

Voting Age Bill

Stuck for ideas? Use this bill for the Make a law – Senate classroom activity. The Voting Age Bill works well with high school classes.

This page includes a master script for the teacher and individual scripts for students who have been given roles for this activity.

Master script

The Clerk stands up and rings the bell.

Clerk: Honourable Senators, please stand.

The Usher of the Black Rod, carrying the Black Rod, leads the President into the room.

Usher: Honourable senators, the President.

The President sits. The Usher of the Black Rod sits down, keeping the Black Rod next to them.

President: Senators, please sit down. The Senate is now in session. The rules of the Senate must be obeyed. Clerk, please read out the rules.

The Clerk stands.

Clerk: Always stand up to speak. Begin your speech with the words 'Thank you President'. Senators should not interrupt each other. The President keeps order.

The Clerk sits.

President: Clerk, read the title of the bill.

The Clerk stands.

Clerk: First reading, The Voting Age Bill. A Bill for an Act to lower the voting age to 16.

The Clerk sits.

President: I call the Leader of the Government in the Senate to introduce the bill.

The Leader of the Government in the Senate stands.

Leader of the Government in the Senate: Thank you President, I am pleased to introduce this bill to the Senate. Young people today are more engaged than ever before. Many use social media to speak out, mobilise and push for change. This bill will allow 16 and 17 year old Australians to participate fully in our democracy.

The Leader of the Government sits.

President: I call the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate in the Senate.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate in the Senate stands.

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate in the Senate: Thank you President, The opposition will not support this bill. Voting is too big a responsibility for young people. There is no

evidence to suggest that today's 16 and 17 year olds are more engaged than previous generations. Our voting system works well and should not be changed.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate sits.

President: I call Senator Reid.

Senator Reid stands.

Senator Reid: Thank you President, I am going to vote for this bill. Young people are Australia's future. They will have to live with the decisions we make today about issues such as the environment and education. They should have a say in those decisions!

Senator Reid sits.

President: I call Senator Lee.

Senator Lee stands.

Senator Lee: Thank you President, I am going to vote against the bill. Many young people tell me they are not interested in voting before they turn 18. They can't see the relevance of Parliament in their lives. If this bill is passed, we will just see a rise in wasted votes.

Senator Lee sits.

President: I call Senator Baker.

Senator Baker stands.

Senator Baker: Thank you President, I agree the youth of Australia should be given a voice. However, I am concerned some 16 year olds may not feel ready to vote. I believe voting for 16 year olds should be voluntary. Later I will propose this amendment to the Bill.

Senator Baker sits.

President: Are there any other comments on this bill? Stand if you wish to speak.

Senators who wish to speak stand.

President: I call Senator _____ (the first name of somebody who is standing).

The called senator stands and gives their speech.

The President repeats 'stand if you wish to speak' and continues to call upon senators until everyone has had a turn or time is up.

President: Order! A vote on the bill will now be taken. Those who support the bill move to the right of the President's chair. Those who oppose the bill move to the left of the President's chair. Whips, count the vote.

The independent and minor party senators choose a side and sit down.

The Whips stand up and count the votes on their side of the room. They tell the count to the President.

The President stands.

President: Order! Result of the division. The number of votes for the bill is _____. The number of votes against the bill is _____.

If the vote is for the bill:

President: The bill is agreed to. Clerk, read the title of the bill.

If the vote is for the bill, the Clerk stands.

Clerk: Second reading, The Voting Age Bill. A Bill for an Act to lower the voting age to 16.

The Clerk sits.

President: Order! The Senate is now adjourned.

The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President out of the room.

If the vote is against the bill:

President: The bill is not agreed to.

Individual scripts


The Voting Age Bill

A Bill for an Act to lower the voting age to 16


- All Australian citizens sixteen years of age and over must register with the electoral office.
- Voting will be compulsory for all people registered.

