

# Gun Control Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum Focus:** U.S. Government

**Lesson Duration:** One to two class periods

## *Student Objectives*

- Use what they learned in the video to define gun rights and gun control.
- Review the history of gun control legislation.
- Research arguments for gun control and gun rights and participate in a class debate.

## *Materials*

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: 2nd Amendment: The Right to Bear Arms*  
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Missouri 51st Militia
  - A Civilian Militia
  - The First American Militia
  - A Self-Described Constitutional Militia
  - The Brady Bill
  - The Goal of the Militia
  - Militia: Protecting Our Freedoms?
- Who Joins a Militia?
  - Women in the Militia
  - Religion and the Militia
  - Scrutinizing Membership of the Militia
  - Stockpiling Supplies
  - Members of the Militia
  - Technology and the Militia
  - Keeping Guns in the Home
- Militia: Politics or Preserving Rights?

- Computer with Internet access
- Posterboard, markers, or other materials to create a display

## **Procedures**

1. Begin the lesson by defining “gun rights” and “gun control.” What do supporters on each side of the issue believe?
  - Advocates of gun control support stricter firearm laws – tougher background checks, longer waiting periods for those purchasing guns, mandatory child safety locks, a limit of one handgun purchase per month, and raising the legal age limit for ownership of guns to age 21 from the current age of 18. They believe these measures will curb the rise of gun-related violence.
  - Advocates of gun rights say such legislation would infringe on the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens. The National Rifle Association, a prominent voice in the gun debate, says firearm-control measures are unnecessary if lawmakers would enforce current laws.

(Summaries above adapted from The Center for Responsive Politics; see the Web site at <http://www.opensecrets.org/>)

2. Review the history of gun control legislation in the United States, from the ratification of the Second Amendment to the Constitution (to protect militias) to the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act. For a timeline, visit the Milestones in Federal Gun Control Legislation Web site at <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/guntime1.html>.
3. Divide the class into two groups: Gun Control and Gun Rights. Explain that the class is going to participate in a debate, and the groups will defend opposing sides. To begin, each group should use the Web sites below to research and develop an argument for their assigned side of the issue.

### **Gun Rights**

- NRA Institute (see “Political/Legislative” section)  
<http://www.raia.org/faqs.asp>

### **Gun Control**

- Brady Campaign: Facts and Issues  
<http://www.bradycampaign.org/facts/index.asp>

### **General Information**

- Yahoo Links on the Gun Control Debate  
[http://fullcoverage.yahoo.com/Full\\_Coverage/US/Gun\\_Control\\_Debate/](http://fullcoverage.yahoo.com/Full_Coverage/US/Gun_Control_Debate/)
- Firearm Injury Center  
<http://www.mcw.edu/fic/>

4. To help students prepare, tell students the rules of the debate:
  - Each group will have five minutes to give an opening statement that should include statistics, quotes from sources, and other facts based on their research.
  - Students are strongly encouraged to prepare visual presentations, such as posters with charts and graphs, to support their argument.
  - After the opening statements, each group may ask two questions of the opposing side. (Remind students to try to anticipate questions--and their own responses--from the opposing side. Encourage students to explore Web sites for both sides of the issue.)
  - Groups will take turns asking questions; give them one minute to ask a question and two minutes to answer.
5. Hold a class debate. Allow about 35 minutes for each side to present their argument, then ask and answer two questions. If time permits, allow students to ask and answer more questions.
6. As a class, summarize the debate. Write two columns on the board ("Gun Control" and "Gun Rights"), and ask students to list the most compelling arguments for either side.
7. After the debate summary, ask students to share their feelings about gun laws. Do events such as the Columbine shooting and the September 11 terrorist attacks influence their opinions about the laws? If so, explain how.

### **Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; they prepared a comprehensive and thoughtful opening statement; they asked clear, challenging questions; and they gave answers based on several facts from their research.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; they created a somewhat comprehensive opening statement; they asked somewhat clear, challenging questions; and they gave answers based on some facts from their research.
- **1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions; they created a simplistic opening statement; their questions were shallow or not well thought out; and their answers were unclear or simple and without basis in fact or research.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act**

*Definition:* Passed in 1994, this act imposes a five-day waiting period and background check before a licensed gun importer, manufacturer, or dealer can sell or deliver a handgun to an unlicensed individual; in 1998, a new background-check system allowed checks to be done over the phone or electronically.

*Context:* Also known as the Brady Bill, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act was named after Jim Brady, the press secretary to President Ronald Reagan, who was shot and seriously wounded during an assassination attempt on the president.

### **gun rights**

*Definition:* The belief that any legislation to curtail the use and sale of firearms is an infringement on Americans' constitutional rights

*Context:* Some groups advocating gun rights believe that firearm-control measures are unnecessary if lawmakers would enforce current laws.

### **gun control**

*Definition:* The belief that the United States needs stricter firearm laws, including tougher background checks

*Context:* Gun control advocates believe that tougher firearm laws will curb the rise of gun-related violence.

### **Second Amendment**

*Definition:* The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states that "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

*Context:* The Second Amendment was ratified in 1791.

## **Academic Standards**

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:  
<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Civics – Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- Life Skills – Thinking and Reasoning: Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance

## Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

