



Election night module

MODULE

Election night



This module is excellent to learn about election night and for pairing with a class election.



Students are transported to the polling place after it closes on election night. Students will help conduct a House of Representative first preference count.

Students will also learn about the various security and transparency measures used when opening ballot boxes and sorting ballot papers.

In the second module, students will help conduct a House of Representatives two-candidate preferred (TCP) count. The TCP is conducted on election night after the first preference count to give an early indication of results.



Learning outcomes

By the end of the first module, students will:

- Recall that ballot papers are first sorted by first preference on election night.
- Recall what a first preference count is.
- Identify an informal ballot paper.
- Demonstrate how to sort ballot papers by first preference.
- Recall that there are processes to ensure transparency and election integrity in the counting of ballot papers.

By the end of the second module, students will:

- Recall that a two-candidate preferred (TCP) count is conducted after a first preference count on election night.
- Recognise the role of the TCP count.
- Demonstrate how to sort ballot papers in a TCP count.
- Recall that there are processes to ensure transparency and election integrity in the counting of ballot papers.



Suggested extension application activities:

UNIT OF WORK: Election day in action

A good election encourages democratic decision making and a respected outcome. A good election is based on principles that ensure it is free and fair.

- Use the 'Unit of work' in this module to conduct a class election.



Supplementary links with AEC resources

Links to other AEC education and information resources:

- Get Voting resources - [Get Voting - School elections made easy](#)
- Get Voting: Instructions for counting [First-past-the-post and Preferential including tally sheet](#)
- AEC poster: [Counting House of Representatives preferential voting](#)
- AEC [Ballot paper formality guidelines](#)
- AEC [House of Representatives count](#)
- AEC TV video: [Scrutineers look but don't touch](#)



Key questions

1. Are the following examples of ballot papers formal or informal?
 - Not numbering all the boxes? **[Answer: informal]**
 - Numbering all the boxes correctly, but drawing a cartoon on the ballot? **[Answer: formal]**
2. What do we do in a first preference count?
Answer: Sort ballot papers into piles based on what the voter marked as their first preference – ‘1’ - on the ballot paper.
3. What are some of ways that the voting count on election night is fair and transparent?
Answer: Scrutineers who represent candidates observing the vote, seals on the ballot boxes.



UNIT OF WORK

Election day in action



DEMOCRACY MODULES

Election day, Election night and Distribution of preferences



KEY CONCEPT

Citizenship



RELATED CONCEPTS

- **Participation** – active engagement in democracy through voting.
- **Processes** – electoral systems (including preferential voting) and election roles.
- **Integrity** – fairness and accessibility of voting processes.



Overarching questions

How do electoral structures and safeguards support participation and a trusted outcome in democratic societies?

Inquiry questions:

Factual – What is preferential voting and how is it conducted on election day?

Conceptual – How do polling procedures contribute to secure and accessible voting?



Learning outcomes

By the end of the activities, students will:

- Explore and explain measures like ballot box integrity, accessible tools, and voter assistance options.
- Explain how the AEC ensures elections are secure and conducted transparently through the various roles and checks present in a polling place.
- Demonstrate how to complete a formal vote for the House of Representatives.
- Demonstrate understanding of the first preference count by determining ballot paper formality.
- Demonstrate understanding of the full distribution of preferences in a House of Representatives count.
- Recall the differences between full preferential voting and first past the post and critically evaluate how each affects representation.



Suggested extension learning experiences and activities:

- Develop a resource pack (poster, video, guide) for educating first-time voters about polling place procedures and electoral integrity safeguards.
- Create an informative poster for 'completing a formal vote' for display in your polling place explaining how to vote and why it's important.
- Conduct a class election using '[Get Voting](#)' resources. Conduct a full distribution of preferences to achieve an election result.
- Research full preferential versus first past the post voting and write an evaluation on how each impacts representation.



Election day in action - Suggested assessment rubric

Criteria	Level 1-2	Level 3-4	Level 5-6	Level 7-8
Criterion A: Knowing and understanding Use knowledge to explain concepts and ideas in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.	Demonstrates minimal knowledge of electoral systems and voting processes.	Demonstrates some knowledge, with limited application to unfamiliar scenarios.	Demonstrates accurate and relevant understanding of electoral systems in varied contexts.	Demonstrates comprehensive and insightful understanding of electoral processes and safeguards.
Criterion B: Investigating Formulate questions, plan investigations, and use methods effectively.	Identifies a basic question or hypothesis with minimal planning or reference to sources.	Develops questions and conducts investigations with some source variety or procedural structure.	Designs purposeful investigations using credible sources and clear methodology.	Conducts sophisticated inquiry with critical use of diverse sources and rigorous investigative planning.
Criterion C: Communicating Organise and express information in appropriate formats and styles.	Communicates with limited clarity or structure; errors interfere with understanding.	Communicates ideas using some structure and conventions; meaning is mostly clear.	Organises ideas clearly using appropriate formats and terminology relevant to electoral contexts.	Communicates persuasively and fluently using discipline-specific vocabulary and engaging formats.
Criterion D: Thinking critically Analyse concepts, arguments, evidence and draw reasoned conclusions.	Shows minimal analysis or evaluation; conclusions lack justification.	Attempts analysis with some logical reasoning; conclusions are basic or unsupported.	Evaluates evidence and arguments with reasoned conclusions relevant to civic contexts.	Demonstrates insightful analysis and synthesis, drawing well-substantiated conclusions about democracy.





Version 1.0.3 | December 2025