part

4

civics and citizenship

The civics and citizenship toolkit

A **citizen** is a person who legally lives in a geographical area such as a town or country. Being a citizen is like having a membership where you belong to a community and have certain rights and responsibilities. In Australia, citizens have the right to vote for members of **parliament** to represent their views. They have the right to go to school and work and speak freely about the issues concerning them. Australian citizens also have responsibilities to abide by the laws of the nation. **Civics** and **citizenship** is the study of these rights and responsibilities and how the **government** works.

Understanding how the political system works gives us an insight into how our vote can impact the future of our country and the global community. Knowledge of some democratic values, such as freedom of movement and the right to a fair trial, provides reassurance that we have a political and legal system that respects the rights of citizens.

chapter

8

Source 1 Parliament House in Canberra is the meeting place of the elected Parliament of Australia.

8A

What are the civics and citizenship skills?

8.1 Civics and citizenship skills

Civics and citizenship studies help us learn to question, interpret information and argue our points of view. The classroom is a forum for you to share your opinions and see things from a wider range of perspectives when examining topics such as compulsory voting, the right to a fair trial and Australia's treatment of asylum seekers.

Studying civics and citizenship requires you to analyse information and ask a range of questions to find out more about a topic. You learn to question and research information by asking what, why, when, who and how to uncover the truth about an issue. Through investigating an issue you will be able to arrive at your own viewpoint while understanding the reasons why others may have different points of views.

Ask questions and conduct research	• Develop, select and evaluate questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems
	• Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources, and reference as appropriate
Interpret and analyse sources	• Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues
	• Account for different interpretations and points of view
Apply strategies to resolve civics and citizenship issues	• Recognise and consider multiple perspectives and ambiguities, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues
	• Use democratic processes to reach consensus on a course of action relating to a civics or citizenship issue and plan for that action
Communicate your findings and reflect	• Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language
	• Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australian, regional and global contexts

Source 1 The four categories of skills used in civics and citizenship inquiries

Source 2 Australian citizens are legally required to vote in both state and federal elections

8.2 Ask questions and conduct research

Develop, select and evaluate questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems

Active citizens ask lots of questions. Often they don't believe everything they read and they seek to detect the motivation behind why someone takes a certain point of view or acts in a certain way. For example, when they see politicians talking in the media they listen to their arguments and seek out differing points of view. They also check facts and look at the arguments for and against a certain issue before reaching their own conclusions. When active and informed citizens state their own viewpoint, they support this with evidence such as statistics, cases from the past, quotes from relevant sources and sound reasoning.

Source 1 Cartoonists present their viewpoints on current issues using images and humour.

skill**drill:** Reasoning and interpretation

Developing civics and citizenship questions

Source 1 is a political cartoon about Australia's response to global warming. Protection of the environment and what our lawmakers and citizens are going to do in the future to conserve the environment are important issues at home and abroad. You can learn to investigate a civics and citizenship issue such as this by starting your questions with the words 'what', 'where', 'how', 'why', 'what impact' or 'what should'. When examining a source, whether it is a cartoon, video footage, a newspaper article or election slogan, the following approach may be helpful.

Step 1 Brainstorm a list of questions and then try to answer them. Some questions, such as 'What is happening?', might be easily answered whereas other questions, such as 'Why is it happening?', might need further research.

Step 2 Look at the source itself to try to understand the context. The 'who' question is important here.

'Who is saying this?' can be just as important as 'What is being said?' Identifying where the source comes from can alert you to whether the truth of their statements should be examined more carefully.

Step 3 The 'how' question is also important. You might ask, 'How is this happening?' or 'How does this source affect me?' Are there any emotions such as fear, persuasion or humour that are being used to influence your judgement?

Apply the skill

1 Where could you look to find answers to the question 'What are the impacts of global warming?'

2 Why is it important to know the author of the source when discovering the truth about an issue?

3 Why is examining how the source affects you sometimes more important than basic descriptive questions such as 'What is happening'?

