

SECTION 1

The President's Job Description



▲ President Ronald Reagan talks to U.S. troops in South Korea in 1983.

Guiding Question

What are the roles and qualifications of the office of the President? Use an outline like the one below to keep track of presidential roles and qualifications.

I. The President's Roles

A. Chief of state

1. Symbol of the nation

2. _____

B. Chief executive

1. _____

2. _____

Objectives:

- Describe the President's many roles.
- Understand the formal qualifications necessary to become President.
- Explain how the President's term of office has changed over time.
- Describe the President's pay and benefits.

Do you know who the youngest person ever to be President of the United States was? The oldest? Who held the presidency for the longest time? The shortest? Can a person born in a different country become President? In this section, you will find the answers to these questions and much more.

What are the presidential roles?

There is only one President of the United States. This one person must fill a number of different roles at the same time. These roles are: (1) chief of state, (2) chief executive, (3) chief administrator, (4) chief diplomat, (5) commander in chief, (6) chief legislator, (7) party chief, and (8) chief citizen.

Chief of state refers to the President as the head of the government. He is the symbol of all the people. In the United States, the President also rules over the government. In many countries, the chief of state reigns over government but does not rule. Examples of this can be found in England, Denmark, Japan, Italy, and Germany.

The President is also **chief executive**, vested by the Constitution with broad executive powers. This power is used at home on domestic issues and also extends to foreign affairs. The executive power is limited, however, by our government's system of checks and balances.

As **chief administrator**, the President is in charge of the executive branch of the federal government. This branch employs more than 2.7 million civilians.

The President is also the nation's **chief diplomat**, the main author of American foreign policy. Everything the President says and does is closely followed, both at home and in other countries.

In addition, the Constitution makes the President the **commander in chief** of the armed forces. This power gives the President direct and immediate control of the military.

As **chief legislator**, the President shapes public policy. The President may suggest, request, and insist that Congress enact laws he believes are needed. Sometimes, Congress does not agree with the President and decides against legislation. Working with Congress takes up a major part of the President's time.

The six presidential roles you just read about are written in the Constitution. The President must also fill two other roles—chief of party and chief citizen.

The President is automatically the **chief of party**—the leader of the political party that controls the executive branch. Political parties are not mentioned in the Constitution, but they are an important part of government.

Finally, the President is **chief citizen**. This means the President should represent all of the people of the United States. Citizens expect the President to work for their interests and provide moral leadership.

The President must carry out each of these roles at the same time. Sometimes, the failure to perform one duty can lead to failure in another area. For example, President Richard Nixon was forced to resign from office in 1974 because of the Watergate scandal. The people who had elected and trusted him were unhappy with the way he chose to fulfill the roles of party leader and chief citizen.

Chief of state

The President as ceremonial head of the United States

Chief executive

The President as the holder of the executive power of the United States

Chief administrator

The President as the leader of the executive branch of the federal government

Chief diplomat

The President as the main architect of American foreign policy and the nation's chief spokesperson to other countries

Commander in chief

The top person in charge of the nation's armed forces

Chief legislator

The President as the main author of public policy

Chief of party

The President as the leader of his or her political party

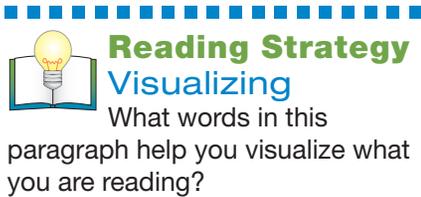
Chief citizen

The President as the representative of all the people

 **Checkpoint** What are the President's responsibilities as the nation's chief of state?

President Bill Clinton meets with Israeli and Palestinian leaders at Camp David in 2000 to conduct peace talks. **What role is President Clinton fulfilling here?** ▶





What are the formal qualifications?

The Constitution says that a candidate for President must meet certain formal qualifications. The President must:

- be a natural born American citizen
- be at least 35 years old
- have been a resident of the United States for at least 14 years.

Most Presidents have been in their 50s when they entered the White House. John F. Kennedy was the youngest at age 43 to be elected President. Theodore Roosevelt succeeded to the office at the age of 42 after President William McKinley was assassinated. Ronald Reagan was elected at age 69. He left office at age 77, the oldest person ever to hold the presidency.

Checkpoint What are the three qualifications a person must meet to be eligible for the presidency?

How long can a President serve?

At first, the Framers debated between a single term for the President, lasting six or seven years, and a four-year term, with the possibility of reelection. They finally chose the second option. The Framers did not set a limit on the number of times a President could be reelected.

