

## INSTRUCTIONS

**Step 1:** You will listen to an article about the US President. The article is 4.5 minutes long. Listen only, and don't worry about understanding everything.

**Step 2:** Look at the questions. Read and understand them, then listen again. As you are listening, try to answer the questions in your head. Don't write the answers yet. Next, listen again and write the answers this time. Compare your answers with a partner.

**Step 3:** Read the article. Check in your dictionary any unknown words. Now listen again. Can you understand more?

**Step 4:** Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen to the article on the train or in your free time. Each time you listen, you will slowly improve!

## QUESTIONS

**Answer the questions to check comprehension. If you don't know an answer, don't worry. Skip it. Then listen again.**

1. Why has the US President been called "the most powerful man on Earth?"
2. When did the position start?
3. What can be said about the states at that time?
4. Who was the first President? When was he President?
5. How many Presidents have there been?
6. Who are generally voted as the best Presidents? How about the worst?
7. According to the article, what might happen to George W. Bush?
8. What three conditions must a person meet to be President?
9. What do presidential hopefuls do a year or more before the elections?
10. What happens on November 2nd?

## the ARTICLE

The President of the United States has often been described as "the most powerful person on Earth." Although the implications of such a statement can be debated over and over, for better or for worse, the description proves applicable in many instances. With the economic and military strength of the US, especially with the fall of Communism in Soviet Russia and a competing superpower yet to arise, the President has the ability to affect change on a global level. He (or she) is considered the head of the government, as well as the head of the armed forces. And he's more than just a political figurehead.

The position came about in 1788, eleven years after America first declared independence from Great Britain. During this time, the only national governing body was a legislatively impotent Congress. Each state could do as it liked, and were more akin to individual countries than politically united states under one flag. In addition, due to fears that the President could become a king-like autocrat, Congress was strengthened. A Judicial branch was created, too.

George Washington served as the first President in 1789, and his actions went a long way to mold the position. He served only two terms, which totaled eight years, so the position wouldn't be seen as king-like. He also demonstrated unity and value for the Constitution.

Since then, there have been over forty Commanders in Chief. The best Presidents, depending on whom you poll, almost always include George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt. In recent years, many have added Ronald Reagan to the list of greats. As for the worst Presidents, Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon often get mentioned, as do quite a few leaders from the 19th century. And although it's far too soon to know for sure, George W. Bush may end up as the worst US President ever, what with his domestic and foreign policies that many from all walks consider nothing short of disastrous.

In order to become the President of the United States, apart from winning the election, the candidate must also meet the following conditions: The President must be a natural born citizen of the US; he must be at least 35 years old; and he needs to have lived in the US for the past fourteen years or more.

The whole process isn't as simple as meeting a few conditions, though. In fact, for non-Americans, the whole system may seem quite perplexing. In recent years, presidential hopefuls have begun an unofficial campaign a year or two before the election. There are also elections just for the party, be it Republican or Democrat, as well as a convention to officially announce a candidacy. Millions of dollars get spent, candidates have staffs of hundreds if not thousands, and spin doctors work overtime. Finally, after months and months on the campaign trail, sound bites, TV spots, and a few debates usually somewhat wanting on substance, it all comes down to the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, when every adult citizen has the right to vote and choose the next US President.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (optional)

1. Which paragraph was the easiest to listen to? Which paragraph was the most difficult? Look at the vocabulary and sentence structure, then think why one paragraph was easy and another difficult.

2. Listen for these words, understand the context, then try to repeat the information from the sentence:

economic and military (paragraph 1)

governing body (paragraph 2)

mold (paragraph 3)

poll (paragraph 4)

spin doctors (paragraph 7)

3. Listen and write the sentences:

He (or she) is considered... (paragraph 1)

\_\_\_\_\_

In order to become the President of the United States... (paragraph 5)

\_\_\_\_\_

There are also elections just for the party... (paragraph 7)

## ANSWERS

QUESTIONS
1. With the economic and military strength of the US, the President has the ability to affect change on a global level.
2. The position came about in 1788, eleven years after America first declared independence from Great Britain.
3. Each state could do as it liked, and were more akin to individual countries.
4. George Washington became the first President in 1789.
5. There have been over forty Commander in Chiefs.
6. The best Presidents almost always include George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt. As for the worst Presidents, Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon often get mentioned, as do quite a few leaders from the 19th century.
7. George W. Bush may end up as the worst US President ever.
8. The President must be a natural born citizen of the US. He must be at least 35 years old. He needs to have lived in the US for the past fourteen years or more.
9. Presidential hopefuls begin an unofficial campaign a year or two before the election.
10. Every adult citizen has the right to vote, and a new US President is chosen.
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
1. ...the head of the government, as well as the head of the armed forces.
2. ...apart from winning the election, the candidate must also meet the following conditions.
3. ...be it Republican or Democrat, as well as a convention to officially announce a candidacy.