

Shaping Society Together



- How do these people know how to play these games?
- Who do you think made the rules in each case?
- Can any player change the rules? Why might this be?

Why Do We Have Rules?

In order to play a game, you have to learn the rules. What are some of the rules of the games shown on these pages? Where do you think these rules came from? What might happen if someone suddenly started using different rules?

Rules let you know what you can and cannot do. They make a game fair because everyone has to follow the same rules. Once you know the rules, you can participate in the game and have fun.

Can rules ever be changed? Imagine that you and your friends wanted to play soccer, but you didn't have enough players. What would you do? What might your family do if you wanted to include a much younger child in a board game?

Rules for people living together in a community are much like rules for a game. It is everyone's job to learn what the rules are and behave accordingly.

? Inquiring Minds

In this chapter, you will learn about government and democracy. As you read the chapter, think about this question.

Why is it important for people and government to work together in a democracy?



What Are Society's Rules?

words matter!

People in a **society** share the same government and the same rules and laws. A society may also be a group of people who have the same interests or culture. You may be part of many societies within Canadian society.

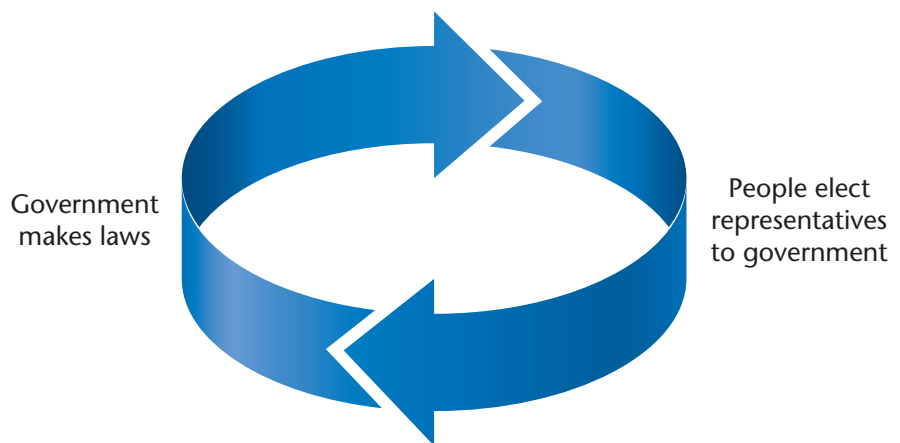
In many ways, games are like a **society**. People in a society need rules to help them get along with one another. Rules guide how we act with others in our home, our school, our community, and our country. Rules help us resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.

The basic rules in Canada are in our Constitution. A **constitution** is the supreme, that is, most important law of the land. It outlines the structure of the government. It also describes the powers of the government and the rights of the people.

Who Makes Decisions About Rules?

Our laws are based on the values and principles that we share, such as equality, justice, respect for cultural differences, freedom, peace, equity, and fairness. In a democracy, the people have the power to make decisions about laws. In ancient Greece, an early democracy, citizens would get together to discuss and then vote on laws. Why is it difficult to make decisions this way in a country like Canada with millions of people?

In modern democracies, people vote for government representatives. Governments have the authority to make decisions and pass laws.



Thinking It Through

What society do you belong to that has rules to follow? How do you know to follow the rules?

Who Are the Members of Canadian Society?

We all have our own identity. Part of our identity comes from the group we belong to. We have our own heritage, traditions, and family histories. We come from varied backgrounds and have different experiences.

When we talk about Canadian society we are referring to all the people who make up communities across Canada. Everyone who is born in Canada is a Canadian **citizen**. People who move to Canada from other countries must apply for citizenship if they wish to become citizens. All members of Canadian society can participate and contribute, but citizens are allowed certain rights and responsibilities such as voting.

This is the Oath of Citizenship that people take today when they become Canadian citizens. This oath may be made in English or in French. What democratic values can you find in it?

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.



