Week 10

VOTING

Being an Informed Voter

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Even if you're not old enough to vote yet, the decisions made by elected officials can affect your school, your community, and your future. Becoming an informed voter starts long before your first trip to the ballot box. Learning how elections work, how to evaluate information, and how to recognize misinformation can help you make thoughtful decisions when the time comes. Your vote is one way your voice can be heard, and understanding the process is the first step toward becoming an informed and engaged citizen.

BIG IDEAS

EVERY VOTE HAS A VOICE
Voting is one way people participate in their communities and help shape decisions that affect schools, neighborhoods, and the future. Learning how elections work prepares you to participate when you're eligible.

BE INFORMED BEFORE YOU VOTE
Making informed decisions starts with understanding the candidates, issues, and ballot measures. Sample ballots, voter guides, and reliable sources can help you prepare before Election Day.

THINK CRITICALLY
Not everything you read online is accurate. Learning to recognize election misinformation and verify information from trustworthy sources helps you become a more informed voter.

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS
Voting isn't limited to a single day or location. Understanding options like early voting, mail-in voting, and provisional ballots helps eligible voters participate when the time comes.

KEY VOCABULARY

Early Voting: The opportunity to vote before Election Day at designated locations or by approved methods.

Election Misinformation: False or misleading information intended to confuse or influence voters.

General Election: An election in which voters choose among candidates or decide ballot measures.

Initiative: A process that allows citizens to propose laws or constitutional amendments for voters to consider.

Mail-In Voting: A voting method that allows eligible voters to cast a ballot by mail.

Nonpartisan: Not affiliated with or supporting a particular political party.

Primary Election: An election used to choose a political party's candidates for the general election.

Provisional Ballot: A ballot used when a voter's eligibility must be verified before the vote can be counted.

Sample Ballot: A copy of the official ballot that allows voters to review candidates and measures before voting.

Voter Guide: A publication or website that provides information about candidates, ballot measures, and the voting process.

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Learn it. Live it.

Voting is one way to participate in democracy, but your voice matters long before Election Day. Learning how to communicate respectfully with elected officials is an important civic skill that can help shape your community.

Challenge: Visit the Find Your Representative tool in the *Want to Know More?* section. Contact an elected official by email, letter, or phone to respectfully share your thoughts or ask a question about an issue that matters to you.

Reflection: How did it feel to communicate with an elected official? Why is it important for representatives to hear from the people they serve?

DID YOU KNOW?

About 4 million Americans turn 18 every year, yet less than 50% are typically registered in presidential years, and under 30% in midterms.

Source: *The Civics Center (2026)*

EXPLORE AND EXPLAIN

- Why is it important to register to vote before an election instead of waiting until Election Day?
- What are some reliable ways to research candidates and ballot measures before casting your vote?
- How can misinformation or AI-generated content affect voters, and what steps can you take to verify information before sharing it?
- How can becoming an informed voter help strengthen your community and democracy?

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

VIDEO

Are You an Informed Voter?

Explore how campaign messages, social media, and other sources can influence what voters think and learn how to make more informed decisions.

ARTICLE

49-Million Young Voters Could Shape the Midterms

Nearly 49 million young Americans can vote in the 2026 midterms. Find out who they are and why their participation matters.

INTERACTIVE

Who Represents You?

Find the elected officials who represent you, learn how to contact them, and discover how to make your voice heard.

"The decisions made by elected officials affect your life long before you're old enough to vote."

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