



WHO CAN VOTE AND TYPES OF ELECTIONS

LEARNING OUTCOME

In this lesson you will learn about the different types of elections and see the difference between elections and referendums. You will also have the opportunity to hold your own election.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Once you are over 18, there are two reasons why as a citizen of Ireland, you would be asked to cast your vote: Elections and Referendums.

While you don't have to be a citizen to vote in a local election, not everyone can vote in a Séanad Éireann election.

Elections come in several forms. They can be Local, General, By-Elections, Presidential Elections or Elections to Séanad Éireann.

By law a General Election must be called in Ireland at least every five years, unless the fall of a government demands that one needs to be called first.

A Referendum is a special type of election, where citizens get to vote on proposals to make changes to The Constitution.

So, how do you Vote? Well, once you know you qualify, you need to register in order to be able to vote in any upcoming Elections or Referendums.

That way, about a week before an election you will receive a polling card in the post, giving you the details of when and where you need to go to cast your Vote.

When you arrive at the Polling Station, you bring the polling card so you can be identified and marked off the register. You're then given a ballot paper which you can mark your vote on and post in the ballot box.

The Ballot boxes are collected and counted after the Polling Station closes.

Why do you think its important to cast your vote in an election?



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ACTIVITY

The Learner Driver Permit Activity

Aim: The aim of this activity is for students to realise just how important it is for them to use their vote at the time of an election/referendum. This activity demonstrates what can happen if a large number of young people do not vote. It shows the difference in the result if everybody was to cast their vote.

Instructions: Download the Learner Driver Permit Vote Cards from Student & Teacher Resources, print or photocopy and cut them into individual role cards. Distribute these role cards making sure that there are enough Yes votes to pass the motion on the first ballot. This activity is based on a class of 30 students, but can be adapted for any number of students as long as the motion gets passed initially.

The Motion is as follows:

“The age at which a person can apply for a Learner Driver Permit is to be raised from 17 to 21 years of age.”

Ask the students to vote for/against the motion according to their voting role card and then count the votes. The motion is passed.

Ask the students to declare their identity and if and why they voted or not. Once this has been done ask the students to vote again, as themselves, based on their own opinions and see what happens. The chances are that the motion will be rejected if everybody votes!

Reflections: Discuss with the students their thoughts and opinions of both ballots and what they have learned about voting.

Follow Up: When everyone has a say in decision-making this is an example of democracy in action. If only one person or a small group of people make all the decisions this isn't a democracy, it's a dictatorship!

The Driving Permit Activity (adapted from The Driving License Activity in Phelan, D. (2005) *Vote! Exploring Democracy, Equality, Participation and Elections*)