling, Paul (Labour)	X	Darling, Paul (Labour)	
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	X	Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	2
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	X	Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	1
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	X	Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	
Darling, Paul (Labour)	1	Darling, Paul (Labour)	1
Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	2	Kapoor, Savita (Conservative)	
Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	3	Bartosz, Piotr (Green)	2
Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	4	Gray, Sarah (Reform UK)	