

# TOPIC EXPLORATION PACK

Theme: Elections

September 2015



PROVISIONAL



## GCSE (9–1) Citizenship Studies

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*This activity offers an opportunity for English skills development.*

## Introduction

This document is written for students to understand and the information (if not the activities) can be adapted to be given directly to them as guide sheets for the activities.

All worksheets can be found in the separate document, and suggested answers are provided at the end of this one.

## Key words

Term	Definition
Election	The act or process of electing someone to fill an office or position
Voting	A formal expression of preference for a candidate for office or for a proposed resolution of an issue
Constituencies	The body of voters or the residents of a district represented by an elected legislator or official
Representation	the principle by which delegates act for a constituency
Suffrage	The right or privilege of voting
Franchise	A privilege or right granted by law, especially the right to vote in the election of public officials
General Election	An election involving all or most constituencies of a state or nation in the choice of candidates
By-Election	A special election held between general elections to fill a vacancy, as for a parliamentary seat
Proportional Representation	Representation of all parties in a legislature in proportion to their popular vote
Majoritarian Systems	Rule by simple numerical majority in an organized group
Member of Parliament	An elected member of the British Parliament

*Credit – The Free Dictionary (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com>)*

## What are elections?

Elections can be defined as: *“a formal and organised choice by vote of a person for a political office or other position.”*

Within the UK we hold regular free and fair elections. In the UK elections are used to ‘elect’ a person into political office of some nature, whether this is for Members of Parliament (MPs), local councillors, Members of European Parliament (MEPs) etc... There are a number of different election systems in operation within the UK (and beyond!).

For elections to the parliament at Westminster, the “First Past the Post” system is used (FPTP). Under the FPTP system, all registered voters get one vote to choose the candidate they would like to run their local area (constituency). There are 650 (as of March 2015) constituencies in the United Kingdom varying in size, with some as small as 21,000 (Na h-Eileanan an Iar in Scotland) and some as large as 110,000 (Isle of Wight). A general election occurs at least once every five years, though by-elections will sometimes occur outside of a general election, usually if an MP dies or resigns. Voting is simple in this system, with a cross being put in the box next to the candidate you would like in charge. Whoever gets the most votes, wins, even if that is just one more vote than the next person. At the end of the general election, the party with the most number of MPs becomes the new government, with the leader of the party becoming the new Prime Minister.

In order to become an MP, you must first be selected by a political party to run for that ‘seat’. More on this can be found by watching the video at the following link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20222003>.

## Activity 1 – Becoming a Prospective Candidate

Whilst watching the video, try to flow chart the steps it takes to become a prospective candidate.

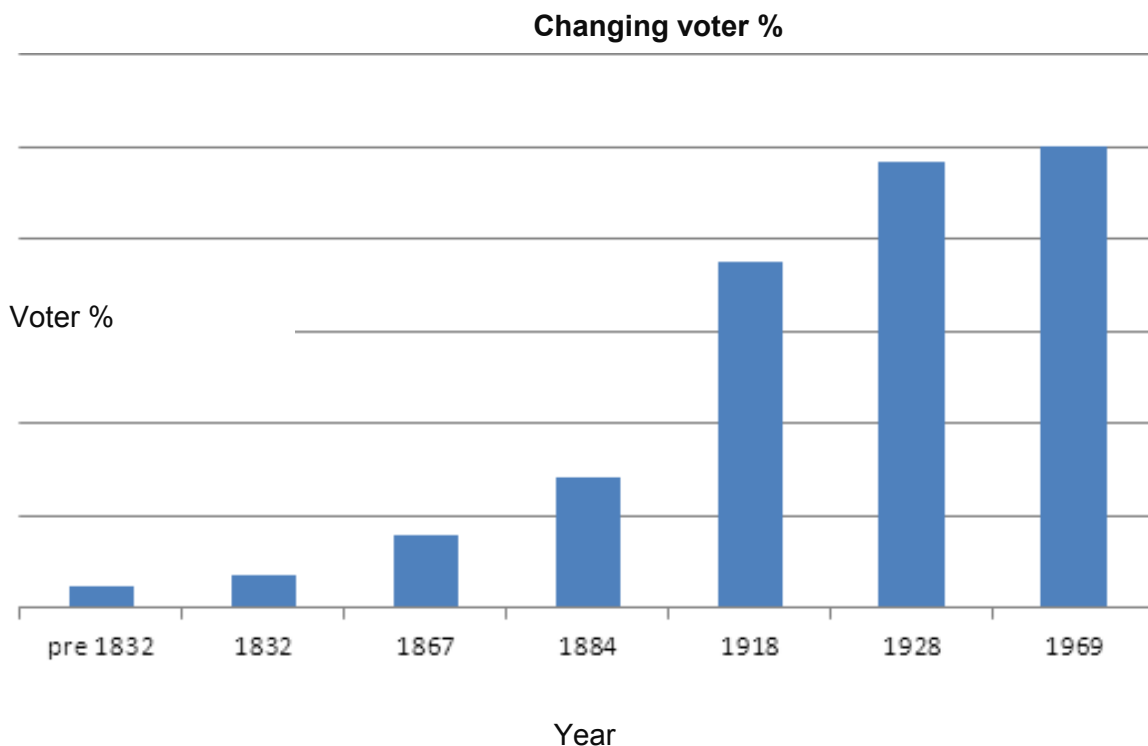
You can use the chart and activity sheet (**Resource 1 – Becoming a Prospective Candidate**) to help you complete the chart.

