

Voting Eligibility: Find the Voter: Page 1

Every state is allowed to decide who can vote in the presidential election in that state. However, they can't just make up all the rules, because the Constitution of the United States tells them who has a right to vote and who doesn't. When the country was just starting, and people were just figuring things out, you could only vote if you were a certain religion, if you owned land, and if you had white skin. Here are some important dates when that all changed :

1870: *You can't stop people from voting because of race or color.* This meant that African Americans, Chinese Americans, Mexican Americans, any kind of Americans could vote, no matter what color their skin, as long as they were male, didn't live in Washington DC, could afford to pay any poll tax, and were over 21.

1920: *You can't stop people from voting because of gender.* This meant that women could vote, as long as they didn't live in Washington DC, could afford to pay any poll tax, and were over 21.

1961: *You can't stop people from voting because they live in Washington DC,* as long as they can afford to pay any poll tax and are over 21.

1964: *You can't charge a poll tax.* This meant that poor people who couldn't afford to pay a poll tax could vote too, as long as they were over 21.

1971: *You have to be 18 years old to vote,* not 21.

Right now, there are still restrictions on voting rights. For example, if you are a convicted felon (meaning you committed a very serious crime), you can't vote in some states. Some states also restrict voting for non-citizens. The federal government has made the rules on suffrage based on race, gender, the amount of money you have, and how old you are.

Challenge Questions

1. Do you think children should be allowed to vote?
2. Why do you think that women weren't allowed to vote until 1920?
3. What is a poll tax?
4. Define the word: Suffrage.
5. Should people without children be allowed to vote on issues that affect parents and children?

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Circle the person who is allowed to vote in each year.

My
ancestors
are from
Africa.



1840

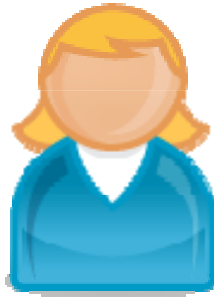


My
ancestors
are from
England

I'm a man.



1910

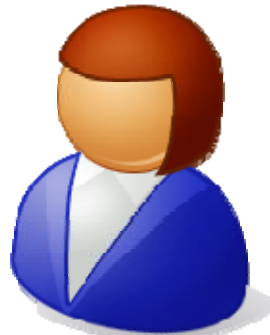


I'm a
woman.

I live in
New York.



1940



I live in
Washington
DC.

I can afford
to pay the
poll tax. No
problem.



1950



I can't
afford to
pay the poll
tax.

I'm 22.



1970



I'm 19.