

Y11 -12 NCB Politics SIL



Your Summer Independent Learning is an opportunity to bridge the gap between GCSE and A Level and prepare for your Y12 course content

Part 1 – Compulsory Content – everyone must complete all parts of the tasks below

Task 1 – Democracy

The debate around 16 year-olds having the vote has been a key theme on the debate of improving democracy in the UK for the last 30 years. Labour began actively implementing votes at 16 from 2025, following its 2024 manifesto pledge, with legislation introduced in 2026. Labour has introduced a major law (the Representation of the People Bill, 2026) which would lower the voting age to 16 for all UK elections as part of wider reforms to modernise democracy and increase participation. This has moved the issue from a theoretical debate to a real policy change, but it is still highly contested. Some parties, including the Conservatives and Reform UK, oppose the change, arguing that 16-year-olds may lack maturity and that adulthood is normally defined at 18, while also claiming Labour may benefit politically from younger voters. Public opinion is also mixed, with some people and even young people themselves unsure or feeling unprepared to vote. At the same time, evidence from other countries suggests lowering the voting age does not significantly change election results and may increase long-term participation, but findings are not conclusive. Overall, it remains a debate because there are still disagreements about fairness, maturity, political impact, and whether the public supports the change.

Read the source on this debate and complete the following tasks that lead on from the source.

the SOURCE

In the UK, the minimum voting age is 18, except in Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds have been given the right to vote in local and Scottish parliamentary elections. By and large, 16-year-olds haven't yet entered the world of home ownership, employment, tax or pensions but these economic issues are often at the forefront of election campaigns. The main argument against lowering the voting age is that a lack of experience in these matters prevents young people from making a considered judgement at the ballot box.

Opponents also point to the fact that 18- to 24-year-olds have the lowest turnout of any age group in elections, reflecting an apparent lack of interest in politics. These critics question whether an even younger generation would be any different. And there are concerns that teenagers who do want to cast their votes would be impressionable and easily influenced by radical politics, or would not fully think things through and would blindly vote for the same party as their parents.

But calls to lower the voting age come from a range of sources – adults as well as teenagers themselves, backed up by youth organisations, pressure groups and politicians. 16 and 17 year olds in the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Brazil and Austria already have the vote. They can also vote in some elections in Germany, Malta and Norway. Evidence from the Scottish independence referendum, substantiated by research from Austria and Norway, shows – aided by the encouragement of families and schools – 16 and 17 year-olds have higher rates of turnout than 18 to 24 year-olds.

For supporters, it's about giving young people a say in matters that directly affect them, such as tuition fees. It's also thought that lowering the limit will encourage civic-mindedness at an earlier age and establish an interest in the political system, which will be continued throughout a person's life. Scotland's positive experience of including 16- and 17-year-olds in the 2014 independence referendum led to the lowering of the voting age for local and Holyrood elections.

A study by the University of Edinburgh during the referendum found that some teenagers were initially doubtful of their own abilities to make the right decision, but that this led them to actively seek out information to help inform their judgement. In some cases, teenagers even influenced their parents' voting intentions with their new-found knowledge.

But as there are no immediate plans for the UK government to debate lowering the voting age for general elections, it is unlikely that all 16-year-olds will get the chance to put that to the test any time soon.

1. Define the following political and non-political terms from the SOURCE

A	Parliamentary elections	
B	Forefront	
C	Ballot box	
D	Turnout	
E	Impresisonable	
F	Radical politics	
G	Blindly	
H	Pressure groups	
I	Substantiated	
J	Tuition fees	
K	Civic-mindedness	
L	Referendum	
M	Holyrood	
N	Voting intentions	

2. Using two differently coloured highlighters, indicate:

- a. The arguments in the source that support the view that 16 to 18 year olds should be given the vote
- b. The arguments in the source that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18

Your judgement

- 1) Which argument in the source do you think is the strongest argument for 16 to 18 year-olds being given the vote? Why is it the strongest argument?
- 2) Which argument in the source do you think is the strongest argument for the voting age remaining at 18? Why is it the strongest argument?
- 3) Do you think 16 – 18 year-olds should be given the vote? Give reasons from the strongest argument in the source and back this up with your own research at the following link

<https://sites.google.com/site/thepoliticsteacherorg/should-the-voting-age-be-reduced-to-16>

Task 2 – Referendums

- Using the statements provided complete the table of arguments for and against the use of referendums.
- In September, we will go through the correct answers in class.

REFERENDUMS – FOR AND AGAINST

- Referendums are when the people of the UK have a vote (a say) on a particular issue. Like the 2016 EU referendum!

a) Using the statements provided complete the table of arguments for and against the use of referendums.

