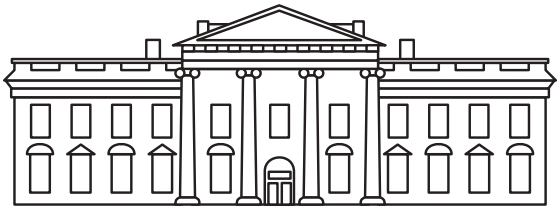
SCHOLASTIC DEMOCRACY For Kids

Campaign Countdown:

Road to the White House



Every four years, the United States elects a President and Vice President. Follow the steps in this year's presidential election.

1. **Candidates announce they are running for President.** This usually happens more than a year before the election. Candidates need time to raise money, meet voters, and tell what they would do if elected President.

2. **January-June 2004: Primaries and caucuses are held.** In each state, voters name their favorite candidate in primary elections or caucuses (party meetings). Voters are actually choosing delegates pledged to vote for that candidate at the national party conventions.

3. **Summer 2004: National party conventions.** The delegates who were elected in primary elections and caucuses attend their party's national convention. There they officially nominate their party's candidates for President and Vice President.

4. **Fall 2004: Election Campaign.** By Labor Day, the candidates are off and running. The major candidates hold televised debates on issues in the campaign. They crisscross the country, meeting voters and explaining how they would solve the country's problems.

5. **November 2: Election Day.** Voters cast ballots for President, Vice President, members of Congress, and state and local offices.

6. **December 13: Electoral College vote.** When voters cast ballots for President and Vice President, they actually are choosing electors pledged to vote for that candidate. In December, the chosen electors meet in each state to cast that state's official electoral votes for President and Vice President.

7. **January 6, 2005: Congress counts the electoral votes.** In January, Congress counts the electoral votes. If no candidate wins a majority (270) of the electoral vote, the House elects the President and the Senate elects the Vice President.

8. **January 20, 2005: Inauguration Day.** On January 20, 2005, the President and Vice President take their oath of office.

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Questions

1. When do candidates announce they are running for President?
2. What is a caucus?
3. In primary elections and caucuses, whom are voters actually electing?
4. What official role do national party conventions play in choosing a President?
5. When is Election Day in 2004?
6. When voters cast ballots for President and Vice President, whom are they actually choosing?
7. Who chooses the President if no candidate wins a majority (270) of the electoral votes?
8. Who chooses the Vice President if no candidate wins a majority (270) of the electoral votes?
9. Is the Electoral College actually a college? Explain.
10. Do you think the U.S. voting system should be changed to have citizens vote directly for President and Vice President? Explain.

ANSWERS: 1. more than a year before the election; 2. meeting of party members to select convention delegates; 3. convention delegates; 4. A national convention nominates both presidential and vice-presidential candidates. 5. November 2; 6. Electors pledged to a candidate; 7. House of Representatives; 8. Senate; 9. No, it is a name for all the presidential electors. 10. Answers will vary.