

# LESSON PLAN

## Executive Branch

**Level:** Low Intermediate, Intermediate

**Suggested Length:** 2 or 3 class periods, depending on class time and level

### Civics Test Questions

- #13—Name one branch or part of the government.
- #15—Who is in charge of the executive branch?
- #26—We elect a President for how many years?
- #27—In what month do we vote for President?
- #28—What is the name of the President of the United States now?
- #29—What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?
- #30—If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
- #31—If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
- #32—Who is the Commander in Chief of the military?
- #33—Who signs bills to become laws?
- #34—Who vetoes bills?
- #35—What does the President’s Cabinet do?
- #36—What are two Cabinet-level positions?
- #45—What are the two major political parties in the United States?
- #46—What is the political party of the President now?

### Key Vocabulary

branch of government, executive, legislative, judicial  
President, Vice President, Commander in Chief  
duties, armed forces, sign a bill, veto a bill, issues  
advise, Cabinet, Secretary of Labor/Defense/Transportation/State  
Oath of Office, inauguration ceremony  
political party, Democratic, Republican

## Objectives:

Students will:

- identify the executive branch as one branch of the government
- learn about the President’s role in the government
- identify the current President and Vice President and their party affiliation
- understand the function of the President’s Cabinet
- identify several members of the Cabinet and their respective departments
- identify presidential terms and the month and year of presidential elections
- explain the presidential order of succession
- identify the two major political parties in the United States

## Materials:

Handouts: *Survey—Leaders Around the World, The Executive Branch, The President’s Cabinet, Presidential Elections, Presidential Order of Succession, Political Parties, Crossword Puzzle—Executive Branch*, and *Civics Test Questions—Executive Branch*

USCIS Civics Flash Cards or prepared sets of Civics Flash Cards on the executive branch

**Intermediate Level Executive Branch Lesson Answer Key**



## Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

There are three intermediate level lessons on the branches of government. We recommend starting with the Executive Branch, followed by the Legislative Branch and then the Judicial Branch, as some of the information presented builds on a previous lesson.

In planning this lesson, decide if you want to cover the material in two or three class sessions. Instructions for each handout are described below. The **Key Vocabulary** found on the first page is generally more advanced than the words in the vocabulary list for the reading and writing portion of the test; however, learning these words will help the students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in this lesson. As a warm-up, there is a survey on the leaders of the students' native countries and the United States. The subsequent readings cover 15 Civics Test items from the System of Government section. At the end of each reading, the students can review and answer the specific test items from that

handout. Some handouts list websites where students can research further information. Where appropriate, there are suggested discussion questions to give the class an opportunity to share ideas and opinions related to what they have read. Students can discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as an entire class. There is background information in some readings that may go beyond the scope of the test questions, such as President Kennedy's assassination and the symbols for the political parties. This information is provided to give context to the test items. Please assure your students that they will not need to know this material for the test. A crossword puzzle is included to review key vocabulary from the test items. The last handout has a complete list of the Civics Test items on the executive branch. Finally, there are instructions for using the USCIS Civics Flash Cards with this lesson.

**Survey—Leaders Around the World:** Tell the students that you are going to discuss leaders of different countries. Read the questions out loud and check for comprehension. Tell them to think about the leader of their native country and write a short answer for each question in the column marked "In my native country." Have the students pair up, preferably with someone from a different country. Tell them to discuss their answers

with their partner and write the answers in the middle column. Lastly, they should discuss what they know about leaders in the United States and write it in the third column. Circulate and provide guidance where needed. Discuss the answers together and review what the students know about the U.S. president (name, election process, length of term, duties, etc.). Write their answers about the United States on the board.

