



# HIT THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

## How to Play



### 1. Toss Your Hat In the Ring!

You decide to run for President of the United States. Before you can become a candidate, you need to register to vote. Fill out the [Classroom Voter Registration Form](#).

Next, investigate the [qualifications and responsibilities](#) (of the office of President of the United States. Make a list of each.

Finally, become a candidate and join (or form) a political party. Fill out the [Notice of Candidacy Qualifying Form](#).

### 2. Hit the Campaign Trail!

You will need a platform, or list of things you will do if you are elected.

Make a list that includes

- A. The problems facing our country
- B. How you will solve those problems
- C. Why people should vote for you

Make buttons, banners and signs to advertise your message. Use the [Forging a Political Platform](#) guide to select the issues that are important to you

### 3. Track the State Primaries and Caucuses

Between January and June of each presidential election year, each state holds primary elections or caucuses (party meetings) to choose one democratic and one republican candidate for president.

Find out which democratic and republican candidate received the most votes in your state.

### 4. Attend a National Nominating Convention

At the national conventions, each party meets in different places to make important election decisions. Representatives from each state attend the meeting and announce the result of their state primaries and caucuses.

Once the votes are totaled, the candidate with the largest number of votes becomes the official party candidate. Each party's candidate continues to campaign until November 6, Election Day.

#### Hold a classroom convention!

Each candidate should make a one-minute speech explaining why the class should vote for her/him. [Campaign](#) for your favorite candidate and pass out buttons and banners.

## Campaign Tools:

- [Influencing the Public Slideshow](#)
- [Speech Guidelines and Rubric](#)
- [Campaign Speeches Guide](#)
- [Campaign Banner Maker](#)

Pass out [classroom ballots](#) and let everyone vote for one candidate from each party. Count the votes to determine the winner for each party.

The winning party candidates will continue to campaign for president.

Use our [Classroom Election Chart](#) to chart results of the election.

## 5. Debate and Campaign

Between September and November of each presidential election year, the party candidates meet to debate, or talk about their views.

### Hold a classroom debate.

Ask each candidate to talk for one minute about his or her views on the issues. Let everyone take turns asking the candidates questions.

### Watch the candidate debates.

Record your thoughts about the debates.

## 6. Election Day, November 6 Vote and Tally!

Track the election results and chart the final vote.

In the final election phase, both the people and the states cast their vote for President of the United States.

The people vote first in the November “general” election. Their vote is called the “popular” (or people’s) vote. The popular vote is used to determine how states will vote in December.

On Election Day, all registered voters can vote for President of the United States. Each voter votes in secret.

### Hold a classroom election.

Give one [ballot](#) to each student.

Ask students to mark the ballot by choosing only one person for president. Place the completed ballots in a container.

### Tally the vote.

Let one person read the ballots while another student writes each vote on a classroom tally sheet. The candidate with the largest number of votes wins the election.

### Election night activity

At home, watch election night returns. Keep a list of how each state votes. The candidate with the largest number of votes is the winner of the popular election.

### Investigate

- Who is the winner of the national election?
- Who is the winner of your state election?

## 7. Electoral College: States Vote!

Each state's electoral vote is equal to the number of U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives the state sends to Washington, D.C. This number is determined in part by the total number of people who live in the state.

Each state keeps a record of how many votes each candidate received in the November popular election. Each state usually gives all of the state's electoral votes to the candidate who won the state's popular election.

### Investigate in your state

- How many electoral votes does your state get?
- Which candidate won the popular election in your state?

### Investigate the national results of the Electoral College vote.

- Who is the winner of the Electoral College vote?
- Who is the winner of the November popular election?
- Are they the same person? Why or why not?

## 8. Inauguration of a New President!

In January following the presidential election, the new President officially takes office.

Watch the inauguration and listen to the new President take the oath of office. What does the President promise to do when he/she takes the oath of office?

## Presidential Oath of Office

Each president recites the following oath, in accordance with Article II, Section I of the U.S. Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Through U.S. history, many presidents used a bible and added the words "So help me God" at the end of the oath. However, neither is required by law.

