

# Summary: Democracy and Citizenship

## Citizenship

A citizen is an official member of a country. Anyone born in the United States is a citizen of the United States. Immigrants can become citizens if they follow certain laws and agree to obey the Constitution. Citizens of the United States have a voice in government. Their many rights are protected by laws. Citizens have the right to vote. When citizens turn 18, they can register to vote. Voting allows citizens to choose leaders and make decisions in their communities.

## Citizens' Responsibilities

Citizens of the United States have rights and responsibilities. Obeying the law is a responsibility. Laws create a safer community. Paying taxes is another responsibility. Taxes help pay for fire departments, roads, and public parks. It is a citizen's responsibility to serve on juries in law courts and vote in elections. Citizens also have a responsibility to take action to change things for the better. Good citizens become involved in their communities. They can take many actions to influence public policy. Citizens can vote for people who will pass laws they support. They can send letters to lawmakers. They can sign petitions. They can even run for political office.

Young people also have responsibilities as citizens. They must go to school. Even before they can vote, young people can take part in democracy by learning about things that are important to them. Being informed about important issues can help them make good choices when they are old enough to vote. Young people can help others and make their communities better places to live by becoming a volunteer. Our democracy depends on its citizens. They should vote, obey laws, and take an active role in their communities.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**register** *verb*, sign up

**responsibility** *noun*, a duty that someone is expected to fulfill

**public policy** *noun*, decisions or laws passed by the government

**volunteer** *noun*, a person who helps other people without being paid



### After You Read

**REVIEW** **At what age can citizens vote?** Circle the number that tells how old you must be to vote.

**REVIEW** **What are some responsibilities of United States citizens?** Highlight responsibilities of citizens.