



Activity Pack: Voting



HM Government





Welcome to the first of our additional resources aimed at Youth Leaders working with groups of Democracy Ambassadors. Each additional resource pack focuses on a different topic and should take around an hour to deliver, although you can adapt activities depending on the time you have available.

Aims & Objectives

By the end of this topic Democracy Ambassadors should:

- understand the importance of voting;
- know how the process of voting works; and
- know how to share their knowledge via social media safely.

Session overview



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Resources you will need

- A laptop/screen and access to the internet
- Flipchart paper and marker pens
- Large bags of wrapped sweets/chocolates (at least two different kinds)
- Coloured stickers
- Small pieces of paper and pens
- Copies of the peer to peer sharing handout on Keeping Yourself Safe Online
- More sweets or other small prizes (if you want to).

Activity 1: Let's vote on it (10 mins)



Note: Don't forget to be mindful of any allergies/dietary needs of the group.

1. Revisit your group agreement before you begin the session if this is needed.
2. Explain to the group that you're very pleased to see them back together and that you'd like to welcome them by giving them some sweets to share. Show them the unopened bags, and say that between them you'd like them to choose which bag they would like – only one will be opened.
3. Explain that each person will be allowed one vote – as in a democracy – and ask them to think (without discussing with anyone) about which bag of confectionery they would like.
4. As they are deliberating, move around the room and randomly tag about half of the participants with a sticker. When they have finished ask those people with stickers on them to move to the side of the room, and explain that unfortunately those with a sticker represent people who didn't register to vote, so they can't take part in this activity.
5. Give each of the remaining participants a small piece of paper and ask them to write down (without showing anyone) their preferred choice of sweets before folding the paper in half and giving it to you.
6. Once this has happened add up the totals, and give EVERYONE sweets from the bag that received the most votes.
7. As participants eat their sweets ask them some, or all, of the following questions:
 - How did it feel not being able to vote and therefore not being part of the democratic process?
 - How did it feel being able to vote and therefore being part of the democratic process?
 - Was the outcome different as a result of only some people voting? (You could ask the participants with stickers which sweets they would have chosen, to see if the results would have been different.)
 - Why was it important to make the voting process a secret? (What might have happened if it wasn't?)

Explain that voting in this way is a democratic process and try to draw out the positive aspect of this – how it feels to have your say, to feel part of a decision, to get the result you were looking for – and conversely how it feels when none of these things happen. Ask what kinds of votes they are routinely involved in (for example, which film to watch, whether to get the bus or train home with their friends) and what votes they expect to be involved in in the future (for example, voting for their local MP).

Conclude that it's only 100 years since some women in this country were given the right to vote, and even then they had to be aged over 30 and own their own property. It was still another 10 years before all women (over 21) were given a voice in UK democracy.

Activity 2: How do people vote in a General Election?

(10 mins)



- Watch the short clip, How does a General Election work? (by UK Parliament) <https://bit.ly/2Lo0CLq>. Before doing so warn participants they are going to take part in a quiz afterwards so they should pay close attention to the detail in the video.

Note: the clip is very short – you may actually decide your young people should watch it twice!

- Divide participants into two (or more) teams and ask them to write down their answers to the following multiple choice quiz questions:

1) What do you need to do in order to be able to vote?

- A) Register for a polling card.
- B) Get a passport.
- C) Request a letter of permission from your MP.

(Correct answer – A)

2) What are two of the different ways you can vote?

- A) In person and online.
- B) In person and by post.
- C) Online or by post.

(Correct answer – B)

3) When you are voting in a General Election what are you voting for?

- A) A local MP to represent you and your area in Parliament.
- B) Who you would like to be the next Prime Minister.
- C) Who you would like to become your local councillor.

(Correct answer – A)

4) What is a manifesto?

- A) The name of one of the political parties.
- B) A kind of ‘shopping list’ of what a political party hopes to achieve if elected.
- C) The name of the place you go to vote.

(Correct answer – B)

5) How long are polling stations open for on the day of an Election?

- A) 9am – 5pm.
- B) Midday until midnight.
- C) 7am – 10pm.

(Correct answer – C)

6) A hung parliament is where ...?

- A) One political party has won all the seats in Parliament.
- B) All the politicians in Parliament are given a day off after an election.
- C) No one political party has won enough seats to form a government on their own.

(Correct answer – C)

- Re-watch the clip one final time and ask the teams to mark one another’s answers. Award prizes if you would like to.
- Answer any other questions that arise, or commit to finding out the answers if you can’t!

Activity 3: Why don't some young people vote? (20 mins)



1. On a flipchart write 51.8%, 64.7% and 51.5% in large numbers, and ask if anyone can tell you what the numbers might represent. Encourage participants to discuss and debate – and hopefully to conclude eventually that they are the estimated percentages of young people (aged 18-24 to be precise) who voted in the last three General Elections. Can they guess what years they were and in what order? (Correct answers are 2010 – 51.8%, 2015 – 51.5% and 2017 – 64.7%). Are participants surprised by the figures at all?

2. Move on to ask and discuss the question 'Why do you think many young people don't vote?' Board blast answers as a group and encourage discussion. No answer is a silly answer.

Answers might include:

- feeling their voice doesn't count anyway;
- lack of transport/bus fare to get to a polling station;
- because their parents don't;
- feeling they don't relate to any of the parties or individuals involved;
- they simply don't know how to;
- feeling that voting is something only relevant to older people;
- feeling intimidated going into a strange building/following a process that's new to them;
- because their friends don't; or
- finding politics boring or strange or a completely foreign language to them.

