

It's a Party!

(60 Minutes)

OBJECTIVE

- ✓ Compare and contrast the values and policy positions of U.S. political parties.
- ✓ Analyze the impact that political parties have on political institutions.

MATERIALS

- ✓ *It's a Party!* Handout
- ✓ Internet access

GET READY

- ✓ Copy the *It's a Party!* handout for each student or upload a fillable Word / PDF file of the *It's a Party* handout to a teacher website or course module.
- ✓ Arrange internet access for students via computer cart, library, or computer lab
- ✓ Link political party websites to your teacher website or course module (*optional*).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Check student prior knowledge about political parties based on previous lessons and/or the news.
2. Distribute copies of the *It's a Party!* handout or direct students to the online version of the handout on the teacher website/course module.
3. Direct students to read the *It's a Party!* handout and directions.
4. Instruct students to use the party websites to locate information about the party's history, key figures, values, and platform positions. Students should individually place the relevant information in the chart on the *It's a Party!* handout.
5. When students complete their charts, lead a classroom discussion on their findings using the discussion questions on Page 2.

6. If possible, invite local representations of the two major political parties to explain the views, campaign activities, and impacts of their party on local government and policymaking.
7. For homework, ask students to find a local or national news event which demonstrates the differences between the political parties. Check for knowledge and understanding of accurate differences between the political parties on ideology, policy platforms, and the role of government.

JIGSAW ACTIVITY – ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Step #4 from the original instructions can be replaced by a Jigsaw Activity:
 - Divide the class into three groups: one for Republicans, one for Democrats, and one for a designated Third Party.
 - Provide students 15 minutes to individually research and complete the column of the chart belonging to their assigned political party.
 - Direct students from each political party to gather, combine information, and make sure their column is complete and accurate.
 - Next, direct students to join with two students representing the other political parties. Students should share and teach the others about their political party. While one student is presenting, other students should complete their chart.
 - *All other steps remain the same.*

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**ELECTIONS AND THE VOTING
EXPERIENCE**

I Study the Candidates and
Issues



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What does the Democratic Party stand for?
How do you know?*
- ★ *What does the Republican Party stand for?
How do you know?*
- ★ *What are some important policy differences
between the Democratic and Republican
Parties?*
- ★ *According to the Democratic Party's website
and/or platform, what is the proper role of
government on social issues? On economic
issues?*
- ★ *According to the Republican Party's website
and/or platform, what is the proper role of
government on social issues? On economic
issues?*
- ★ *Other than the Democratic and Republican
Parties, which other political parties do you
know?*



It's a Party! Handout

Getting involved with a political party is one way that Americans can participate in politics and government. In most cases, when Americans vote for a candidate for president, Congress, or governor, they are voting for someone associated with a political party.

Throughout U.S. History, there have been many political parties. Since the Civil War, however, two main political parties have held control over the federal government: the Democrats and the Republicans. As society changes, political parties must address new issues and voter concerns. The Democratic and Republican Parties of today are very different from previous generations.

DIRECTIONS:

1. To learn about the differences between the political parties, research them using the web addresses provided below. Using the websites, complete the comparison chart on the next page with the following information:
 - a. Describe the party's brief history and identify key political figures from history or today who are associated with each party.
 - b. Find the political party's most recent platform. A **platform** contains the party's stated positions on a variety of political issues. Summarize how each party impacts policymaking based on its values and policy positions using the platform.

WEBSITES:

- Democratic Party Website:
 - www.democrats.org
- Republican Party Website:
 - www.gop.com
- Libertarian Party Website:
 - www.lp.org
- Green Party Website:
 - www.gp.org

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It's a Party! Handout

| | The Democratic Party | The Republican Party | Third Party: _____ |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Party History and Key Figures | | | |
| Values and Policy Positions | | | |