



Senate: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The Senate is the upper house of Congress. Each state has two senators, giving the chamber a total of 100 members. Along with the lower house, the House of Representatives, the Senate is responsible for proposing, deliberating, and voting on bills. The Senate also has the power to ratify treaties, confirm presidential appointments to the executive and judicial branches, and adjudicate impeachment proceedings.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government • Politics • History 	45-60 min
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/senate-the-upper-house-of-the-legislature/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the Senate functions. • List responsibilities and powers of the Senate. • Discuss the Senate's role in the system of checks and balances. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Bills, executive branch, judicial branch, impeachment	
Materials Needed	
Computers, Worksheet	
Before you watch	
<p>Think-pair-share: Ask students what they believe the Senate is responsible for. First, have them discuss in partners, then in small groups, and then have groups share with the class.</p>	



While you watch

1. How much of the Senate is up for reelection every two years?
2. What are the three main types of committees in the Senate?
3. How many presidents have been impeached? Have any of them been convicted?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Why did small states want all states to be equally represented in the legislature regardless of population?
2. Originally, senators were elected by state legislatures. In 1913, the 17th Amendment established direct elections, meaning senators were now elected by the people. Why do you think the Founding Fathers did not institute direct elections for senators? What are some potential arguments in favor of switching to direct elections?
3. Why is it important for bills to be debated in smaller committees and subcommittees before they are considered by the entire Senate?

Activity Ideas

- **More Research:** Have students find their two senators [here](#). Students should spend some time doing Internet research about their senators. They should then write a short response explaining some of the key positions of their senators and discussing whether they have similar or different policy priorities. Students can use the Worksheets to help focus their research.
- **Take Action:** Let students choose an issue that is important to them and write an email to one or both of their senators about it. This can be a broad issue, such as “I think more needs to be done about climate change,” or it can be a specific request, such as “Please support this bill.” Contact information for senators can generally be found on their websites.
- **A Closer Look:** Assign each student to look at the impeachment of Johnson, Clinton, or Trump. They should do some research on the allegations and the trial, and write a short response explaining why the president was impeached, what happened during the trial, and what the result was.

Sources/places to learn more

1. “Learn More About the U.S. Government.” *Senator Ed Markey*, www.markey.senate.gov/services/learn-more-about-the-us-government.



2. "The U.S. Senate." *U.S. Capitol Visitor Center*, www.visitthecapitol.gov/about-congress/us-senate.
3. "Powers & Procedures." *United States Senate*, 8 Nov. 2019, www.cop.senate.gov/history/powers.htm.
4. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "United States Senate." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 22 May 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/Senate-United-States-government.