

Counting Every Vote

Analyze how election rules shape representation and outcomes.

12.G4a "Depending on the level of government and type of election, there are different processes and mechanisms within the United States electoral and representational systems, including the electoral college and winner-take all systems..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline election rules. Circle claimed advantages and box drawbacks. Compare how the rules affect representation.

Rules, Results, and Representation

- ① Election rules differ by office and place. Each state elects two U.S. senators statewide; House members represent congressional districts. Many elections use plurality voting; the candidate with the most votes wins, even without a majority. Some elections instead use ranked-choice rules or a runoff. States set many procedures within constitutional and federal-law limits. Comparing systems requires knowing both the voters represented and the rule used to determine a result.
- ② Presidential elections use the Electoral College. Each state has electors equal to its senators plus representatives; Washington, D.C., has three. The total is 538. Most states award all their electors to the statewide winner. Maine and Nebraska allocate two to the statewide winner and one to each congressional-district winner. Winning a majority of electoral votes, normally 270, elects a president. Without a majority, the House chooses among the top three presidential electoral-vote recipients, with each state delegation having one vote.
- ③ Supporters of statewide winner-take-all emphasize a unified state result and incentives to build statewide coalitions. Critics note that votes for losing candidates earn no electors and campaigns may concentrate on competitive states. District allocation can give a candidate electors despite a statewide loss, but district boundaries affect results; it is not proportional allocation by vote share. Electoral College supporters emphasize states' role in the federal system, while critics object that the national popular-vote winner can lose. A recommendation should explain its criteria for representation and acknowledge a drawback.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the geographic unit for electing a U.S. senator differ from the geographic unit for electing a U.S. House member?

2 How does the usual statewide winner-take-all rule for presidential electors differ from the method used in Maine and Nebraska?

3 What normally happens when a presidential candidate reaches 270 electoral votes? What happens if no candidate receives an electoral-vote majority?

4 State one argument supporting statewide winner-take-all and one criticism of it from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

In three or four sentences, recommend statewide winner-take-all or district allocation to a fictional state legislature. Use the passage to explain an advantage, a drawback, and an effect on representation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline election rules. Circle claimed advantages and box drawbacks. Compare how the rules affect representation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the geographic unit for electing a U.S. senator differ from the geographic unit for electing a U.S. House member?	Voters elect senators statewide. Voters elect House members within individual congressional districts.
2	How does the usual statewide winner-take-all rule for presidential electors differ from the method used in Maine and Nebraska?	Most states award all electors to the statewide winner. Maine and Nebraska award two statewide and one for each congressional-district winner.
3	What normally happens when a presidential candidate reaches 270 electoral votes? What happens if no candidate receives an electoral-vote majority?	An electoral-vote majority elects a president. Without one, the House chooses among the top three recipients, with one vote per state delegation.
4	State one argument supporting statewide winner-take-all and one criticism of it from the passage.	Supporters say it gives a state a clear result or encourages broad statewide coalitions. Critics say it can leave losing-candidate supporters without electoral votes or focus campaigns on closely divided states.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I favor district allocation because a candidate could earn electors in a district despite losing statewide. This could reflect different regional preferences within the state. However, district boundaries could distort the outcome, and allocation would not necessarily match vote shares. Lawmakers should weigh regional representation against those limits.

Accept equivalent descriptions of statewide, district-based, plurality, ranked-choice, runoff, and Electoral College processes when they match the passage. For the open response, accept either recommendation if the student accurately explains a relevant advantage, drawback, and representational effect.