

# The Electoral College

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<b>Grade Level</b>	8 and High School
<b>Duration</b>	2 class periods

## National Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

#### Element 6: The Uses of Geography

17. How to apply geography to interpret the past

18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future

## AZ Standards

### ELA

#### Reading

##### Key Ideas and Details

8.RI.2 and 11-12.RI.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

#### Writing

##### Text Types and Purposes

8.W.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

d. Establish and maintain a formal style.

e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

11-12.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and

## Arizona Social Science Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### The use of geographic representations and tools helps individuals understand their world.

8.G1.1 Use geographic tools and representations to analyze historical and modern political and economic issues and events. Key tools and representations such as maps, globes, aerial and other photos, remotely sensed images, tables, graphs, and geospatial technology

HS.G1.1 Use geographic data to explain and analyze relationships between locations of place and regions. Key tools and representations such as maps, remotely sensed and other images, tables, and graphs

#### Examining human population and movement helps individuals understand past, present, and future conditions on Earth's surface.

8.G3.1 and HS.G3.5 Evaluate the impact of economic, political, and social decisions that have caused conflict or promoted cooperation throughout time.

#### Global Interconnections and spatial patterns are a necessary part of geographic reasoning.

8.G4.1 and HS.G4.1 Take an active stance on a geographic issue reflecting its scale (local, regional, state, national, or global)

### CIVICS

#### An understanding of civic and political institutions in society and the principles these institutions are intended to reflect including knowledge about law, politics, and government is essential to effective citizenship.

8.C3.1 Describe the impact of political and civic institutions such as political parties, interest groups, elections, and the media in shaping policy.

HS.C3.3 Analyze the impact of political parties, interest groups,

clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.  
d. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.  
e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

elections, and the media on political institutions.  
**Process, rules, and laws direct how individuals are governed and how society addresses problems**  
8.C4.4 Identify, research, analyze, discuss, and defend a position on a national, state, or local public policy issue including an action plan to address or inform others about the issue.  
HS.C4.3 Explain the procedures for elections at the local, state, tribal, and national levels.

## Overview

The Constitution of the United States outlines the process of how the president is elected. Students need to be aware of this process because they are the voters of the future.

## Purpose

In this lesson students will learn how the members of the electoral college are determined, how the electoral college operates, and its effect on presidential elections.

## Materials

- The Electoral College reading
- Electoral College Worksheet and Answer Key
- The United States (with state names) map
- The United States (with state names and electoral votes) map
- Electoral College Quiz and Answer Key
- Answer Key for Maps
- Scoring Guide for Essay

## Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Describe how the electoral college is organized.
2. Describe the purpose of the electoral college.
3. Analyze how the electoral college affected the results of presidential elections in multiple years.

## Procedures

*Note: This lesson will be updated with new information when the 2020 census data is analyzed and its effects are determined on the electoral college process.*

### SESSION ONE

1. Distribute The Electoral College reading. Instruct students that while reading the handout, they are to highlight or underline important information on how the electoral college is organized, its function in presidential elections, and any effects the Electoral College had on elections. Then, as a class, read and discuss the handout.
2. After finishing the reading and discussion, distribute the Electoral College Worksheet and the United States (with state names) map. Instruct students they are to do Question 1 on the worksheet and complete the coloring of the map; when that is done, they are to come get the United States (with state names and electoral votes) map to complete Question 2 and the coloring of that map. When this is completed, they are to continue working on the worksheet using the Electoral College reading as a reference. This may be done as homework.
3. Collect the maps and worksheet for an assessment.

### SESSION TWO

*Prior to the Session: Place signs in 3 parts of the classroom. In each of the 3 areas, post some chart paper and have a marker.*

1. *The electoral college works very well.*
2. *The electoral college needs to be revised.*
3. *The electoral college should be replaced with a new system.*

1. Introduce this session by discussing how the electoral college is a national issue. Its pros and cons are debated. Then have students show their opinions by moving to the part of the room that best represents their opinion on the topic.
2. Invite the groups to sit down in the area where they are gathered. Have the groups brainstorm their claims/evidence for their opinion. Have one member of the group record the contributions on the chart paper.
3. Explain to the students that they will be writing an essay taking a position on the electoral college. The essay must have a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. Share the Scoring Guide for Essay. Then students can work independently or in partners to write the essay.
4. Leave the chart papers on the wall and allow students from all three groups to view the contributions and get ideas for their essay.

### SESSION THREE

1. Distribute Electoral College Quiz and have students complete it.

## Assessment

### Social Sciences

The Electoral College Quiz can be used to assess social sciences. Eight out of ten points or 80% is considered mastery.

The United States (with state names) map and United States Map (with state names and electoral votes) map may be assessed for a geography grade. Sixteen out of twenty points or 80% is considered mastery.

The Electoral College Worksheet may be scored for a social sciences grade. Twenty-four out of twenty-nine points or 80% is considered mastery.

### ELA

The essay can be scored with the Scoring Guide. Mastery will be considered a score of 20 points or higher.

## Extensions

Students could create historical maps showing the electoral college results for the election of 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000 or 2016.

Divide students into groups and give each group either a regional map or list of states with each state's electoral votes. Then have each group create a cartogram of their region and report their results to the rest of the class. The class could then discuss if there is a region or regions that carry more weight due to their electoral votes. A lesson that describes how to make a cartogram can be found at:

<https://geoalliance.asu.edu/Cartogram>

Students could research to find out if there were ever any elections where an elector did not vote as pledged and if it affected the outcome of the election.

Before beginning the procedures for SESSION ONE, use the scenario: "You are running for President of the US. Which 10 states would give you enough votes to win?" Then give them a list of state populations with a list of corresponding number of congressmen. Have them order them from largest to smallest. After students have determined the states with the most electoral votes, ask, "How did this system come about? Let the students debate the fairness of states with large populations controlling the presidential elections. Then read the handout.

The class might discuss the idea of pledging to vote for a candidate. Opponents of the Electoral College system also point to the risk of so-called "**faithless Electors**." A "faithless Elector" is one who is pledged to vote for his party's candidate for president but nevertheless votes for another candidate. There have been 7 such Electors in this century and as recently as 1988 when a Democrat Elector in the State of West Virginia cast his votes for Lloyd Bensen for president and Michael Dukakis for vice president instead of the other way around. Faithless Electors have never changed the outcome of an election, though, simply because most often their purpose is to make a statement rather than make a difference.

## Sources

<https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>