

So, You Want to be President? Background Information

There are many guidelines for the Executive Branch of government. Most are outlined in Article II of the Constitution. Read on to learn more about the what it takes to become president, presidential roles upon taking office, and some interesting presidential statistics.

How old do you have to be to become president?

Article 2 of the Constitution of the United States of America outlines the qualifications for becoming president. To even qualify to run for office, a candidate must be 35 years or older. The candidate must also be a natural born United States citizen.

How long is each presidential term?

The Constitution also specifies that each Presidential term should last four years. In 1951, the 22nd Amendment enforced the maximum of two terms, or ten years in office if the president had succeeded the previous president and served two years of his term.



← President who served the **longest**: Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was elected to serve four terms, but passed away during his last term— he served a total of twelve years and 39 days.



← President who served the **shortest**: William Henry Harrison won the election of 1840 by a landslide. Unfortunately, after making the longest Inaugural Address on record (and refusing to wear a hat or coat), he caught a cold. Thirty-two days later, he died.

What does the president have to do once he is elected to office?

The president has many roles. Following is a list of some of his most important responsibilities:

1. Chief Executive—the president is the head of the Executive Branch of government.
2. Commander in Chief—the president is the head of the military and asks Congress to declare war.
3. Chief Diplomat—the president is a national spokesman and a world leader. Presidents throughout history have met with American Indian delegations, representatives of important groups in the United States, and world leaders.



Presidential Statistics

#22 and #24!



- Forty-Three Men have served as president.
- President Grover Cleveland was the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms: he was both our 22nd and 24th president.
- The **youngest** president elected to office was John F. Kennedy, who was 43 years old when he began his first term in 1961. The youngest to ever serve, however, was Theodore Roosevelt, who was 42 years old when he succeeded President McKinley in 1901.
- The **oldest** president elected to office was Ronald Reagan, who was 69 years old on his inauguration day in 1981. →
- Presidents who were related to each other:

Oldest!



Father (#41)



Son (#43)



#2 John Adams (father) AND #6 John Quincy Adams (son)

#9 William Henry Harrison (grandfather) AND #23 Benjamin Harrison (grandson)

#26 Theodore Roosevelt AND #32 Franklin D. Roosevelt (distant cousin)

#41 George H.W. Bush (father) and #43 George W. Bush (son)



Presidential Careers

Many presidents have had more than one career. This is quick glance at some careers presidents have had before taking office.

Farmer (#39)

Presidents who were **farmers**: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Harry Truman, and Jimmy Carter (pictured at right)



Teacher (#36)

Presidents who were **teachers**: John Adams, Chester Arthur, William McKinley, Woodrow Wilson, and Lyndon. B. Johnson

Twenty-five American presidents were lawyers before becoming president.

Ronald Reagan was an **actor** before he became president.

Andrew Jackson owned a racing stable before he became president.

Our presidents have had many different types of jobs. Ask your students what careers they think are the best preparation for becoming the president.



