

Candidate Evaluation

Name: _____

Step One: What do you think? It is hard to evaluate where a candidate stands on an *issue*, or topic, if you don't know what you stand for! Comparing your opinions with the opinions of the candidates is a great way to get started. Check *three* issues you care about on the first page of notes and three qualities you look for in a candidate on the second sheet.

Three issues I care about:

- Education
- The Environment
- The Economy
- Crime
- Healthcare
- Taxes
- Children's Issues
- Animal Rights
- Other: _____

Three qualities I look for in a candidate:

- Good Communicator
- Brave
- Intelligent
- Creative
- Experienced Leader
- Cooperative
- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Other: _____

Step Two: Research the Candidates Create a 'library' of information on each candidate. This information can be found in many different places! Below is a list of some good sources to consider. Circle the *three* that you would be most likely to use.

The Candidates

Each candidate has a team that works on his or her campaign. Their job is to inform the public about the candidate and work to get the candidate elected.



Positive: you can get information about the candidate directly
Negative: the material is only going to focus on what is good about the candidate and bad about the opposition

Examples:

- Campaign websites
- Campaign mailings
- Town Hall meetings
- Campaign ads on the TV/radio

The Media

Most of the information people get about an upcoming election is on some form of media (TV, internet, radio, newspapers, magazines).



Positive: there are lots of sources available for you to choose from
Negative: watch out for bias in reporting and know the difference between *facts* and *opinions*

Examples:

- News reports
- Recorded candidate interviews
- Candidate speeches
- Candidate debates

The Public Record

If a candidate has been in a public office before, there are records of how they voted. This information is gathered on nonpartisan (doesn't take sides) websites for voters to check out.



Positive: these sources tend to be the least biased and really useful for making comparisons
Negative: some candidates may not have a voting record, and comparison websites may not cover every election

Examples:

- Nonpartisan voter websites
- Candidates' voting records
- Civic organizations

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Step Three: Learn about leadership skills & qualifications How can you tell someone will be a good leader or if they are qualified for the job? Here are two places to look and some questions to ask.

Background

What kind of jobs have they held?
Do they have a good reputation in your area?
What kind of education do they have?
Do they have any skeletons in their closets, or secrets, they want to keep hidden?

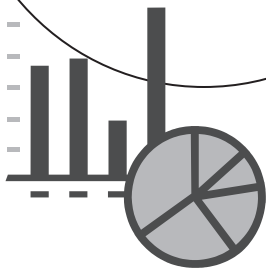


Campaign

Do they speak to a variety of groups?
Are they willing to participate in a debate?
Do they answer hard questions, or dodge them?
How do they act in press conferences?

Step Four: Find out what other people think Hearing the opinions of others can help you clarify your own views on the candidates. Asking people you know about what they think and why they think it is helpful, but here are some other ways to learn about others' opinions that you may not have thought of.

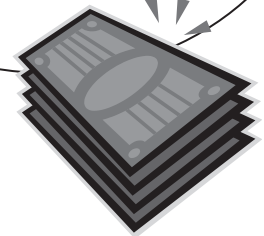
Opinion polls show who is leading in the race at any one time and can influence voters. Where do these numbers come from? Look out for how and where the polls were taken. Good polls cover a large number of people and are done by neutral organizations.



Endorsements are a way for interest groups and organizations to give an official 'thumbs up' to a candidate. These can clue you in to the issues and groups that the candidate supports. Look at what these groups stand for and why they endorse the candidate.



Follow the money! How do the candidates pay for all those advertisements, mailings and travel? Most of the time **contributors** donate money to the campaign through fundraisers. The sources of money can influence how a candidate acts in office.



Step Five: Grade the Candidates and decide! After you have done all the research it is time to pull all the information together. Here are some BIG questions you can use to help you make sense of it all.

Which candidate's view on the issues do you agree with the most?

Who ran the fairest campaign?

Who will best represent me and serve my community?

Which candidate showed the most knowledge on the issues?

Which candidate has the leadership qualities you are looking for?

