

Language for ...

politics

Age: Young adult / adult

Level: Intermediate

Length: 45–60 minutes

Language Focus: key vocabulary associated with politics and elections

Skills: speaking, reading

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Aims: to provide students with the language needed for talking about politics



Teaching tip: Giving students a set of letters (in the form of a word eight or nine letters in length where all the letters are different if possible) and then asking them to use those letters to generate as many words as they can within a set time limit (as a word race) can be a useful activity because it both helps students to recall items of vocabulary and gives them spelling practice. A useful website to help with this can be found here: www.allscabblewords.com/unscramble.

What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

- 1 To introduce the topic, ask students to make a word family from the word *politics*. Elicit the different possibilities (*political, politically, politician*) and write them on the board. Mark the stress on each word: *politics, political, politically, politician*. Have students repeat each word chorally and individually with the correct stress.
- 2 Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.
- 3 Ask students to work individually to make words using the letters of the word *politics*. Make sure they understand that each word must contain at least three letters and that they should try to find one five-letter word. Encourage them to compare their answers in pairs. Make a list of suggested words on the board.
- 4 Allow students to work individually and complete the second part of exercise 1. Have them compare their answers in pairs and then check the answers with the whole class.
- 5 Tell students that they are going to read a questionnaire about politics in English-speaking countries. Tell them to read the questionnaire and choose the best answer in each case. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs, then get them to tell you the answers.
- 6 Ask students to choose the correct words in exercise 2b without looking back at the questionnaire. Listen to their answers as a class but do not correct them at this stage. Then ask them to read the text again to check their answers.
- 7 Ask students to work individually to complete the sentences in exercise 3a. Check the answers as a class. Make sure they have used any vocabulary from the text correctly.
- 8 Exercise 3b focuses on some common two-word phrases from the questionnaire. This exercise can be done individually. Check answers with the whole class.

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9 Exercise 4 is an extended activity. Explain that in many countries, people are free to start their own political parties and these don't have to be serious in nature. As examples, have them look at the following, focusing on the parties' manifestoes and policies:

- **Rhinoceros Party**
<https://www.partyrhino.ca/en/our-promises/>
- **The Official Monster Raving Loony Party**
<https://www.loonyparty.com/about/policy-proposals/>
- **Gremloids party**
<https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/news/joke-candidates-513884>

Discuss as a class.

10 Next, tell students that they need to form their own, non-serious political party. It can be based on one issue or more than one. They need to give their party a name and come up with a manifesto. They should think of five key policies and think of how they will present these to the 'voters' to make them vote for their party. If time, they could also design a logo. Set a time limit for this.

11 Finally, have each group come to the front of the class and present their manifesto to the rest of the class. When finished, allow the other students to ask them questions. When each group has presented, you can hold a mock class election to see which party was the favourite.

KEY:

1a Words with three letters or more include:
Stop, pot, top, opt, spot, cop, slip, silt, clip, lip, soil, oil, toil, pit, tip, spit, coil, slop, lop, tic, post, lost, cost, spoil, stoic, pilot

1b

- 1 presidential
- 2 parliamentary
- 3 political
- 4 republican

2a

- 1 b
- 2 c
- 3 b
- 4 a
- 5 b
- 6 c
- 7 a
- 8 b
- 9 b
- 10 a
- 11 c
- 12 a
- 13 b
- 14 c
- 15 a

2b

- 1 voluntary
- 2 policies
- 3 cross
- 4 held
- 5 member
- 6 represent
- 7 minimum
- 8 chambers

3a

students' own answers

3b

- 1 d
- 2 f
- 3 a
- 4 b
- 5 c
- 6 e

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4a

| Name of party: | Policy example: | Candidate/s: | Logo/slogan: |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| The Rhinoceros Party | Produce more green cars in Canada: forest green, pale green, and neon green. | Supreme Dealer: Sébastien CoRhino | A rhino |
| The Official Monster Raving Loony Party | We promise that should we be elected we will not initiate any of our policies. | Alan 'Howling Laud' Hope | 'Vote for insanity' |
| The Gremloids Party | Free bikes for all UK citizens, to combat obesity, reduce traffic congestion and stop all bike theft. | Lord Buckethead | Lord Buckethead |

4b students' own answers

4c students' own answers

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1 Warmer

- a** How many words of three letters or more can you make using the letters of the word **POLITICS**? You may only use each letter once in each word (apart from 'i', which you can use twice if necessary). No plural words and no proper names. There is at least one five-letter word to be made.