3. Now change the question slightly and ask 'Why do you think young people *should* vote?' and discuss as a group. There are lots of great clips you could show during or after these discussions to help stimulate discussions further, such as:

- Why Should You Vote? (by Youth Debates) <https://bit.ly/2LnRCpB>
- Why Vote? (by The League of Young Voters) <https://bit.ly/2MuJOYx>

Do also take time here to discuss the suffrage movement on women's rights: the long struggle they had to have their voices heard and effect change for both themselves and future generations. For further information see:

- Eight facts you didn't know about the Suffragette movement (The Telegraph) <https://bit.ly/2MMI4ct>
- Why women won greater political equality by 1928 (BBC Bitesize) <https://bbc.in/2OtFTIh>

Activity 4: Breaking the barriers

(10 mins)



1. Summarise the session so far, explaining that we've established it's really important young people do use their voices and vote, but that there can be barriers to this, especially for some people. Now ask the participants to flip the initial question posed in Activity 3 – can they come up with any solutions to the barriers they identified? So, for example – if people find politics boring or difficult to understand, would a more consistent focus on politics and how it affects people's lives from an early age, be a possible solution, so that people always understand the importance of using their vote?
2. Make a list of possible solutions to some of the barriers, and where these are plausible why not encourage young people to think about taking these further in peer to peer sharing? For example: arranging a visit from/to their local MP's surgery with a few friends in order to build better relationships with their MP, or writing to their MP to discuss how our democratic systems can be made more accessible.

Note to Youth Leader

In preparation for the above activity you might like to watch Rick Edward's TED talk entitled 'How to Get Young People to Vote' <https://bit.ly/2MstuaO> which offers five solutions to the problem of encouraging more young people to vote (make it an online process, make it compulsory for first timers, offer a 'none of the above' option on voting offers, offer better access to information about the different parties, and work on getting 'more people like me' elected as MPs). This video is 13 minutes long and primarily aimed at adults, so you may only want to show part of it to your young adults.

Activity 5: Ideas for peer to peer sharing (10 mins)



1. Leading on from the previous activity, remind participants of the key aim of the Democracy Ambassadors programme – to share what they’ve learnt about democracy with their peers. You may want to revisit some of the content of the peer to peer sharing handout from the startup session, and this could be a good time to gather information about what they’ve done so far and how it’s been received by peers.
2. Explain that as social media is now such a common way of sharing information and thoughts amongst young people, Young Citizens have produced some good practice guidelines around how to stay safe online. These provide advice for when and if Democracy Ambassadors want to use this form of communication for their democracy messages. Give each participant a copy of the handout ‘Keeping Yourself Safe Online’ and discuss.

Keeping yourself safe online



The good, the bad & the ugly of social sharing

The world has always been full of strange and wonderful things, both nice and nasty and the internet is no different. We spend so much of our lives online it's a fantastic way to connect with people as a Democracy Ambassador, but this also means it's vital to know how to look out for yourself and your friends.

Top tips for posting on social media

1. **Always pause and think before posting.** Never post anything when you are feeling angry, upset or tired. Instead, write it down in a document and check it over the next day. Sometimes it's helpful to have a fresh pair of eyes check your content for you, so you could show it to a trusted friend, family member, teacher or youth worker to get some feedback. Triple check spelling, grammar and that what you have written makes sense.
2. **Always check your facts when sharing information.** Who has made the content you're sharing and why have they made it? Where did they get their information from and does it show all perspectives? This has always been a challenge in media and often it's very difficult to know what the truth is. Keep an open mind and as long as you're willing to be open to new perspectives you can't go wrong with sharing information online.
3. **Be honest** and if you have made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. Sometimes the best way to grow and learn is by making mistakes. Conversations both off and online are a good thing, but online some people can quickly turn a healthy debate into a toxic environment. If you find yourself typing a response in frustration or anger usually it's best to be the bigger person and walk away from the conversation.
4. Everyone has their own views, especially when it comes to politics. Naturally, anything you post around specific political views might see you come up against **trolls** or even friends who don't agree. That's OK – we don't all agree on everything. Just remember to be polite, agree to disagree and most importantly – keep up the good positive messages about how democracy is good for everyone.



Dealing with trolls

In folklore

An ugly cave-dwelling creature depicted as either a giant or a dwarf.

In internet slang

A person who upsets people on purpose to provoke a reaction.

The internet is buzzing with trolls who love to spam Instagram, clutter Snapchat messages, cause trouble and purposefully push buttons. They're really annoying! Luckily, they are easy to get rid of so here are our top tips:

1. **Screen-shot it.** Make sure you capture anything posted so that you have a record in case they try to delete or edit it once they realise it might get them into trouble.
2. **Stand up for yourself.** Ignore them online (remember they want a response from you), but report them on social media sites and block them so they can't annoy you anymore.
3. **If you are feeling upset, log off for a bit.** Take some time for yourself and go and do something fun! Remember the internet is a tool you can use to help yourself, as soon as it's having the opposite effect there are plenty of other things to do.
4. **Tell someone you trust** – a teacher, friend, family member or youth worker.

Looking after yourself

If you are ever affected by content online, negative comments or anything else that makes you feel upset, worried or anxious it is important to talk to someone. Speak to someone you trust like a friend, parent, doctor, teacher or youth worker.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Find Get Give <https://bit.ly/1qwEfYA>

Young minds <https://bit.ly/2pmXogv>

Online Safety and Cyberbullying

Ditch the label <https://bit.ly/2k4rlit>

Childline: online, on the phone, anytime <https://bit.ly/2jnQCpe>

UK Safer Internet Centre <https://bit.ly/2Pv18KW>