These people are becoming Canadian citizens. They are from many different cultures and countries. Each year thousands of people choose to become Canadian citizens. They agree to the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.

More About . . .

Citizens and Citizenship

The word citizen has several different meanings.

- In most cases a person who is born in a country is automatically a citizen. People who move to a country can also obtain citizenship. As a citizen, a person has certain rights that non-citizens do not have, such as the right to vote.
- A citizen is someone who lives in a particular place such as a city or town.
- A citizen is a person who contributes to the society in which he or she lives. Contributing to a society means playing a part in improving people's lives or improving the environment.

Skill Smart

In 1995 and 1998 there were proposals to change our Oath of Citizenship.

- Do research to find these other oaths.
- Compare them to the present oath.
- Decide which of them you think most strongly supports democratic values.

Why Do We Need Government?

Thinking It Through

What are some ways that government helps people in your community? your province?

The purpose of government is to make sure that the people in a society have safe, comfortable lives. You have already looked at one way that government does this—by making laws. Laws help society run peacefully. Here are some other things that government does.

Government provides services. People have certain needs, such as food and shelter. Our families provide these needs for us. We also need schools, hospitals, libraries, courts of law, police, public transportation, community centres, and services for seniors. People cannot do all these things for themselves. One reason that people created government was so that there would be a structure to take care of the needs of everyone in society.



The government protects our freedom to express our opinions openly.



What service is government providing in this situation?

Government protects rights and freedoms. In a democracy, people have certain rights and freedoms. The government's job is to protect our rights and freedoms, for example, our freedom of religion and the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Government provides leadership. The government takes actions that affect our society in many ways. These include making decisions about the environment, resources, and relations with other countries.



The government gives leases to companies to explore for gas and oil.

What Are Our Responsibilities as Citizens?

Representatives of the people make decisions on our behalf. The decisions might be about closing a public swimming pool, opening a new school, or setting the fee for a dog licence. The government also makes decisions such as sending troops to act as peacekeepers in another country. In order to make good decisions, governments need to listen to what the people need and want. Governments rely on the people for information that will help with these decisions.

People have a responsibility to inform the government of what they want and need. They have a responsibility to make their point of view known and to listen and try to understand the points of view of others.

Speaking Out

Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play.
Every individual makes a difference.

Dr. Jane Goodall, scientist and environmentalist



Telling Fact From Opinion

words matter!

An **issue** is a concern or problem that affects a community. People often have different ideas about what is the best solution.

Throughout this book, you will encounter many opinions on **issues**. You will also be asked to express your own opinion. In order to determine how reliable information about an issue is, you need to be able to tell the difference between fact and opinion. A **fact** is a statement that can be proven to be true. You can check a fact in an encyclopedia, a dictionary, or on a reliable Internet site. Reliable websites include those posted by governments, universities, and museums. An **opinion** is what someone believes. An opinion cannot be proved to be right or wrong.

People use facts to make their opinion more convincing to others. When you give an opinion on an issue, it will be more convincing if you back it up with facts.

When you read information, you can look for clues that help you separate fact from opinion. Facts often contain numbers or dates. A fact is a specific piece of information. An opinion can include the words “I think” or “I believe.”

A current issue in some schools in Alberta is whether students should wear school uniforms. People have different opinions about this issue. Read the statements below. Which statement is fact? Which one is opinion?



I like wearing a uniform. It means I don't have to think about what to wear each day.



In a poll of students in my school, 76 percent of them said that they would like to get rid of uniforms.

Practise the Skill

The story below is about student uniforms in a school in Québec. It contains facts and opinions about this issue. Read the story and then answer the questions that follow.

Can Uniforms Change Behaviour?

Leif Torjusen was the principal of LaSalle High School in Québec in 1992. Torjusen faced a big challenge. He knew that some of his students had discipline problems. There had been a few fights in the school. Some students had also sprayed graffiti on the lockers.