### The Evolving Franchise

Not everyone has had the chance to vote throughout history and people have fought long and hard to campaign for the right to decide who will represent them in parliament.

- The Franchise before 1832 – approximately 5% of adults could vote
- The 1832 Reform Act approximately 7% of adults could vote
- The Reform Act of 1867 – approximately 16% of adults could vote
- Representation of the People Act 1884 – approximately 28.5% of adults could vote
- Representation of the People Act - 1918 – approximately 74% of adults could vote
- Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act – 1928 – approximately 97% of adults could vote
- Representation of the People Act 1969 – 100% of over 18s (barring disqualification) could now vote.

You can see from the above the fight for the right to vote lasted for a very long time and it took until 1928 for equality in voting rights between men and women to happen - the chart below highlights this further.



### Voting Systems

There are a number of different types of voting systems used throughout the world. These can be broadly categorised into three groups which are shown below, together with named examples of each:



**Majoritarian Systems** – tend to be more simple but are often disproportional in terms of votes to seats.

- Alternative Vote
- First Past The Post
- Limited Vote
- Supplementary Vote

**Proportional Representation** – highly representative of votes.

- Party List PR
- Single Transferable Vote

**Mixed Systems** – a combination of majority and proportional systems.

- Additional Member System
- Alternative Vote Plus

Each system has its own methods and own advantages and disadvantages and although in this guide we will only look at four, more can be studied should you wish. The four systems we will look at are those found predominantly in use within the United Kingdom and these are:

- First Past the Post
- Party List System
- Single Transferable Vote
- Additional Member System.

## First Past the Post (FPTP)

The First Past the Post system is used in the UK to elect members of parliament during general and by-elections. It uses a simple “1 person 1 vote” system and voters are required to put a cross next to the name of the candidate they would like to represent their constituency.

## Party List System

These are used to elect Members of European Parliament using the regional list variation of the system. The UK is divided in 11 multi-member constituencies with each voter voting for the party that they prefer. As it is a proportional system, the number of MEPs elected is roughly in proportion with the amount of votes that they receive. Britain uses a Closed List System meaning that the party chooses the MEPs, not the electorate. They will rank their candidates numerically, with 1 being the first person to be given a seat. So, for example, if a party wins 20 seats, the first 20 people on the list will be elected, with 21 onwards failing to gain election.

## Additional Member System (AMS)

The AMS system is a mixed system and used to elect members of the Welsh Assembly. It operates partly using FPTP and partly on the list system. Voters have two votes in this system, one (under FPTP) to elect a representative in their constituency, and one (under the list system) to a political party of their choice which are allocated under the party list system describe above.

## Single Transferrable Vote (STV)

This is the system used in Northern Ireland. Under this, each constituency has multiple seats with voters asked to rank each candidate in preference order and can select as many or as few as they like. In order to be elected, a quota must be reached. This quota varies depending on size of constituency and number of representatives being elected. Once your preferred candidate has no chance of being elected or has enough votes to have been elected, the next preferences are then re-allocated and this continues until all the seats are filled.

# Activity 2 – Election Systems Card Sort

## Allocating ‘lead learners’

For this activity, the class will be split into groups. For each group, a lead learner will need to be allocated. Each lead learner should be given a pack of information and the card sort activity (**Resource 2 – Election Systems Card Sort**) to share with their group.

