Evaluate The Candidates

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to “Evaluate the Candidates: Who Will You Choose?”, an online Civics tutorial for students in 7th grade.
1.2 Your Objectives

Notes:

In this tutorial, you’ll learn how to evaluate candidates for political office.
You’ll analyze the issues most important to you and determine what qualities you look for in a candidate for office.
You’ll take into account background information, speeches, debates, and advertising as you evaluate a pair of candidates.
And in the end, you’ll identify the candidate that you would be most likely to vote for!
Ready?
1.3 What’s a Candidate?

Notes:

As a middle school student, you’ve probably never participated in a real election yourself-at least not as a voter!

But you’re surely aware of elections, political campaigns, and the candidates who run for office. So let’s review some basics and define a few terms.

First, candidates are people who are “running for office,” or attempting to be elected to a public position.

Candidates run for positions in many different levels of government: from local offices, like mayor of your hometown, to state offices, like congressperson, to national offices, like President of the United States.

Do you have a student council at your school? If so, then you probably know some classmates who may have been candidates.

Almost everyone who serves in public office, including the president, was once a candidate for that office.

Most offices have some basic qualifications that candidates must fulfill.

To run for president, for example, a candidate must be at least 35 years old and a natural born citizen of the United States.
1.4 Elections, Voters, and Ballots

Notes:

Here are a few more terms.

Candidates must be elected to office. So, *elections* are formal processes in which voters pick the candidate of their choice.

*Voters* include anyone who is legally able to submit a vote in an election. There are usually qualifications to be a legal voter. To vote in Florida, for example, you have to provide proof of residency in that state.

To make their choice official, voters cast a *ballot* for their candidate on election day. Voting is done in privacy: no one but you knows how you voted!
1.5 Match the Terms

Notes:

Let’s test your knowledge of the terms we just reviewed.

Drag and drop to match each definition on the right with the correct term on the left. Then click Submit.

Correct Feedback Layer

You got it! Easy, right? Don’t forget these important terms, because you’ll be using them throughout this tutorial as you evaluate candidates yourself. Click CONTINUE to move on.

Incorrect Feedback Layer

Here are the right matches. Don’t forget these important terms, because you’ll be using them throughout this tutorial as you evaluate candidates yourself. Click CONTINUE to move on.

Try Again Feedback Layer

You haven’t found all the right matches yet. Did you possibly mix up candidate and voter? Try again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drag Item</th>
<th>Drop Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person who is running for political office</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone legally able to vote in an election</td>
<td>Voter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal process in which voters pick candidates</td>
<td>Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official vote for a candidate, done in privacy</td>
<td>Ballot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6 Choosing the Right Candidate for You

Notes:

Voting is a big responsibility, and in a sense, the process of evaluating candidates actually starts with you, the voter.

Before you even pay attention to the other people running for office, get to know your own mind, and think about your own political values.

There are many issues in your nation, your state, and your local community. Issues are “problem areas,” or at the very least, things that can be improved.

All political candidates focus on certain issues as they campaign for office, but usually, a candidate emphasizes certain issues over others, depending on their values.

It’s the same for voters. For every citizen, certain issues may be “near and dear” to their heart, and certain others may be less so.

So, it’s time to think: as a voter, what’s most important to me?

Do I care most about getting a good education?

Am I most concerned about living in a safe community?

Is it very important to me to be surrounded by a clean environment?

Do I value a strong military to defend my nation?

Should there be a higher minimum wage?

Are equal rights for all citizens especially important to me?

You may find all of these issues to be important, but chances are, you may connect more personally to some of them than others, depending on your personality, your life experiences, and your own values.

These are important choices that no one else can make for you—not your friends, not your peers, not even your parents.
### 1.7 Choosing Your Issues

![Choosing Your Issues](image)

**Notes:**

Take a look at the issues below. There are 10, including public education, low taxes, quality healthcare, strong moral values, and several others.

Think about each issue and decide if it is *more* important or *less* important to you as a voter. Then drag each issue to the right box until you’ve found a home for them all.

Although you don’t have to, try to have an equal number be in each box when you click Submit.

**Feedback:**

Thanks! It looks like you’ve chosen several issues that are *more* important to you as a voter, even if there are other issues important to you that weren’t listed here. It’s likely you’d want to vote for a candidate that *also* believes these are important issues—and wants to change them for the better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drag Item</th>
<th>Drop Target</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public education</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College tuition</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National defense</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and order</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drag Item</th>
<th>Drop Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal rights</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral values</td>
<td>More or less important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.8 Personal Qualities

Notes:

Now that you’ve analyzed yourself as a prospective voter, let’s turn to the candidates.

We’ve already established that voters are inclined to support candidates who think like they do, and who value the same issues.

But another set of factors comes into play when making a choice: the personal qualities and characteristics of the candidates themselves.

Try to imagine the perfect leader. What kind of characteristics would he or she possess?