In order to change the school image, Torjusen recommended a school uniform policy. Some students, teachers, and parents were against the idea.

"I do not believe that you can change the behaviour of students by changing the clothes they wear," said one teacher. Some parents were concerned about the cost of the uniforms. A group of students even held a protest against uniforms outside the school. Torjusen decided to send a letter to parents that stated, "wearing a uniform helps create a high standard of neatness,

self-discipline, and a strong sense of belonging."

After six years of uniforms, the school's image improved. Before 1992, only 33 percent of students passed the final exams. By 1997, 64 percent of students passed. Torjusen doesn't think uniforms solve every problem, but he does believe they helped create a sense of community.



What are some advantages and disadvantages of wearing uniforms to school?

1. What are two facts about Leif Torjusen? What are two facts about LaSalle High School?
2. What are two opinions in this story about uniforms?
3. How does the last paragraph combine facts with opinion?

Why Is It Important to Contribute?

Speaking Out

[Democracy] is about people feeling that their voice makes a difference.

Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, Canadian activists

words matter!

An **injustice** is an action that is not fair.

What do we mean when we say that someone “contributes to society”? In what ways do you or people you know contribute to society? One way is to become involved in actions that benefit others in the community. Another way you can contribute is to learn about issues in your community and school. You might find out that the people affected by the issue disagree about the action that should be taken. For example, an issue in some schools today might be the use of cellphones.

Once people become informed about an issue in their community, they may want to become more active. Sometimes people form a group so they can work together to achieve certain goals. The goal might be to have the local government install street lights at a dangerous corner or create a law that prohibits people from keeping dangerous animals in their community. The goal may be to ask the government to correct **injustices** or wrongs from the past.

Citizens can also be active by supporting an action a government takes. In some communities in Alberta, for example, the local government has imposed a curfew. Young people under 16 years of age are not allowed to be on the streets without an adult after certain hours. Some citizens support this action.

Skill Smart

With a group, research the word “democracy” in at least three different sources. Take point-form notes to answer the question: What are the characteristics of a democracy? Work together to list the characteristics in order of their importance, beginning with the most important. Compare lists with another group and explain your rankings.

Thinking It Through

What issues are there in your community?



Alzheimer Society CALGARY

Lindsay decided to raise money for the Alzheimer Society of Calgary after her grandmother died.

Like you, Lindsay is a Grade 6 student. Lindsay's grandmother and her great-grandmother both had Alzheimer's. This disease causes people to lose their memory. Eventually they become helpless and need others to care for them. Lindsay saw how Alzheimer's had affected her grandmother. She knew there was a chance that her mother or father might also get Alzheimer's. In 2004, when her grandmother died, Lindsay wanted to do something to help. She decided to raise money to help find a cure for the illness.

Lindsay is good at drawing, so she drew pictures and sold them at her school in Calgary. Lindsay's mother helped her contact the Alzheimer Society of Calgary. The organization liked Lindsay's project and it had two of her pictures made into cards. The organization said Lindsay could sell the cards door-to-door to help raise money.

Lindsay's goal was to raise \$1000 but she has raised many times that amount. Part of the money she has collected will go to the Alzheimer Society of Calgary. Some money will also go to families with someone who has Alzheimer's.

Speaking Out

If we all do a little bit, we can all accomplish a lot and have a big impact.

Lindsay Lehr



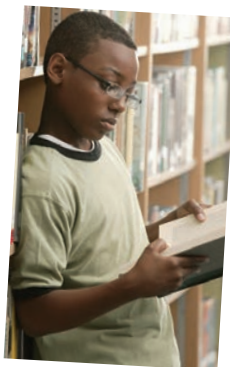
Over to You

1. If you were to nominate Lindsay for Citizen of the Year, what criteria would you use to support your decision?
2. Identify someone in your community who could be recognized as a good citizen. What are his or her contributions?

Should Cellphones Be Allowed in Class?

Cellphones are very useful; they have also caused problems in some situations. What problems can you think of?

