

General Elections

The 8th of June is a very important day this year. People will choose someone to lead our nation. All around the country, people will also choose leaders for the places they live. They will do this by voting. This is called an election.

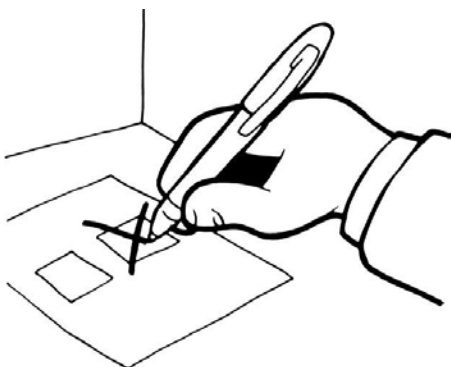
There was going to be an election in three years time but Prime Minister Theresa May asked for an election to be held this year because she wants the best person to be in charge.

Why is it important?

The results of the election will have a big effect on our country, because the leaders who are chosen will have the power to make important decisions. They will decide what you learn at school and how much money to spend on hospitals. They will be able to make new laws, change taxes and choose if Britain should fight wars. We call the leaders 'politicians'. They make a lot of these decisions by voting. They listen to a new idea or a new law, and then talk about it. Normally, different groups of politicians disagree and the idea or new law is changed a little. After this has happened a few times, the politicians vote to decide if it should go ahead.



The politicians will make these decisions in the Houses of Parliament, which are in London. The 'Houses' are not two different buildings but are actually two rooms in an old building called Westminster Palace. Westminster Palace is next to the river Thames and has a tall clock tower called 'Big Ben'.



How do people vote?

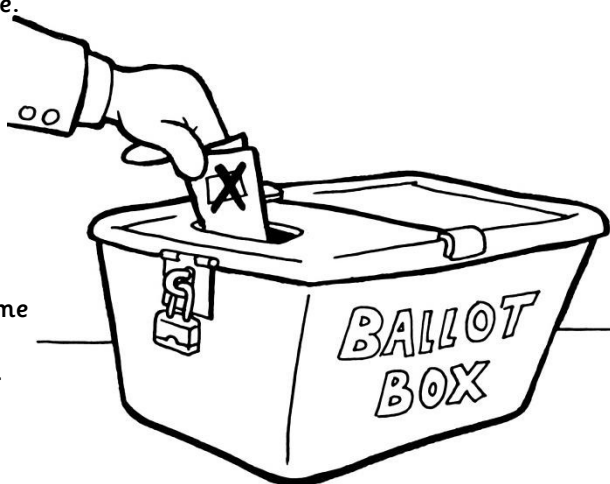
Our country is divided into 650 parts, and each part can send one politician to the Houses of Parliament. The people in each part will vote for the politician that they think will be the best. People who are 18 or older can vote.

It is possible to vote by post but most people do it in person. On election day, there will be special places organised where people can vote, such as churches, libraries and schools. These 'polling stations' are open from 7 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night so that everyone has time

to vote. If you are lucky, you might get a day off! When they go to vote, each person will be given a piece of paper and on it will be a list of politicians that they can choose.

Behind a screen, they will draw a cross next to the name of the person they want. Finally, they put their paper into a secure box. All of this is to make sure that their vote remains a secret.

At the end of the day, all the votes from the area will be counted. Sometimes it can take all night! The politician who gets the most votes will become a Member of Parliament, or 'MP'. They are now elected and will go on to spend a lot of time in London. In Westminster Palace, they will be allowed to sit on the long, green benches where politicians argue about their ideas and make the big decisions. So when a politician is elected, we say that they have 'won a seat'.



Who can people vote for?

Everybody has different opinions about how our country should work. They think different things are good and different things are bad. Some people want things to change and some people want things to stay the same. A person who feels very strongly about their opinions might choose to become a politician. If they are elected, they will have a much better chance to make things the way they think they should be.

In the UK, a person who is 18 or older can be a politician (16 in Scotland). Some people try on their own but most people join a group which has the same opinions as them. A group like this is called a 'political party'. Political parties can have lots of members. Some of them will try to become politicians, and the others will give them money and try to help. There are lots of parties in the United Kingdom, but the largest are:

The Conservatives

The Labour Party

The Liberal Democrats

The Green Party

The United Kingdom Independence Party

At this election, these big parties will have a politician in nearly every part of the country, all trying to get people to elect them. There are also some big parties who only try to get votes in Scotland, or Northern Ireland, or Wales. Every political party has a main leader, who will become Prime Minister if their party wins.

