

Negotiating parties and government

This task activity comprises two parts: the first asks students to create their own political parties, each with their own aim and policies; the second requires students to negotiate a coalition government between their parties.

Part one: Form a political party

Negotiation

1. Let students separate themselves into four groups based around four colours: orange, purple, yellow, and black. Groups do not need to be even – the task will work better if groups are different sizes – but no one group should have more than half the class in it.
2. Explain that students must now form a political party among their group. To do this, they need to decide together on three things:
 - A party name and leader,
 - What the aim of their party is, and
 - Two policies (actions) to help achieve that aim.



It may be helpful to give students a clear scope for their parties' aims and policies, e.g., they're parties in the ACT Assembly or in a school parliament.

Group share

3. Ask the leader of each party to introduce their party to the class, including their name, aim, and two policies.

Reflection

4. At this point, lead a brief discussion with the class about these questions reflecting on the activity so far:
 - Did everyone in your party agree on all issues or were there some issues that you struggled to all agree on?
 - How did your party handle different opinions when deciding what your aims and policies would be?
 - Did your party size (the number of members) influence how you made decisions?

Part two: Form a government

Speed negotiation

1. Explain to the class they are now members of a parliament (be it the Assembly or something else) elected as part of their parties and that to form a government, they need a majority – over half their total number (e.g., for 30 students, 16 or above).

Ask them to determine if any party has a majority – none should – and then, how a government can be formed when no parties have a majority of members.

2. Pair the four parties off and give the students two minutes to share their parties' aims and policies with each other and discuss whether they could work together, as a government, to support each other as a government. Rotate the pairs so all parties have a chance to negotiate with each other:
 - **Round 1:** Orange and Purple, and Yellow and Black, then
 - **Round 2:** Orange and Yellow, and Purple and Black, then
 - **Round 3:** Orange and Black, and Purple and Yellow.
3. Split the parties up and ask them to discuss and decide which other party (or parties) they would like to work with to form a government. Allow party leaders to talk with each other to finalise any cooperation.

Declaration and reflection

4. Have party leaders to share with the whole class the outcome of negotiations and which parties have agreed to work together. Ask whether these parties have a majority of students and can form a government.
5. Lead a discussion reflecting on how this outcome was reached:
 - Why did the parties that formed government agree to work together? What compromises were made (both between parties and within each party's members) and why?
 - What kind of government was formed: a majority, coalition, or minority?
 - What might happen if a government couldn't be formed?