

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #50 – Electoral College



Maggie says ...

Our country elects a president every four years, so it's important for everyone to understand how the election process works!

Today's lesson is about the ELECTORAL COLLEGE. Everyone likes to be heard and voting for the president is one of the best ways to do that! Even though I can't vote because I'm a dog, I know

that choosing the president is important for everyone in this country, including me. So, let's learn about exactly how we do that.

We The People – the citizens of the United States of America – cast our vote for a president and vice president every four years. But in reality, this doesn't complete the process. Having just broken away from a monarchy form of government, the founders of our country wanted a format for electing the president that wasn't just by popular vote. So, the framers of the **Constitution** put forth that U.S. presidents would be elected by an **Electoral College** made up of the people's electors.

Each state is allotted a different number of **Electors** based on how many people live in that state. Once the election is over and all votes are counted, the leaders in each state use the votes cast there during the election to determine whom to select as *Electors* [to represent the votes cast in their state]. Each of these *Electors* then casts a vote for the president and vice president through what is called the *Electoral College*. The candidate who gets the most votes in the *Electoral College* – at least 270 votes – becomes the next President and Vice President of the United States!

Why we have the Electoral College: The *Electoral College* is required by the *Constitution*, and the rules for how it operates come from that document and laws passed by Congress, in accordance with the Constitution. The *Electoral College* is an example of how our country uses a mixed system of government. Although it may seem confusing, or even unfair at times, there are many good arguments for and against using such a system for electing our country's president and vice president. One reason in favor of it is that in the 246+ years of our country's history, there have been only four (4) instances when the vote of the *Electoral College* differed from that of the popular vote in the election.

So why should the adults you know – you must be 18 to vote – vote for president and vice president if the *Electoral College* ultimately determines who it will be? Because it is **their vote** that determines for whom **their state's electors** will vote.

To learn more about *Electors* and the *Electoral College*, visit the [National Archives](https://www.archives.gov) website.

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Sticky Situation: Imagine that when all of the votes across the country are counted, one presidential candidate gets more Electoral College votes and the other candidate gets more votes from the people (the “popular vote”). According to the U.S. Constitution, who will be the next U.S. President?

Activity: Think about when you make decisions that you find hard or challenging. Do you like making decisions by yourself? Do you prefer to make decisions working with others? What do you think are the benefits of each method? What are the disadvantages? By thinking about this problem, you can start to understand why the Electoral College exists and why there are people who like it and those who don't.

Civics Resources: Visit PBS Learning Media's *Election Central* to learn more about [How Voting Works](#).