**It is helpful if this person is pre-selected before the lesson and given the material beforehand.**

The lead learner is then responsible for allocating tasks within their group.

*The benefits of the Lead Learner – this enables students to take personal charge of their learning, working independently of the teacher who is free to roam the class room “trouble-shooting” with any issues that arise. In addition to developing skills in citizenship, it can also enable the learner to develop personal skills relevant to their progression, from communication to leadership and others.*

*The following lesson element is an adaption of an Ofsted rated “Outstanding” lesson.*



## The activity

The overall aim of the activity is for each group to work together to sort the cards and complete the ‘Election Systems’ activity table.

Election System	Description	Pro	Con	Democracy rating (out of 5)

The activity focuses on the four key voting systems:

- First Past the Post
- Party List System
- Single Transferable Vote
- Additional Member System.

Learners will need to work out (through reading the cards) which voting systems they think are being described and then list these systems in the **first column** of the table.

Once the group has decided on which systems are being described in the cards, they must then discuss and agree upon a ‘Description’ for each system and write this in the **second column** of the table.

They must then, still in their groups, place each of the cards in the relevant ‘Pro’ or ‘Con’ column of the table (**columns 3 and 4**), for the appropriate voting system.

Once all the cards have been sorted, the group must then decide ‘how democratic’ they feel each system is, writing a value between 1 and 5 in the **fifth column**. For this they will need to agree criteria within the group as to what they think a ‘democratic system’ is. This could be done as a class activity or within each group and prompts could be provided for some students should they need additional guidance.

When the table is completed, learners could discuss which of the four systems (or more) they think is the most democratic and why.

## Summing up

The final two activities could be used as a ‘summing up’ activity or to revisit information learned.

## Activity 3 – Match up exercise

**Activity 3** is a simple match up exercise asking students to match the type of election with its description and suggest a pro and con of each.

See **Resource 3 – Match the System and Location**

## Activity 4 – Mock Election

**Activity 4 (Resource 4 – Mock Election)** is a mock election which can be done with the colours given or alternatively, can be part of a longer project where students attempt to win election for different constituencies within the class/cohort.

**Step 1** – Divide the class into 4 or 5 “constituencies” (groups) depending on the numbers in your class.

**Step 2** – Give each student a “polling card” – one of each (note, for AMS there are two cards, one for the party and one for the candidates).

**Step 3** – Begin with FPTP: count each vote and elect a representative for each constituency, the colour with the most seats wins and is elected – the winning party only needs one more seat than the rest, in the event of a draw, a coalition would need to be formed.

**Step 4** – For STV – the formula will change depending on the class size.

$$Quota = \frac{\text{Total Votes}}{\text{Total Number of Seats} + 1} + 1$$

So for example, with 30 people voting, and four “constituencies” the quota would be:

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{30}{4 + 1} + 1$$

Quota to win one seat = 7

### Step 5 – Closed List System

Seats are awarded proportionally based on the total number of votes received, in this model there will be no strict constituencies with each ‘colour’ gaining the percentage of the number of groups they have received. So for example, if there were four groups and “Blue” gained 25% of the votes, they would receive 1 seat.

### Step 6 – Additional Member System

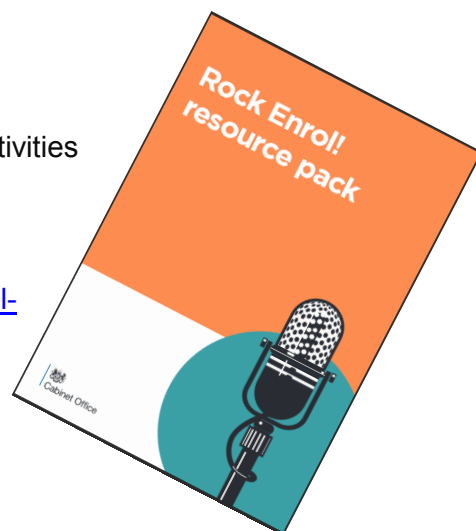
Each learner makes two votes. One for the party and one for the candidate. Candidate votes are counted using FPTP system with party votes allocated based on Closed List. For simplicity, however many constituencies (groups) you have could have the same number of Closed List votes.

**Step 7** – Once all the voting has taken place, results of the varying election types could be noted down by learners on the form (**Resource 5 – Voting results**).

