

# Voting systems

## Secondary resource pack



### What's in the pack?

Use these resources to provide opportunities for your students to learn about and reflect on different systems for elections.

#### Includes

- Teaching ideas to encourage your students to consider the features of these systems.
- Voting System tables with and without suggested strengths and limitations.

### Electoral System Top Trumps

Students could create their own revision notes in the form of top trump cards.

These could include:

- A short description of the system.
- A pie chart showing the likely split of results.
- Examples of places it is used
- A rating of the system's
  - Proportionality
  - Ease of implementation
  - 'Understandability' for voters.

### Reasons to Vote

Ask students to consider voters in different systems. How might they feel about the potential results of each system? What are the possible consequences of this?

Using the voting systems table encourage students to research examples where different systems are in place, and their typical results.

### Proportionality Continuum

Ask students to use the voting system tables on the following pages to list different electoral systems in order from proportional to majoritarian.

Proportional



Majoritarian

Type of System	Strengths	Limitations
<p><b>First Past the Post (FPTP)</b> This system is used during <b>general elections</b> and some other ballots in the UK. Each voter can cast one local vote, and the candidate with the most votes becomes the MP or councillor. It has historically usually produced single-party governments.</p>		
<p><b>Supplementary Vote</b> Used in <b>mayoral elections</b>, voters indicate first and second preferences. If no single candidate wins a majority, the two candidates with the highest number of votes are retained, the other candidates are eliminated, and second choice candidates are counted to choose the winner. This is likely to lead to majority governments.</p>		
<p><b>Closed List System (CLS)</b> Used in <b>European</b> parliamentary elections, this system requires voters to select a party of their choice, while parties present lists of candidates to be allocated according to their share of the vote. This system is likely to produce coalitions.</p>		
<p><b>Single Transferable Vote (STV)</b> Used for local and devolved elections in <b>Northern Ireland</b>. In each area, a certain number of seats are available, and voters choose a range of candidates in order of preference. Seats are allocated as soon as a candidate reaches a 'quota' (specific number) of the votes, and votes can be reallocated to reduce 'wasted' votes.</p>		
<p><b>Additional Member System (AMS)</b> Voters in elections for the <b>Scottish</b> Parliament and the <b>Welsh</b> Assembly have two votes – one to elect a member for their local constituency and one to indicate their choice of party. This is a hybrid system: the constituency votes are counted using the FPTP system, and the second is used to select regional members proportionally. It can make coalitions more likely.</p>		

Type of System	Strengths	Limitations
<p><b>First Past the Post (FPTP)</b> This system is used during <b>general elections</b> and some other ballots in the UK. Each voter can cast one local vote, and the candidate with the most votes becomes the MP or councillor. It has historically usually produced single-party governments.</p>	<p>It tends to produce majority governments, which can make legislating easier.</p> <p>It is simple for voters to understand – one person, one vote.</p>	<p>Election results are not proportional to votes cast overall and small parties and minority groups can be under-represented.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Vote</b> Often used in <b>mayoral elections</b>, voters indicate first and second preferences. If no single candidate wins a majority, the two candidates with the highest number of votes are retained, the other candidates are eliminated, and second choice candidates are counted to choose the winner. This would likely to lead to majority governments.</p>	<p>Avoids multiple counts and redistribution, as only two choices are recorded.</p>	<p>Parties may not be rewarded for the share of the votes they gain.</p>
<p><b>Closed List System (CLS)</b> Used in <b>European</b> parliamentary elections, this system requires voters to choose a party of their choice, while parties present lists of candidates to be allocated according to their share of the vote. This system is likely to produce coalitions.</p>	<p>Often leads to better representation for smaller parties and minority groups, as a strong connection is retained between votes won and seats gained.</p>	<p>There may be no clear link between the MP and the constituency. This can make people feel their area is less represented than it would be under FPTP.</p> <p>It is a complicated system to administer.</p>
<p><b>Single Transferable Vote (STV)</b> Used for local and devolved elections in <b>Northern Ireland</b>. In each area, a number of seats are available, and voters select their favourite candidates in order of preference. Seats are then allocated as soon as a candidate reaches a 'quota' (specific number) of the votes, and votes can be reallocated to other candidates, to reduce 'wasted' votes.</p>	<p>Offers voters a choice of candidates from each party.</p> <p>Produces a strong connection between votes won and seats gained.</p>	<p>As with CLS, there may be no clear link between the MP and the constituency.</p> <p>It is a complicated system to administer.</p>
<p><b>Additional Member System (AMS)</b> Voters in elections for the <b>Scottish</b> Parliament and the <b>Welsh</b> Assembly have two votes – one to elect a member for their local constituency and one to indicate their choice of party. This is a hybrid system: the constituency votes are counted using the FPTP system, and the second is used to select regional members proportionally. It can make coalitions more likely.</p>	<p>Retains the MP-constituency link while offering a choice of representatives.</p> <p>Often leads to greater representation for smaller parties and minority groups.</p>	<p>Results are not as proportional to the votes cast as in systems such as STV.</p>