Many students in elementary and high schools have cellphones. Some people feel that students should not be allowed to use cellphones in school. What if your school had a rule that said you must turn off your cellphone whenever you are in a classroom? Here are some points of view about that rule:



I think it's a terrible rule! I feel better when I have my cellphone with me and know that I can use it whenever I need to. My family is really busy. What if I need to tell my parents about after-school plans?

Viewpoint 1

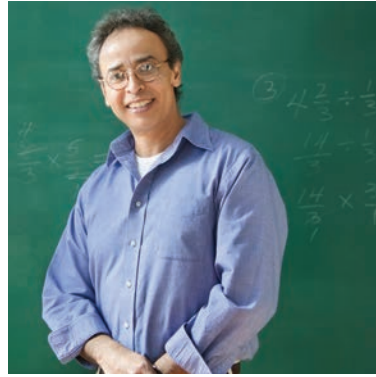
I don't have a cellphone, and I don't think people need to use them in school. Sometimes people send text messages in class—even when they are supposed to be working in a group. It's very annoying. I think people just use them because they have them!



Viewpoint 2

In what ways do you think cellphones affect how people communicate?

Students love their cellphones, but I think there are a couple of important issues here. I worry about how well students are concentrating on their work when they are sending and receiving text messages. Another concern is that people take photos with their cellphones. These can be a real invasion of privacy.



Viewpoint 3



Students aren't like they used to be! We've always had lots of technology around us—it's just part of our lives. It doesn't interfere with other things we're doing. We're used to splitting our attention between different things. And all kids know that cellphones can take pictures. It's no big deal.

Viewpoint 4



My teacher last year thought cellphones were great. She would text message answers to our questions and have us do short assignments that we could e-mail to a computer for printing. It was really useful.

Viewpoint 5

Over to You

1. Which of these opinions most closely reflects your own opinion about cellphones in school? Give reasons to support your point of view.
2. Which arguments supporting the opposite point of view did you think were the most persuasive? Explain.
3. If you were the leader in your school, what rules would you make about cellphone use? What criteria would you use?

Contributing to Community



The developer wants to build a condominium like this one on the lot. There will be grass and trees around the building and an underground parking lot.

This feature appears throughout this book. In it, you will meet different students in Mr. Kahn's class. Like you, these students are in Grade 6. They are learning how to become involved in issues in their school and community. In the example below, someone in the class has just discovered some news about a vacant field beside the school.

KAITLIN: *My dad says the field belongs to the city. The city council, which represents our local government, is going to have a meeting about it. A developer wants to buy the field and build a big condominium. My dad thinks that's a bad idea and so do I! My friends and I use the field as a park. We always play there after school and on weekends. Our neighbourhood needs that field to stay the way it is!*

The students in the class agreed with Kaitlin that the field should stay the way it is. But Maria and Matthew presented two other opinions.

MARIA: *My uncle Tony thinks the land should be turned into a proper park with a walking trail. He has two dogs and he said this community needs more places for people to take their pets.*

MATTHEW: *My grandparents like the idea of a new condominium. They want to move here to be closer to me and my sister.*

1 Identify the issue that concerns you

JANA: *There are different ideas about what the field should be used for. But I think the real issue is: How do people in our neighbourhood want the field to be used?*

2 Research the issue

KAITLIN: *We need to find out how people use the field now. If we show city council that people in the neighbourhood need the field, maybe they won't sell it.*

3 Find out who supports you

JANA: *That's a good idea. That way we'll find out who else supports our point of view.*



4 Create a plan

MATTHEW: *We decided to start by taking a survey of the neighbourhood. We would ask people who use the field. We would also ask them if they would be willing to sign a letter asking that the field not be sold to the developer. If we got support, we would take our letter to the city council meeting.*

5 Take action

RICHARD: *This is what we found in our survey:*

- *The field should stay as it is because many groups in the community use it for exercise.*
- *A lot of people walk their dogs there.*
- *People talked about how nice it is to see grass instead of roads and cars and buildings.*

Lots of people signed the students' letter. Then the students found out the date of the meeting when the field would be discussed. A group of them went to the meeting and presented their survey and their letter. The developer showed pictures of what the new condominium would look like. He said the city needs more places for people to live. There was a lot of discussion and listening to all ideas and opinions. Then city council voted and decided to sell the land to the developer.

