

# Mandatory Voting

## Pre-Reading

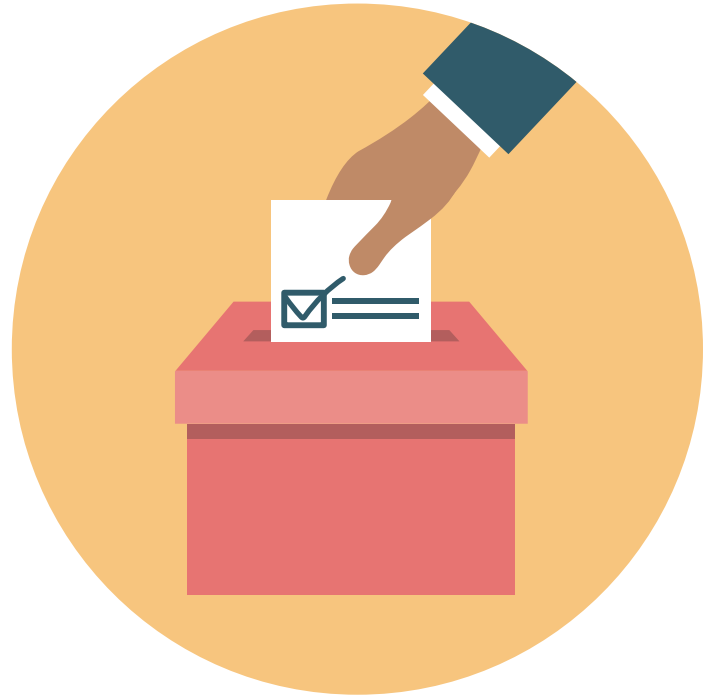
### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. If you are eligible to vote, do you?  
Do your parents vote?
2. Do you think voting in federal elections should be mandatory? Why or why not?
3. How would the world change if voting was mandatory for all adults worldwide?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can. Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ___ 1. compulsory | a) to make people follow a rule                     |
| ___ 2. eligible   | b) a person who is running for a political position |
| ___ 3. enforce    | c) mandatory, required by law                       |
| ___ 4. abolish    | d) a political group that has set ideals and goals  |
| ___ 5. turnout    | e) to remove completely, to outlaw                  |
| ___ 6. candidate  | f) dishonesty in a group or organization            |
| ___ 7. corruption | g) the amount of people who attend something        |
| ___ 8. party      | h) related to one's town, city, or region           |
| ___ 9. civic      | i) allowed, able to do because you have the right   |
| ___ 10. violate   | j) to fail to comply or respect, to break a rule    |
| ___ 11. comply    | k) to remove oneself from an opportunity            |
| ___ 12. withdraw  | l) to follow or obey                                |



## Reading

### MANDATORY VOTING

*Your duty to decide*

1. Is voting **compulsory** in your country? Over 20 countries around the world require **eligible** voters to vote in elections. These countries include Australia, Singapore, and Peru. Some countries have a law but do not **enforce** it. Other countries have experimented with compulsory voting but have **abolished** it. There are many arguments for and against mandatory voting.
2. Mandatory voting results in a higher voter **turnout**. On average, over 90% of Australians vote in federal elections (under 60% of Americans vote in US elections). Voters who do not approve of any **candidates** or who do not wish to participate must cast a blank vote or risk facing a fine or penalty. Money that is traditionally spent on convincing people to vote is not necessary in a nation that enforces mandatory voting. This removes some of the **corruption** in politics and gives poorer candidates and **parties** a better opportunity to get votes.
3. While voter turnout is significantly higher in countries with compulsory voting, the voters aren't necessarily politically informed. People who think of voting as a **civic** duty rather than a right may not put much thought into who they vote for. Uninformed voters may simply choose a name randomly. They may also pick a person or group based on a name or face. Some may simply vote for who their family members or friends are choosing. Many opponents feel that mandatory voting **violates** a person's right not to speak and has no place in democratic societies.
4. There are a variety of penalties used to punish voters who repeatedly refuse to **comply** to mandatory voting rules. Some citizens are fined, while others lose their right to vote in future elections. **Withdrawing** government-based goods and services is another type of penalty for not voting. More commonly, however, no penalty occurs.
5. Why doesn't an eligible voter bother to vote? This is the question many women and minorities have asked throughout history when their right to vote was denied. Some citizens claim they are content with the leader or party in power and don't feel the need to cast a vote. Others don't trust any of the candidates or think all of them are the same. If you had to decide whether or not mandatory voting should be enforced in your country, would you say *yea* or *nay*\*?

