



# VOTE SMART

## JUST THE FACTS

### Lesson 3 - Respecting Opinions

#### **Standards: National Council for the Social Studies**

NCSS 4: Individual Development and Identity

#### **Objectives:**

SWBAT (students will be able to) identify opposing sides of an argument.

SWBAT express their ideas clearly in writing.

SWBAT respect differing opinions.

SWBAT define “political parties.”

#### **Subject Matter:**

Political parties, writing, different opinions, respect

#### **Materials:**

- Computer and projector (optional)
- Whiteboard
- Notebook paper
- Pencils

#### **Procedure: (1 hour 30 min)**

1. Before class begins, define “political party” on the board. [We recommend this definition from [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org): “A group of people who join together because they share many ideas about what the government should do.”] Highlight key phrases such as “group” and “roughly similar political opinions”.
2. Gather the students and ask them about a time they disagreed with someone. Maybe they disagreed with a friend about what game to play, with their mother about a bedtime, or with their sibling about what show to watch.
  - a. How did you discuss your disagreement?
    - i. Did you yell, cry, fight, talk calmly?
    - ii. Did you ask your mom/dad to decide?
  - b. Were you nice? Was the person you were arguing with nice?
  - c. How did you end the disagreement?
3. Explain to the class that everyone has disagreements sometimes - even adults and politicians.

4. On your computer/projector, display [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org)'s National Political Parties page. Point out that there are many different political parties [DISCLAIMER: Vote Smart takes information on ALL political parties, including those that some view as "objectionable." Take a look at this page first.]. Point to the definition of political party on your board. Explain that all of these political parties on the screen are groups that have different opinions from the other groups on how to run our country. Each party is formed of people that mostly agree on political issues. So to clarify, within the political party, members mostly agree on things, but between different political parties, the parties mostly disagree on important issues. Explain that in both politics and everyday life, having disagreements is normal, and sometimes good. The important thing is that when people disagree, they remain respectful to each other.
5. See if the class can come up with some rules for how to remain nice and respectful while in a disagreement:
  - a. Take turns talking and explaining their point.
  - b. Remain open-minded and listen to the other person's ideas.

Activity:

1. Inform the students that today they will hear a disagreement.
  - a. For many years now, people have disagreed on whether school should be year-around, i.e. school children should keep their 2.5-month long Summer break. Some people think school children should keep this break. One reason is because they believe a break is healthy, giving the kids time to relax and play. Other people think school children should not have this break. One reason is because they think the break is too long and the students will forget what they learned last year.
2. Have students identify the two sides of the argument.
  - a. School should be year-round (No Summer break).
  - b. School should not be year-round (Keep the current schedule).
3. As a class, brainstorm some other supporting reasons for each side of the argument. Write these responses on the whiteboard.
4. Students will have to choose a side and support one position. After 15-20 mins of writing in support of that position, the students should flip their paper over and now must write in support of the opposite position.

You might recommend that they structure their paper as:

  - a. **Introduction** – What is your position?
  - b. **Point one** – What is one reason to support your position?
  - c. **Point two** – What is another reason to support your position?
  - d. **Acknowledge other side** – Respectfully explain why the other side of the argument is wrong
  - e. **Conclusion**– briefly rewrite your position and your points to end

Cool down:

Gather the students and ask them how they felt about the writing assignment.

1. Was it hard to write for both sides?
2. Can they recall what a "political party" is?