Maybe you thought of some of these qualities:

Many people value intelligence in their candidates. Don’t you want the people in charge to know what they’re doing?

Others want their leaders to be well-spoken. Communication skills are important when serving in a public position.

Lots of voters want leaders who are strong, determined, and will fight for what they believe.

Honesty is an important quality to many people. Voters want to pick a candidate who means what he or she says.

For some, personal morality is important. They want leaders who set a good moral example and don’t have many “skeletons in their closet.”

Another quality is bravery. Leaders sometimes need to make a stand for what is right, even if it may be controversial or unpopular.

Which of these qualities would you most like to see in a candidate? Pick the 3 answer choices most important to you.

Feedback:

Thanks! Candidates for office, like the rest of us, aren’t perfect, but you’ll want to vote for a candidate that exhibits at least some of the personal qualities you value most.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.9 Meet the Candidates!

Notes:

It’s time to meet the candidates! Starting now, you’ll be playing the role of a citizen of Tutorial Town. Luckily for you, in this community, there is no age limit on voting, so you’ll be able to vote for Tutorial Town’s new mayor!
1.10 Background Information

Notes:

So who are you going to vote for? You don’t know yet, of course—you don’t know anything about these candidates!

Let’s begin by learning about their backgrounds. Some voters prefer candidates they can identify with, and with whom they have things in common. For other voters, those things aren’t so important.
1.11 Which Candidate is Which?

Notes:

Let’s see if you got all that. Drag and drop each answer choice to match the right candidate.

If you need to, you can go back one slide to watch the video again before completing this exercise.

Correct Feedback Layer

Good work! As a voter, these personal details may be important to you...or not. But it’s a good idea to know where candidates for office come from and what their backgrounds are.

Incorrect Feedback Layer

Here are the correct matches. As a voter, these personal details may be important to you...or not. But it’s a good idea to know where candidates for office come from and what their backgrounds are.

Try Again Feedback Layer

You don’t have all the right matches yet. If you need to, you can go back one slide to rewatch the video. Try again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drag Item</th>
<th>Drop Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has been a teacher for 19 years</td>
<td>Male Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers at an animal shelter</td>
<td>Male Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Florida State University</td>
<td>Male Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works as a lawyer</td>
<td>Female Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag Item</td>
<td>Drop Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to Tutorial Town 5 years ago</td>
<td>Female Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started a recycling program</td>
<td>Female Candidate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.12 Sources of Information

Notes:

Maybe you’re finding yourself leaning toward one candidate or the other already, based on what you know about their backgrounds.

But probably, you realize that you need more information as an educated voter. Where do these 2 candidates stand on the issues? What are their personal qualities?

Voters draw on several sources of information to evaluate candidates, including media coverage, debates, and campaign speeches.

Click on each to learn more about it. Don’t skip any!

[Media coverage popup]

The term *media* includes print newspapers, TV and cable news, radio, and Internet sites: all popular sources of news and information.

One of the duties of the press is to cover political campaigns and candidates.

Media coverage generally tries to be *objective*, or fair, in the way it present candidates, but it doesn’t always succeed. Some news sources may have a *bias*, which means they lean toward one candidate or another.

[Debates popup]

Political debates are the best way to see the candidates side by side, as they argue face to face over the issues.

Almost always, a person called a *moderator* controls the debate, asking the candidates questions and enforcing the rules and time limits.

Debates are often televised so that they reach a larger audience.

[Speeches popup]
When candidates give a campaign speech, they can speak directly to the voters in their audience.

Some candidates write their own speeches, but many have help from professional speechwriters who help them find just the right words.

To reach a wider audience, many candidates rely on the media for televised coverage of their speeches.
1.13 Time for a Speech!

Notes:

It’s time for a campaign speech! You’re in the audience when Kathryn Park, one of the candidates for mayor, gives a public speech.

Candidates usually make campaign promises in their speeches, vowing to accomplish certain goals if they’re elected.

Pay attention to the promises this candidate makes.

“I’m so proud to be a citizen of Tutorial Town, and I would be honored to be your new mayor! My years serving as a lawyer have given me the experience to make the tough choices our town needs. I don’t like the crime and graffiti I’ve seen recently, or the litter in our streets and in our parks. In a Kathryn Park administration, I pledge to clean up this town in more ways than one! And I can do it while lowering taxes, unlike my opponent Tyler Smith, who wants to keep them the same at their current rates. With new leadership, Tutorial Town can be great again!”
1.14 Campaign Promises

Notes:

Which of these answer choices are among Kathryn Park’s campaign promises, based on the speech you heard? Pick ALL the right answers.

Correct Feedback Layer

Well done! This candidate promises to lower taxes and to fight crime and litter: “cleaning up this town in more ways than one,” as she puts it. But she didn’t emphasize public education in her speech. Do the issues important to this candidate line up with the ones important to you?

Incorrect Feedback Layer

Here are the right answers. This candidate promises to lower taxes and to fight crime and litter: “cleaning up this town in more ways than one,” as she puts it. But she didn’t emphasize public education in her speech. Do the issues important to this candidate line up with the ones important to you?