*"Bad officials  
are elected by  
good citizens  
who do not vote."*

—George Jean Nathan

**\*yea or nay:**

yes or no

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. What is implied about voting rules in the US?

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2. Why might mandatory voting reduce corruption in politics?

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3. Why does the reading mention democracy?

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4. What punishments and penalties exist for people who don't comply with mandatory voting?

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5. How does the reading end?

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## Vocabulary Review

### A. What's the Word?

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence?  
More than one option may be possible.

#	Sentence	Word
1	At the last minute, my uncle decided not to run for council.	
2	You must visit the polling station and cast your vote for the city's mayor.	
3	Only 50 people came to the polling station to vote last night.	
4	In my country, the legal voting age is 18.	
5	I refuse to obey the uniform rule. I'll wear what I want to school.	
6	The party is paying people to vote for them.	
7	Child slavery must end now.	
8	There are three people running for prime minister.	

### B. Write a Sentence

Write a sentence or example that illustrates each word below.  
Do not use the word in your example.

1. violate \_\_\_\_\_
2. comply \_\_\_\_\_
3. compulsory \_\_\_\_\_
4. turnout \_\_\_\_\_
5. enforce \_\_\_\_\_
6. parties \_\_\_\_\_
7. candidate \_\_\_\_\_
8. eligible \_\_\_\_\_

## Grammar Review

### A. Modals of Obligation + First Conditional

When you want to express a rule, law, or duty in English, you can use a modal of obligation. There are three modals/modal expressions to choose from. Modals of obligation are often followed by conditional clauses (if + might / may / could/ will) that express consequences for not following the rules.

**MUST** *formal*  
**must + base verb**

- You **must vote** on Friday. If you don't, you **could face** a fine.
- You must **be** on time. If you **aren't**, you **can't sing** in the concert.

**HAVE TO** *slightly less formal*  
**have to + base verb**

- Aussies **have to visit** the voting polls on election day. If they don't, they **might lose** their right to vote in the future.
- You **have to file** your taxes by Friday. If you don't, you **might owe** a late fee.

**HAVE GOT TO** *informal, for emphasis (often by a parent or spouse)*  
**have got to + base verb**

- You **have got to finish** your homework. If you **don't**, you **can't play** outside.
- You **have got to be** home by 6:00 pm. If you **aren't**, Johnny **will miss** hockey practice.

### B. Practice

Write three examples that are similar to the ones above. Be sure to include a sentence with each modal of obligation, as well as a sentence that states a consequence for not complying.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Discussion

1. If a country has mandatory voting, but it is not enforced, should this country still be considered one of the nations that has compulsory voting?
2. Does voter turnout increase when there is a candidate that people really *don't* want to win?
3. Why are so many citizens uninterested in politics and elections? What needs to change?
4. What if, instead of introducing mandatory voting, governments introduced **incentives** for voting? What kind of incentives might work? What problems might occur?