**Step 8** – Get students to discuss the difference in votes between the systems and comment on the ‘fairness’ of each system and what anomalies they think each one shows.

## Further learning

You can further enhance your learning through the use of other activities on this area. We would recommend the “Rock Enrol!” programme, produced by the Cabinet Office and more details of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rock-enrol-engaging-young-people-in-democracy>



## Suggested Answers

### Activity 1 – Becoming a Prospective Candidate

The steps in the flow chart could include:

1. Set of tests designed by a psychologists (questions, interviews, in-tray exercise)
2. Approved candidate list (Labour miss out)
3. Apply to a local association for seat
4. Interview or hustings
5. Repeat until selected.

What changes are some of the parties suggesting?

How fair do you think the current process is and what would YOU do to make it accessible to all?

## Activity 2 – Election Systems Card Sort

### First Past the Post

Pros	Cons
Simple and easy to understand for all concerned.	You can be elected despite not getting the majority of votes
It is cheap to run and doesn't take long to work out who has won.	Lots of wasted votes.
The voter can clearly express a view on which party they think should form the next government.	Lack of choice
Creates strong, usually single party governments which means they can pass laws much more easily.	Leads to uneven support throughout the country, as votes can be concentrated in certain areas and therefore a party losing by thousands in one area would not be badly hurt if they have enough support spread in other areas.
Each constituency has a single and accountable representative.	Leads to too many 'safe seats' where voters needs can be ignored as the party is guarantee re-election at each election.
	Significantly disadvantages third parties, even if they have a lot of support.

### Party List

Pros	Cons
Every party is represented based on the percentage / number of votes received.	Weakened link between the representative and the area they are representing.
Every vote is worth the same	Some variations offer very little choice, choosing a party instead of a person.
Simple and easy to understand for all concerned.	Can lead to an increase in 'safe' candidates meaning under-represented groups might be less involved, this can also include groups within the party.
Involves large multi member constituencies, so minority groups more likely to benefit.	Often produce unstable, multi-party governments with little being done once in office as a result.
Can offer more choice in who to elect particularly open ones.	

### Additional Member System

Pros	Cons
It has a proportional aspect to balance out unfairness	Two types of representatives can lead to tension between the two of them with some being thought of as 'second class' members or a two tiered system
Each constituency has a single and accountable representative.	Parties have a lot of control over who they select on the list aspect, meaning they can choose the best (or who they think are the best) rather than who is best for the area.
Votes tend to matter more.	Smaller parties are under-represented still in this system despite an element of proportionality.
Voters have more choice and can vote in more than one way should they wish.	Can lead to mid-size parties gaining undue power and influence.

### Single Transferable Vote

Pros	Cons
Results are fairly proportional in that each prospective candidate needs the same amount of votes to be elected.	Once the quota has been reached the remaining votes are divided up amongst the rest, meaning results might not reflect the voters desires.
Voters have a wide range of choice and can vote in order of preference, helping to stop tactical voting.	It is a very complicated system that is both difficult to explain, vote and count up afterwards.
A party has to win over 50% of the vote to be elected into government, making it very fair and representing a majority.	High likelihood of weak coalition governments.
You have more than one MP for your area, meaning you get more say.	Often less involved representatives, as there are many and not always focussed on the constituency.



### Activity 3 – Match the system and location

Match the system to the location where it is used and a feature.

System		Where is it used		One Feature	Pro	Con
First Past the Post		Use to elect Members of the European Parliament	→	Vote for a party in a large multi-member constituency	Every party is represented based on the percentage/number of votes received.	Weakened link between the representative and the area they are representing.
Single Transferable Vote		System used to elect members of the Welsh Assembly	→	Vote for a candidate to represent your constituency	Simple and easy to understand for all concerned.	You can be elected despite not getting the majority of votes
Additional Member System		the system used to elect Members of Parliament to Westminster	→	A proportional system elected using a quota formula.	Results are fairly proportional in that each prospective candidate needs the same amount of votes to be elected.	Once the quota has been reached the remaining votes are divided up amongst the rest, meaning results might not reflect the voters desires.
Party List System		System used to elect members of the Northern Ireland Assembly	→	A hybrid of majority and proportional systems	It has a proportional aspect to balance out unfairness	Two types of representatives can lead to tension between the two of them with some being thought of as 'second class' members or a two tiered system



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June 2015

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