

Political Parties and Politics

TOPIC SUMMARY

A political party consists of individuals with common political interests. Leaders of political parties may work together to gain control of decision-making power in government. During most of American history, government has largely been comprised of two major political parties: Democratic and Republican. Candidates and individuals from third parties have at times also influenced American politics. Each party has a national committee and congressional campaign committees. Political parties nominate candidates through a nomination process of direct primaries. Party members campaign for their candidates by raising money, informing voters on issues, and encouraging citizens to vote. Political parties with great power and influence are called political machines. Many countries use political party systems; however, some may have only one major party, and others may have a multiparty system.

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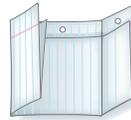
FOLDABLES™ Study Organizer

Comparing Information Study Foldable This Foldable will help students compare how political parties work.

Step 1 Fold a sheet of paper in half from the long way with edges evenly together.

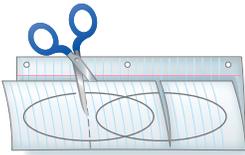


Step 2 Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.

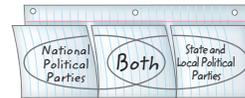


Reading and Writing
Compare and contrast the duties and roles of political parties at different levels.

Step 3 Unfold and draw two overlapping ovals. Cut the top layer along both fold lines.



Step 4
Label as shown.



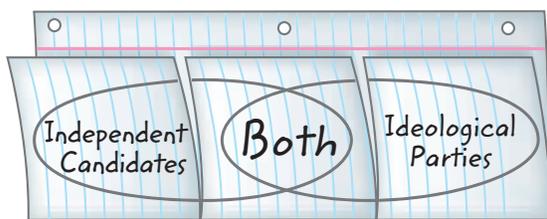
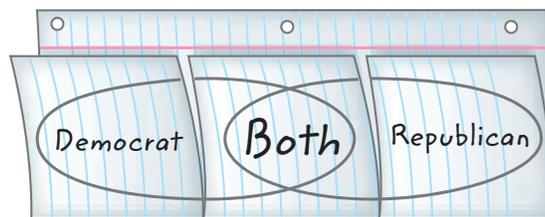
TOPIC ACTIVITY IDEAS

Compare and Contrast

Have students create the Study Foldable above, labeling the tabs as directed. Have them use the textbook, Internet, and library to gather details about the national political parties and the local and state parties. They will then use this information to complete the Venn diagram Study Foldable. Have students share their findings as a class. Discuss why the differences in the levels occur and what challenges might the parties face with communication.

IDENTIFYING

Have students use the Comparing Information Study Foldable to identify and compare the positions of the two major political parties on several important issues. First, have students identify the major beliefs held by each party in regard to the role of the federal government. Students should note those beliefs in the Venn diagram. Then have students use recent newspaper or magazine articles to identify each party's stance on specific issues, such as taxes or education. Encourage students to list on the Foldable the different approaches taken by the two parties on these particular issues.



EXPLAINING

Have students use the Foldable to examine how third parties can affect elections. Using the Venn diagram, students should list details about independent political parties, including the names and goals of individual parties or candidates. In the space labeled *Both*, students should list ways that these independent parties may influence the debate about particular election issues. Encourage students to use library and Internet materials to find additional examples of these third parties from their state or region.

Student Study Tip

Remind students that information provided in charts and illustrations can help them better understand the information in a text. Information presented in charts and illustrations may also provide details that students can use for projects or assignments. Encourage students to review the information presented in related charts or graphics when they begin work on a research assignment.