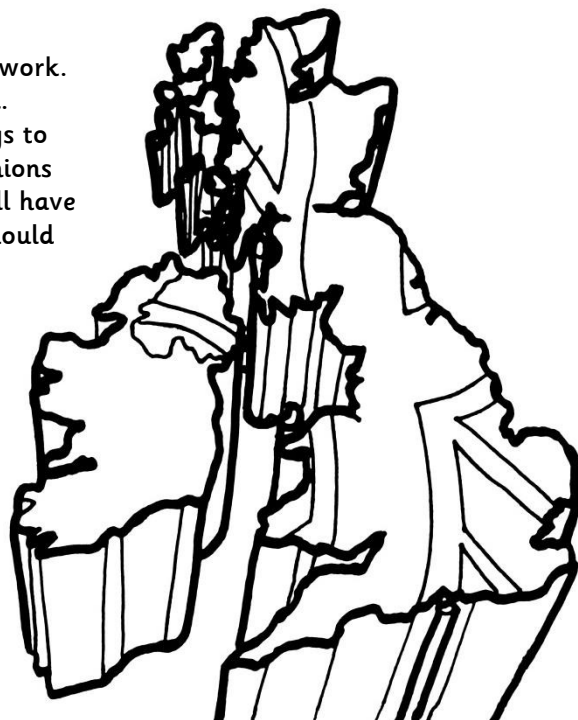
All politicians are very busy before an election. They campaign, trying to persuade the people in their area to vote for them. Often they knock on doors and tell people how they will help them. They put up posters and give people leaflets saying what they want to do. All of this is to make voters think that they are the best politician to choose. Sometimes, there are political discussions on television where party leaders argue with each other about what they want to do. They declare that they have good ideas and that the other leaders are wrong.

Special things happen before an election. Some parties make adverts which explain their ideas or which make fun of the other parties. Sometimes normal people put up brightly coloured posters on their houses or on lamp posts. The posters show the name of the politician that the people want to vote for.

Who wins the election?

Every part of the country will elect a politician, and that means that 650 politicians will be chosen. They will be from many different parties, but the party which has the most politicians elected is the winner. The Queen will declare the leader of the winning party as the new Prime Minister. This Prime Minister will be the leader of our country and is allowed to live in a special house in London. The house is number 10, Downing Street.

There is an election every five years unless there is a special situation. As Britain have voted to leave the EU, the Prime Minister has called for an election 3 years early.



Ed Moss

General Elections

What is an election? Pick 2 answers.

A time when people vote.

A time when hospitals are closed.

A time when people have a party.

A time when leaders are chosen.

Find and copy 2 things that the leaders who are picked will do.

Why might you get a day off?

Why do some parties make adverts which make fun of the other parties?

When else might you or other people use voting?

In what year should the next election have taken place?

Do you think you would find this text in an encyclopaedia or a story book? Give a reason for your answer.

'Big Ben' is a famous London landmark.

(a) Find and copy another famous place in London from the text.

(b) Which person in the text might you find at Buckingham Palace?

Do you think people write their names on their voting papers? Why?

Choose the best answer.

Do you think the author is trying to:

Persuade readers?

Annoy readers?

Inform readers?

Make readers laugh

Put these election events in the order that they happen.

A politician is made into the Prime Minister by the Queen.

Politicians go on campaigns to win voters.

Votes are counted.

People go to polling stations.

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A time when people vote.

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A time when leaders are chosen.

Find and copy 2 things that the leaders who are picked will do.

Various answers; must be from the text.

Why might you get a day off?

School may be closed so people can vote there.

Why do some parties make adverts which make fun of the other parties?

To make voters think that the other parties are bad/silly/wrong; so that more people vote for them instead of the other parties.

When else might you or other people use voting?

Various answers from occasions in school/friendships/the wider world.

In what year should the next election have taken place?

2020

Do you think you would find this text in an encyclopaedia or a story book? Give a reason for your answer.

An encyclopaedia because it is non-fiction/factual writing.

'Big Ben' is a famous London landmark.

(a) Find and copy another famous place in London from the text.

The Houses of Parliament/10 Downing Street.

(b) Which person in the text might you find at Buckingham Palace?

The Queen

Do you think people write their names on their voting papers? Why?

No, because everyone's votes are kept secret.

Choose the best answer.

Do you think the author is trying to:

Persuade readers?

Annoy readers?

Inform readers?

Make readers laugh

Put these election events in the order that they happen.

2 A politician is made into the Prime Minister by the Queen.

4 Politicians go on campaigns to win voters.

3 Votes are counted.

1 People go to polling stations.