**The Executive Branch:** Discuss the photo of the White House with the students, asking them what they think of when they see the White House (such as, the White House is a symbol of the United States, it is the home of the president and first family, etc.). Then have the students read the paragraphs silently. Tell them to underline any new words while they read. When they finish, read the paragraphs aloud while they listen. As you read each phrase or sentence, pause to ask if there are any words

they do not know. Explain any new words in simple terms (**armed forces=Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy; issues=problems, etc.**). Read the paragraph out loud straight through, or if you wish, call on a volunteer to read it out loud. Then give the students a chance to hear each sentence and repeat after you. Have the students fill in the answers to the Civics Test items at the bottom of the handout and go over them together, modeling the pronunciation of the questions and answers.

**The President's Cabinet:** Explain that the executive branch is the largest branch of the government and that the president's job is difficult. Refer back to the answers students gave about the president's duties during the discussion of the survey. Explain that the president has many people to advise him/her. Write **advise** on the board and ask if they can explain what it means (**give help/ideas/opinions**). Explain that people who give advice are called **professional advisors**. Ask the students **What kind of advice does the president need?** Write their ideas on the board. Review the reading as previously

described. Go over the titles of the four cabinet members listed in the box and then have the students fill in the correct title to complete the sentences. Have the students fill in the answers to the Civics Test items and go over the answers together. Assure the students that they need to name only two Cabinet positions for the Civics Test. Point out the web site, [www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet), at the bottom of the handout to find information about all of the cabinet members.

**Presidential Elections:** Discuss the photo of the presidential inauguration. Ask the students **How often do Americans hold presidential elections? (every four years)**. Review the reading as in the previous handouts. Discuss the requirements for presidential candidates but

assure the students that they do not need to know these for the Civics Test. Have the students fill in the answers to the test items and check them together. Use the discussion questions to elicit students' opinions on the two-term limit and the requirements for presidential candidates.

**Presidential Order of Succession:** Have the students look at the photo of Lyndon Johnson taking the Oath of Office. Ask the class **What are the people doing?, Who is taking the oath?, Does this picture look like other inauguration ceremonies?**, and so on. Explain that this photo was taken in 1963 several hours after President John F. Kennedy's assassination when Vice President Lyndon Johnson became president. Review this reading

as previously described. One point you should explain is the title and position of **Speaker of the House of Representatives** and the role the Speaker plays in the order of succession if the president and the vice president cannot serve. Have the students answer the Civics Test items at the bottom of the handout. Use the discussion question to elicit students' thoughts on the presidential order of succession in the United States.

**Political Parties:** Have the students look at the pictures of the donkey and elephant, and discuss what these symbols represent. Review the reading as in the previous handouts. Remind the students that they will not need to know the donkey and elephant symbols for the test,

but that they will need to be able to name the two major political parties and the party of the current president. Have the students fill in the answers to the test items and check them together.

**Crossword Puzzle—Executive Branch:** Since crossword puzzles may be new for some students, explain the “across” and “down” aspects of the puzzle. Do the first item (**5-Across**) together. Ask the students to read the sentence (**The \_\_\_\_\_ becomes President if the President can no longer serve**) and supply the correct words (**Vice President**) to complete the sentence. Show

them where to fill in the words in the puzzle. Go over the answers together when everyone is finished, using an overhead transparency of the puzzle, if available. Please note that **4-Down** can be filled in with the words “Democratic” or “Republican,” depending on the political party of the current president.

**Civics Test Questions—Executive Branch:** The 15 Civics Test items from this lesson are listed on this last handout. This can be assigned for homework or pair work, where the students take turns interviewing each

other. Point out to the students that they can look up more information on the current presidency at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

**USCIS Civics Flash Cards:** To give the students another activity where they can practice the test questions, use either several sets of the Civics Flash Cards or download the Flash Cards from the Citizenship Resource Center (visit [www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship) and search for “Civics Flash Cards—reversed colors cut-out version” for a printer-friendly version). For a student-centered activity,

separate out the specific items on the executive branch listed at the beginning of the lesson plan. Give one set of those items to each pair or small group of students. Have the students take turns, picking a random card and reading the item aloud for the partner or group to answer. As the students quiz each other, circulate and offer assistance as necessary.