During the 1940s, Franklin Roosevelt served four terms, or 16 years, as President. To make sure this would not happen again, Congress passed the 22nd Amendment. The states ratified this amendment, which limits the President to two full terms in office. If the Vice President succeeds to the presidency and then is elected twice, he or she can serve up to ten years in office.

Many people criticize the 22nd Amendment. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Reagan each called for its repeal. They claimed it should be left to the people to decide how long a President should serve. Others say it weakens the President's authority at the end of the second term. Those in favor of the 22nd Amendment claim it prevents one person from having too much power.

What are the pay and benefits?

Congress sets the President's salary, and it cannot change during a President's term. Since 2001, the President has been paid \$400,000 a year. The President also has a \$50,000 expense account to spend any way he or she chooses each year. The President is also given many benefits. One benefit is living in the 132-room White House in the center of Washington, D.C. The President also has use of a fleet of cars, Air Force One, and several other planes and helicopters.

Biography



Ronald Reagan (1911–2004)

Ronald Reagan was born in Tampico, Illinois, on February 6, 1911. He graduated from Eureka College in Illinois and became a radio sports announcer. This led to a career in the movies. He also served in the army from 1942 to 1945. After his wartime service, Reagan became president of the Screen Actors' Guild. This was the beginning of his political career. When he was first elected governor of California in 1966, he fought for lower taxes and reduction in government spending. In 1981 he

was elected President of the United States and served two terms. President Reagan became known for his grace and wit. His economic policies were called “Reaganomics.”

Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, returned to their ranch in California at the end of his second term. He suffered from Alzheimer’s disease the last ten years of his life. He died in 2004.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Essential Questions Journal

Go to your **Essential Questions Journal** to work on this chapter’s Essential Question.

Quick Write

Research one President that is talked about in this section. Write a paragraph on your findings. Make sure to include the President’s full name, years in office, and number of terms. Also include any interesting facts you find about the President.

1. **Guiding Question** Use your completed outline to answer this question: What are the roles and qualifications of the office of the President?

Key Terms and Comprehension

On a sheet of paper, write the answer to each question. Use complete sentences.

2. What is the President’s role as chief of state?
3. Which two presidential roles did not come from the Constitution?
4. What is the purpose of the 22nd Amendment?
5. What are two of the benefits of being President of the United States?

Critical Thinking

6. **Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the Framers set formal qualifications for the presidency?
7. **Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment** Some people think that the President is paid too little. Others believe the President is paid too much. What do you think? Why?

Evaluating Leadership

“Tuesday’s election for the State Assembly seat in Gloucester County is going to be a close one. Recent polls show that Jane Arbino is leading among voters who think lowering taxes is important. Voters who favor a national health insurance program are much more likely to vote for her opponent, Keith James.”

What qualities are important to you when you choose whom to vote for in an election? Many different factors can make someone the right candidate for you. Your criteria might not be the same ones that matter to someone else. It is important to decide what is important to you before you vote.

1. Decide what factors are most important to you. Before you start thinking about the candidates, you should determine what leadership qualities you care about the most. Do you want a leader who has been in office for a long time? Past behavior can be a good indication of how someone will perform in the future. You may want to evaluate candidates based on their personalities or characters. Does the candidate

have the ability to motivate or inspire others? Does the candidate share your beliefs and values?

2. Match the skills to the job. Your evaluation of the candidates may depend on the position that is being filled. A town mayor may need different skills than a town clerk. The qualities of a good senator might be different than those of a good Board of Education member. For some positions, it is important to have a strong vision and an ability to unite people. For others, someone who can stand up to opposition is ideal. It is important to match the specific requirements

of the job with the abilities of the candidate.

3. Compare qualifications. Once you have done Steps 1 and 2, you will need to compare candidates against those factors. Who meets most of your requirements? Does your list of requirements reduce your options to one candidate? If not, you will have to compare the candidates to determine who you think will be the best choice for the position.

▶▶ What do you think?

1. What do you think is the most important leadership quality for a United States senator? What about for a high school principal?
2. Do you think it is a good idea for a leader to admit when he or she has made a mistake?
3. **You Try It** Make a list of the qualities that you think make a good leader. Then, choose someone in a leadership position, such as a member of Congress or the President. Evaluate this person based on the criteria on your list.



GOVERNMENT ONLINE

Citizenship Activity Pack

For activities on evaluating leadership, go to PearsonSuccessNet.com