6 Evaluate the plan

JANA: *We felt that our survey and letter did a good job telling our local government what people in the neighbourhood wanted. But city council members voted for what they thought was in the best interests of the whole city: they allowed the condominium.*

MARIA: *Our presentation didn't change the final decision, but we did our best. Some people thought that it might have been better to bring people who supported our idea to the meeting. They felt this would make a bigger impression on city council than our survey and letter.*

7 Apply your learning

KAITLIN: *I told my friend Sasha about what we did. She and her friends want to ask the local government to put in a crosswalk near their school. They want to see our survey and letter. We can use what we learned to help Sasha and her friends get started.*

Over to You

1. How else could the students find out how people are now using the field?
2. What issues in your community might you want to get involved in?

Getting Involved

In this book, you will read about people who took action on issues or concerns. In order to be effective, they had to plan and organize their actions. What action will you take? How will you go about it? The diagram on these pages outlines seven steps that you can follow to take action on an issue that concerns you.

1

Step 1: Identify your concern

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What do I hope to achieve by becoming involved?

7

Step 7: : Apply your learning

- How can we apply the results?
- How might we build on our action?

6

Step 6: Evaluate the plan

- What part of the plan worked well?
- What part didn't work?
- What did we learn from our experience?

*I'm glad I got involved.
I learned a lot and tried to
make a difference.*



2

Step 2: Research your concern

- Where can I get information about this?
- What are the different points of view?
- What actions could I take?



We talked about action we wanted to take. I think we have a good plan.

3

Step 3: Find out who supports you

- Who else might be interested in taking action?
- How can I get others involved?

4

Step 4: Create a Plan

You will need a plan whether you work in a group or on your own.

- Are we going to take any action?
- If so, what action are we going to take?
- Who do we need to talk to?

I want to learn more about this issue. I will take notes on what I learn.

5

Step 5: Take action

This is the step where you turn your plans into action.

- Are we doing what we planned to do?
- Do we need to make any changes to our plan?



Explore More!

? Inquiring Minds

1.
 - a. Think about your responsibilities as a member of a community. Make a list of the ways that citizens and government work together in a democracy.
 - b. If you were part of the discussion on page 15, what reasons would you give for why people should participate in a democracy?

2.
 - a. People often write e-mails or letters to the editor to express their opinions on community concerns. Skim the letters to the editor in a newspaper and select one on a topic that interests you. Record your understanding of this letter using the chart below.

Person	Concern or Event	Opinion

- b. Write your own e-mail or letter to the editor on the same topic or another current topic of your choice. Make sure that you clearly state your opinion. What facts can you provide to support your opinion.

3. Imagine that you are someone who wants to get Canadian citizenship. Use Government of Canada sites on the Internet to find out about:
 - a. your rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen
 - b. what you need to know to pass the citizenship test
 - c. the citizenship ceremonyExplain briefly how each of the above prepares you to be an active, participating citizen of Canada.

Your Turn

With a partner or a small group, discuss the values on page 4.

- a. In what ways are these values reflected in rules and in people's behaviour in your classroom and school?
- b. Brainstorm a list of other ways that these values could be encouraged. Choose one item on your list and create a poster for it. Put up your poster in your school.



Democracy in Action Journal

This year, you may want to keep a journal in a notebook or binder to record your ideas about democracy, action, and participation. You will be asked to write a reflection or create a response at the end of each chapter. You can also collect pictures, newspaper articles, and cartoons to include in your Democracy in Action Journal.