Score:
Five words = good
Eight words = very good
Ten words = excellent!

- b** Complete the table. Look in the text to find the missing words if necessary.

| | Noun | Adjective |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1 | president | |
| 2 | parliament | |
| 3 | politics | |
| 4 | republic | |

2 Text

- a** Choose the best answer to each of these questions.

What do you know about politics in English-speaking countries?



- In the United States, presidential elections are held every _____ years.
 - three
 - four
 - five
- In the UK, parliamentary elections are held every _____ years.
 - three
 - four
 - five

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3. In the UK, political parties publish their policies before the election in a document called a _____.
 - a. leaflet
 - b. manifesto
 - c. statement
4. There are two main political parties in the United States, the Republican Party and the _____ Party.
 - a. Democratic
 - b. Libertarian
 - c. Independent
5. An attempt to find out how people intend to vote in an election is called an _____.
 - a. opinion survey
 - b. opinion poll
 - c. opinion questionnaire
6. In the UK, people vote at _____.
 - a. voting stations
 - b. election stations
 - c. polling stations
7. In the UK, people often vote in _____.
 - a. schools
 - b. hospitals
 - c. post-offices
8. In the UK, voters put a _____ next to the candidate they want to vote for.
 - a. ✓
 - b. X
 - c. ?
9. In the UK and the USA, the minimum age at which you can vote is _____.
 - a. sixteen
 - b. eighteen
 - c. twenty-one
10. In most countries, voting is voluntary but in which of these countries is voting compulsory?
 - a. Australia
 - b. The UK
 - c. The USA
11. In the UK, the area which each Member of Parliament (MP) represents is called a _____.
 - a. region
 - b. district
 - c. constituency
12. The two main political parties in the UK are the Conservative Party and the _____ Party.
 - a. Labour
 - b. Liberal
 - c. Workers

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13. The head of the government in the UK is the _____.
 - a. president
 - b. prime minister
 - c. chancellor
14. The United States Congress has two chambers - the Senate and the House of _____.
 - a. MPs
 - b. Governors
 - c. Representatives
15. Some people vote for right-_____ political parties, while others prefer left-_____ parties.
 - a. wing
 - b. side
 - c. policy

b Choose the correct word. Then read the questionnaire again and check your answers.

1. **Voting** in the UK is **compulsory** / **voluntary**.
2. People usually **vote** for the **party** whose **policies** / **programmes** they agree with.
3. Remember to put a **tick** / **cross** next to the **candidate** you want to vote for.
4. **Presidential elections** in the USA are **held** / **given** every four years.
5. **MP** is short for **member** / **minister** of **Parliament**.
6. MPs are supposed to **defend** / **represent** the views and interests of their **constituents**.
7. Some countries have a **minimum** / **maximum** voting age of twenty-one.
8. There are two **chambers** / **houses** in the US Congress.

3 Language in use

a Complete the sentences so that they are true for you.

1. In my country, the head of the government is called the _____.
2. The main political parties are _____.
3. The ruling party is _____.
4. The minimum voting age is _____.
5. Voting in elections is _____.
6. Elections are held every _____.

b Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make two-word phrases from the questionnaire.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. opinion | a. station |
| 2. political | b. age |
| 3. polling | c. election |
| 4. voting | d. poll |
| 5. presidential | e. wing |
| 6. left | f. party |

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4 Communicate

a Not all political parties are serious. Look at the following websites about some funny political parties in Canada and the UK. Fill in the table, writing the name of the party, one or two of their policies, the name of their main candidate/s and their logo or slogan.

- **Rhinoceros Party**
<https://www.partyrhino.ca/en/our-promises/>
- **The Official Monster Raving Loony Party**
<https://www.loonyparty.com/about/policy-proposals/>
- **Gremloids party**
<https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/news/joke-candidates-513884>



| Name of party: | Policies: | Name of main candidate/s: | Logo or slogan: |
|----------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

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- b** Work in groups. You need to invent your own funny political party. It can be based around one issue or more than one. Give your party a name, write five policies and design a slogan or logo.

Party name: _____

Policies:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Logo/slogan:

- c** Now present your new party to the class. Remember, you need to persuade them that your policies are the best! At the end there will be a vote.
Listen to the other groups as they present their parties and policies. Ask them questions to agree or disagree with them.

Red Words

opinion*** station*** political*** age*** election*** vote*** poll** presidential**
wing*** left*** party*** candidate*** MP** parliament*** constituent**