## Critical Thinking

### IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Can you think of any other civic duties or human obligations that should be mandatory? What about giving blood or recycling? Work in a small group and think of a few things that should be mandatory in your country or city of residence. Write a statement using a modal of obligation and debate it with your classmates. For example:

*“Every eligible donor must give blood once a year.”*

## Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

### MANDATORY VOTING

*Your duty to decide*

- Is voting compulsory in your country? Over 20 countries around the world require eligible voters to vote in elections. These countries include Australia, Singapore, and Peru. Some countries have a law but do not enforce it. Other countries have \_\_\_\_\_ compulsory voting, but have abolished it. There are many \_\_\_\_\_ for and against mandatory voting.
- Mandatory voting results in a higher voter turnout. \_\_\_\_\_, over 90% of Australians vote in federal elections, (under 60% of Americans vote in US elections). Voters who do not approve of any candidates or who do not wish to participate must cast a blank vote or risk facing a fine or penalty. Money that is \_\_\_\_\_ spent on convincing people to vote is not necessary in a nation that enforces mandatory voting. This removes some of the corruption in politics and gives poorer candidates and parties a \_\_\_\_\_ to get votes.
- While voter turnout is \_\_\_\_\_ higher in countries with compulsory voting, the voters aren't necessarily politically informed. People who think of voting as a civic duty rather than a right may not \_\_\_\_\_ into who they vote for. Uninformed voters may simply choose a name randomly. They may also pick a person or group based on a name or face. Some may simply vote for who their family members or friends are choosing. Many \_\_\_\_\_ feel that mandatory voting violates a person's right not to speak and has no place in democratic societies.
- There are a variety of penalties used to punish voters who repeatedly refuse to comply to mandatory voting rules. Some citizens are fined, while others lose their right to vote in future elections. Withdrawing government-based \_\_\_\_\_ is another type of penalty for not voting. More commonly, however, no penalty \_\_\_\_\_.
- Why doesn't an eligible voter bother to vote? This is the question many women and minorities have asked throughout history when their right to vote was denied. Some citizens claim they are content with the leader or \_\_\_\_\_ and don't feel the need to cast a vote. Others don't trust any of the candidates or think all of them are the same. If you had to decide whether or not mandatory voting should be \_\_\_\_\_ in your country, would you say *yea* or *nay*?

## Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about mandatory voting and discuss their opinions on it. The lesson includes vocabulary development tasks, comprehension questions, discussion questions, and a review of modals of obligation.

**LEVEL:** Int – Adv

**TIME:** 1.5–2 hours

**TAGS:** discussion, vote, voting, mandatory voting, Australia, politics, political rights, democracy, conditionals, modals

### Pre-Reading

#### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Review the term “mandatory” and practice the pronunciation and stress. Who has the right to vote in your country? Do some eligible voters “not bother” to vote? You may need to explain the term “federal.”

#### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. a | 5. g | 7. f | 9. h  | 11. l |
| 2. i | 4. e | 6. b | 8. d | 10. j | 12. k |

### Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

### Comprehension

1. It is implied that voting is not mandatory in the US. The US is not listed as a country that has mandatory voting, and it is used in comparison with Australia where voting is compulsory.
2. Mandatory voting might reduce corruption in politics because parties don't have to spend money encouraging people to vote.
3. The reading mentions democracy because some people think that mandatory voting removes a person's right not to speak.
4. People who don't comply with mandatory voting may be fined or face prison time. They may also lose the right to vote.
5. The reading ends with a question for the reader to ponder.

### Vocabulary Review

#### A. WHAT'S THE WORD?

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. withdraw              | 5. violate/comply |
| 2. compulsory/civic duty | 6. corruption     |
| 3. turnout               | 7. abolish        |
| 4. eligible              | 8. candidates     |

#### B. WRITE A SENTENCE

Answers will vary.

*(continued on the next page...)*



## Answer Key cont.

### Grammar Review

#### A. MODALS OF OBLIGATION + FIRST CONDITIONAL

Review our editor's tips about modals:

<https://ellii.com/blog/suggestions-with-modals-of-advice-and-necessity-2>

#### B. PRACTICE

Answers will vary.

### Discussion

Answers will vary. Can be done in pairs or small groups.

### Critical Thinking

Individual answers. Can be done in pairs or small groups. You can decide if you want students to come up with one or many statements to debate. You can also ask students to come up with consequences for not complying (practice using conditionals).

### Listening

1. experimented with, arguments
2. On average, traditionally, better opportunity
3. significantly, put much thought, opponents
4. goods and services, occurs
5. party in power, enforced