Try Again Feedback Layer

You haven’t picked all the right answers yet, or you may have picked a wrong one by mistake. Go back one slide to listen to the candidate’s speech again if you need to, and then try again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct Choice</th>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Improving public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Cleaning up litter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Fighting crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Lowering taxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1.15 Time for a Debate!

Notes:

It’s time for the Tutorial Town debate! Let’s see how debates may help voters evaluate candidates.

In a debate between Kathryn Park and Tyler Smith, the moderator asks this question: “What do you think is the best use for local tax dollars?”

Naturally, both candidates will get a chance to respond. Click on each to hear them in your own words. Whose answer do you agree with more?

Popup Layer Text

Smith Answer: “Nothing is more important to me than public education. I propose turning our schools into state-of-the-art facilities, giving our teachers well-deserved raises, and purchasing a new laptop for every student. It won’t be cheap, but it will be worth it!”

Park Answer: “I’d like to put more cops on the streets and more criminals behind bars—where they belong. I’d also like to beautify our community and create new parks for all our citizens to enjoy.”
1.16 Campaign Advertising

Notes:

There’s another important way voters get their information about political candidates: advertising.

Campaign ads come in the form of flyers, signs, billboards, buttons, or commercials. You’ve probably seen lots of TV ads for candidates during election season before.

Political ads can be powerful tools for persuading voters. Images, music, and editing combine to create exactly the impression a candidate wants to project to voters.

But like any form of advertising, you have to be careful before believing everything you hear or see in an ad. Political ads sell candidates like products, so ads, by design, are one-sided. They only send you the message the candidate wants voters to hear, and they’re almost always biased.

Generally, there are 2 kinds of campaign ads. Positive ads promote a candidate and his or her good qualities. Candidates or their allies pay for them.

But negative ads attack another candidate, pointing out weaknesses and giving voters a reason not to vote for him or her. Negative ads about a candidate are paid for by their opponent.

Here are 2 TV ads about Tyler Smith and Kathryn Park, your mayoral candidates. Click on the candidates to watch them both before moving on to the next slide.
1.17 Positive or Negative?

Notes:

Did you watch both TV commercials? If not, go back one slide and view them both.
When you’re ready, drag and drop the answer choices to identify which commercial was a positive ad, and which one was negative.

Correct Feedback Layer

Right! Both of these ads try to convince voters to vote for Tyler Smith—but in very different ways. The positive ad is about Smith and his qualifications for office. It makes voters feel good about supporting him. But the negative ad targets Kathryn Park and makes her seem like a bad candidate. The ominous music is designed to make voters feel apprehensive about supporting her. Did you notice, at the end of the ad, that it was paid for by the Tyler Smith campaign? Negative ads can be effective, but they can also backfire if voters feel like the candidate making them is being too negative—or nasty. What do you think?

Incorrect Feedback Layer

Not exactly. Both of these ads try to convince voters to vote for Tyler Smith—but in very different ways. The positive ad is about Smith and his qualifications for office. It makes voters feel good about supporting him. But the negative ad targets Kathryn Park and makes her seem like a bad candidate. The ominous music is designed to make voters feel apprehensive about supporting her. Did you notice, at the end of the ad, that it was paid for by the Tyler Smith campaign? Negative ads can be effective, but they can also backfire if voters feel like the candidate making them is being too negative—or nasty. What do you think?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drag Item</th>
<th>Drop Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative ad</td>
<td>Meet Kathryn Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive ad</td>
<td>Hello! My name is Tyler Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.18 Evaluate the Candidates

Notes:

It’s almost Election Day! It’s time to evaluate the candidates.

Based on all that you’ve learned, who would you be most likely to vote for: Tyler Smith or Kathryn Park?

Pick a candidate and explain your choice in detail. You can draw on background information about the candidates, their answers in debates and speeches, their advertising, and their positions on the issues that are important to you as a voter.

When you’ve written at least one solid paragraph, click Submit for feedback on your answer.

Feedback:

Thank you for your response! It looks like you’ve done a good job evaluating the candidates and indicating your preference. It doesn’t matter who you picked, as long as you justified your choice with reasons and details. Remember, no one can ever tell you how to vote on Election Day: your choice is your choice! But as a voter and a citizen, it’s your responsibility to be informed when you evaluate the candidates running for office!
1.19 Lesson Review

Notes:

It’s been a pleasure learning with you today!

In this tutorial, you learned how to evaluate candidates for political office.

You analyzed the issues most important to you and determined what qualities you look for in a candidate for office.

You took into account background information, speeches, debates, and advertising as you evaluated a pair of candidates.

And in the end, you identified the candidate that you would be most likely to vote for!
1.20 Thank You

Notes:

Thank you for using this original tutorial. This screen shows your start and end times, which can be printed on your computer or tablet. Be sure to check out our other original tutorials too.

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