For	Against

Statements

- The general public is ill-informed, poorly educated and little interested in politics; its interests are best safeguarded by representative democracy – government by politicians
- Wider political participation will help to create a better informed, more educated and more politically engaged electorate
- Referendums do not educate the electorate because their views are largely a reflection of media manipulation and pressure from the political elite
- Governments are made more responsible because referendums force them to listen to public opinion between elections
- Referendums extend government power because governments can manipulate the outcome by deciding whether and when and over what issues to call referendums, and they can also dominate the publicity campaign
- Constitutional issues should not be decided simply through the normal legislative processes because they alter the way the country is governed: they thus need to be popularly endorsed

- Referendums give the general public direct and unmediated control over decision-making, ensuring that their own views and interests are expressed, not those of politicians
- Referendums provide only a snap-shot of public opinion at one point in time, and so are not appropriate for making constitutional decision that have far-reaching effect
- Referendums provide a much needed check on government power because they have less control over their outcome than over Parliament
- Governments can absolve themselves of responsibility by handing decisions over to the electorate – governments are elected to govern (that is, make decisions)

b) Categorise the statements

Colour code the statements in your table for which of the following categories they fit into:

- Direct democracy (where people decide on an issue directly, rather than having an MP or representative decide on their behalf)
- Political education
- Responsible government
- Government power
- Constitutional issues

Task 3 – What do you know about British Politics

Use Internet research to answer the following questions:

1. How many MPs sit in the House of Commons?
2. What is the job of an MP?
3. How many MPs do the following parties have in the House of Commons: Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru, Green Party, Sinn Fein, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)?
4. Sinn Fein do not take their seats in the House of Commons. Why?
5. Due to this, how many MPs sit in the House of Commons in reality?
6. What majority does the Conservative Party currently have in the House of Commons?

Task 4 – Current Affairs

One of the most important tasks in Politics is being up to date with current affairs, read the news online, watch the news, Newsnight, question time, etc.

Here are some tasks for you to research;

Find out about your local MP – who are they? What party do they represent? How long have they been in Parliament? What are some of their key beliefs/policies?

Find an example of an important current news story that shows an important aspect of politics, for example, what is happening with Brexit, how has Coronavirus impacted on the government? Bring it in with you and be prepared to discuss it with the class.

Task 5 – Democracy Video

Our first topic is on democracy.

Watch the following video and make some Cornell notes on it. An example of how to do this is shown on the following slides, it is not for Politics but the principle is the same

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARnQmrLxjBk>

Is Britain REALLY democratic? Channel 4 News

1.2 WHERE DO EARTHQUAKES OCCUR REGULARLY?
Describe the distribution of earthquake epicentres around the world.
Describe the relationship between the location of seismically active areas and plate boundaries.

Questions: Notes:

Summary:

"How would you explain this information to someone else?"

2. Questions

- Questions that are answered by the notes
- Wide range of questions
- Low level to high level

1. Notes

- Key definitions
- Sketch diagrams
- Bullet points
- Explanations
- Paraphrase key ideas

3. Summary

- Summarise key ideas
- Full sentences
- Own words

How to write Cornell notes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX-xshA_0m8&t=13s

How to Use Cornell Notes - Learning Strategies Center Cornell

Task 6 - Political Ideologies -

As part of your study of politics you will look at a number of *political ideologies* (theories and ideas about how the world works)...

Watch the short video for each ideology and identify the key ideas, philosophers/thinkers and criticisms/challenges of each of them – finally try to think of at least one policy (a law implemented by a government in the UK) that is based on the values of each ideology. Set this out in a table like the one below...

1. Conservatism - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khzQ8iOuwgl>

An Introduction to Conservatism. Politics and Ideas

2. Liberalism - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K08OxfiVv8>

Liberalism: where did it come from and are its days numbered? The Economist

3. Socialism - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_TTYd6yIYI

A brief history of socialism | A-Z of ISMs Episode 19 - BBC Ideas. BBC Ideas

	Conservatism	Liberalism	Socialism
Key ideas			
Philosophers/Thinkers			
Criticisms/Challenges			
Policies in the UK			

Part 2 – Optional Content – this is not compulsory but will help widen your knowledge of Politics

Task 1 – News Story

What you need to do:

Produce a newspaper style report/article that addresses why young people should be interested in politics.

This is your chance to showcase your own interest in politics!

Think!

Why should young people be engaged in politics in the UK?

- How does politics impact on people's lives?
- How can politics change people's lives?
- Why is it so important that people in society are engaged and active within the political process?

Task 2 – widen your knowledge with the following reading

Wider reading – Y12 topic 1 democracy and participation

<https://www.tutor2u.net/politics/collections/uk-politics-study-notes-for-a-level-politics>

X/TikTok/Instagram

Start developing your knowledge of current affairs by following:

Politics Explained – for exam help and good examples for your knowledge

BBC – News and Politics

Politicians

BMS Politics

The Guardian

Government Departments

Study Politics

The Times

New College Pontefract
Politics

Britain Elects

New Statesman

Simple Politics

UK Parliament

The Spectator

Voting counts

UK House of Commons

The Independent

Politics Home

The Telegraph

Task 3 – what career opportunities are there in Politics?

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree/politics>