



## Tips for Parents: Elections for Kids

***If it's near election time, your kids are likely hearing bits and pieces about the candidates and issues from teachers, television, radio and adult conversations. This is a great time to introduce them to the political process and answer their questions. Here are a few tips for getting started:***

### **Discuss the Process**

Tell your children how laws are made and government officials are elected in the United States. How detailed you are should depend on the age of your child. Familiarize them with democracy in our country, and talk about how voting works. Stress the importance of everyone having a right to vote and our obligation as citizens to do so. They might also find the history of women and people of color gaining the right to vote interesting.

Younger children might enjoy the numerous children's books on the subject. Popular fiction books about elections include: *Otto Runs for President* by Rosemary Wells, *Grace Runs for President* by Kelly DiPuccio, and *Duck for President* by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin.

You can create a family voting game over an issue such as "Where should we go for vacation?" or "How much should we budget for Christmas gifts?" Have two sides present their side of the issue, including relevant facts, and conduct a vote.

### **Review the Candidates and Issues**

Go over real issues you think might interest your child. Remember that the right to think for one's self and vote independently is an important part of the democratic process, so try to not to lean one way or another in your explanation. Present the facts in a neutral way and try to let them make up their own mind. If they can't decide, or ask which they should choose, you might try saying, "Our family believes this is right/wrong but you must choose for yourself" or even admitting that you sometimes have difficulty making a choice and it can help to get more information.

With teenagers, stage a family debate. Each family member old enough to participate can present their issue/candidate and debate why they deserve the vote. Then finish with a mock vote.

### **Follow Up**

Once the elections have been completed, follow up on the issues and candidates with the kids. See if campaign promises were kept, and if measures and laws had the desired effect. If not, investigate the details with the kids and see what lessons can be learned for the next election.

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