

Read-Along Teach-Along: Political Conventions

Each political party gets to choose one **candidate** for President. That candidate then chooses his **Vice President**. The pair of candidates is called a **ticket**. The contest that leads up to the election is sometimes called a "**race**." The Vice Presidential candidate that the Presidential candidate chooses is called a "**running mate**."

Candidates used to be chosen by members of **Congress** in secret meetings called **caucuses**. People didn't like this! They wanted the choice to be more **democratic**, meaning that more people would have a say in **choosing the candidate**. So the parties began having **primaries and conventions** so regular people could vote and participate. A primary is an **election** within each party. A convention is a **huge party** that lasts for days, attended by **delegates and leaders of the party**.

Each state holds a **primary**, an election where people in each political party compete with **each other**. Whoever gets the most votes in each state sends the most **delegates** to the national **convention**. During the convention, delegates officially **vote**, and a candidate is officially **nominated**. This will be the person to compete against the other parties' candidates for President in the **general election**.

The convention has two other purposes. The first is to **adopt a platform**. A platform is a statement of **beliefs and issues** that are important to the party. The second purpose is to **get excited** about the general election in November. Delegates and guests waves signs, wear funny hats, yell, laugh, cheer, and have **pep rallies**.

Challenge Questions:

1. What is another meaning of the word "convention"?
2. How do you think delegates are arranged on the floor of the convention hall? Why?
3. Why do people yell and cheer during political speeches?
4. Can you make up a rhyming cheer that includes your name?
5. Look up some pictures of conventions on the internet.