THE PRESIDENT

When you are led in by the Usher of the Black Rod, sit down and say:

-  Senators, please sit down. The Senate is now in session. The rules of the Senate must be obeyed. Clerk, please read out the rules.


After the Clerk has read out the rules, say:

-  Clerk, read the title of the bill.

Then say:

-  I call the Leader of the Government in the Senate to introduce the bill.


Wait for the speech to be read.

-  I call the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

Wait for the speech to be read.

-  I call Senator Reid.

Senator speaks.

-  I call Senator Lee.

Senator speaks.

-  I call Senator Baker.

Senator speaks.


-  Are there any other comments on this bill?

Stand if you wish to speak. (wait for people to stand)

I call Senator _____ (use first name)

If any more senators wish to speak, repeat 'stand if you wish to speak'.

When all the senators have finished speaking, say:

-  Order! A vote on the bill will now be taken.

Those who support the bill move to the right of the President's chair.

Those who oppose the bill move to the left of the President's chair.

Whips, count the vote.

After the whips have told you the results of the vote, stand up and say:



Order! Result of the division:

The number of votes for the bill is ____

The number of votes against the bill is ____

The bill is agreed to. Clerk read the title of the bill again.

If the vote is for the bill say:

If the vote is against the bill say:



The bill is agreed to. Clerk, read the title of the bill.



The bill is not agreed to.

To end the session, say:



Order! The Senate is now adjourned.

Follow the Usher of the Black Rod out of the room.

THE CLERK

Stand up, ring the bell and say:

 Honourable Senators, please stand.

When the President asks you to read the rules, stand up and say:


 Always stand up to speak.

Begin your speech with the words 'Thank you President'.


Senators should not interrupt each other.

The President keeps order.

The President will ask you to read the title of the bill. Stand up and say:

 The Voting Age Bill. A Bill for an Act to lower the voting age to 16.

Later, the President will ask you to read the title of the bill again. Stand up and say:

 The Voting Age Bill. A Bill for an Act to lower the voting age to 16.

When the President says 'the Senate is now adjourned', stand and say:

 Honourable Senators, please stand.

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

When the Clerk rings the bell, lead the President into the room, carrying the Black Rod on your right shoulder. Say:



Honourable Senators, the President.

Sit down, keeping the Black Rod upright beside you.

When the Clerk says 'Honourable Senators, please stand', pick up the Black Rod and lead the President out of the room.

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE



Thank you President,

I am pleased to introduce this Bill in the Senate.

Young people today are more engaged than ever before. Many use social media to speak out, mobilise and push for change.

This bill will allow 16 and 17 year old Australians to participate fully in our democracy.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE



Thank you President,

The opposition will not support this bill.

Voting is too big a responsibility for young people. There is no evidence to suggest that today's 16 and 17 year olds are more engaged than previous generations.

Our voting system works well and should not be changed.

SENATOR REID – GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHER



Thank you President,

I am going to vote for this bill.

Young people are Australia's future.

They will have to live with the decisions we make today about issues such as the environment and education.

They should have a say in those decisions!

SENATOR LEE – OPPOSITION BACKBENCHER



Thank you President,

I am going to vote against the bill.

Many young people tell me they are not interested in voting before they turn 18.

They can't see the relevance of Parliament in their lives.

If this bill is passed, we will just see a rise in wasted votes.

SENATOR BAKER – MINOR PARTY MEMBER



Thank you President,

I agree the youth of Australia should be given a voice.

However, I am concerned some 16 year olds may not feel ready to vote.

I believe voting for 16 year olds should be voluntary.

Later I will propose this amendment to the Bill.

GOVERNMENT WHIP

When the President says 'Whips, count the vote', stand up and count the senators on your side.

Don't forget to count yourself, your leader and the President.

Go and tell the President the results.

OPPOSITION WHIP

When the President says 'Whips, count the vote', stand up and count the senators on your side.

Don't forget to count yourself, and your leader.

Go and tell the President the results.