4 What tactics have been used to convey the cartoonist's message about the future of the planet due to global warming in Source 1?

Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources and reference as appropriate

Sources provide information for informed citizens. They can take many different forms, from written records in books or online to live interactions that may be captured by varying forms of media. Some examples of sources include case transcripts and judgments, newspaper articles, letters, tweets, blogs or Facebook posts, cartoons, diaries, interviews and live debates.

Locating a range of relevant sources is a valuable skill and usually involves a number of different search methods, such as:

- using online search engines such as Google
- visiting government websites
- looking at newspaper and magazine articles online
- contacting local members of parliament or asking a person with expertise in the subject
- interviewing other class members or family members to gain an insight into their views on a particular issue.

Source 2 You need to ensure that sources of information gathered online are accurate and reliable.

Using ICT to locate relevant sources

Although books and newspapers are valuable sources of information, most research today is conducted online. In order to ensure that sources gathered online are accurate, reliable and relevant, a number of guidelines should be followed:

- Search engines such as Google are useful research tools, but much of the material on these sites is not reliable and may contain inaccuracies, false and misleading information or material that is out of date. When using search engines, be sure to define your search using keywords.

  Your librarian is a good person to ask for help and information. Most schools will also have a website devoted to providing information about developing good research skills.

- A reliable way of searching for sources is to use sites linked to educational institutions, government departments, reputable companies and universities. A quick way of telling if a site is reputable is to look at the domain name in the URL (internet address).
- Avoid blogs posted by unknown individuals. If you happen to find information relevant to your investigation on a blog or social media site, always verify it by using a more reliable source.
- Never cut and paste information from the internet straight into your own work. Taking someone else's work, ideas or words and using them as if they were your own is called plagiarism and can result in very serious consequences.

Check your learning 8.2

Remember and understand

1 Why is it important for citizens to ask questions?
2 What can citizens use as a reliable source of information?
3 What is plagiarism?

Apply and analyse

4 Kim wants to know why housing is so expensive in Australia. Where might she go to find the answer to a question like this?
5 Katie has noticed that a local swimming pool has been closed for a long time. Despite a local politician promising to reopen the pool, nothing has happened. Suggest three questions Katie might ask about this as an active citizen?

8.3 Interpret and analyse sources

Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues

All sources are affected by the author's own attitudes or beliefs. In some cases, the author may have been paid or forced to write in a particular way or to ignore important facts from an event or story. This is referred to as a bias and is often aimed at persuading a reader or viewer to agree with the person who created the source. In politics and therefore in the study of civics and citizenship, people often write or speak about issues from their own perspective. This is why we must carefully evaluate and analyse sources when we are drawing conclusions from them.

skilldrill: Reasoning and interpretation

Identify and describe points of view, attitudes and values in sources

A person's perspective is their point of view – the position from which they see and understand events going on in the world around them. The more controversial an issue is, the more likely that there will be strong, competing points of view. Controversial civics and citizenship issues include:

- Australia becoming a republic
- Australia's treatment of asylum seekers
- the treatment of Indigenous Australians
- retaining the jury system
- policy on climate change
- foreign investment in Australia.

Step 1 Identify a controversial issue. You can choose one of the above issues or choose a more localised issue such as the use of mobile phones at school or your school's efforts to protect the environment.

Step 2 List those affected by the issue.

Step 3 Locate sources depicting each point of view.

Step 4 For each point of view, describe the point of view being expressed. Why is the view being expressed? Who is expressing it? What are they saying?

Step 5 What affects this person's point of view? Think about the person's role, personal experience, whether they stand to benefit financially and their ability to tolerate difference in others.

Apply the skill

1 Use the steps above to look closely at another controversial issue of your choice. You can choose one of the above issues or a more localised issue such as the use of recycled goods at school or your school's efforts to provide healthy food and drink options at the canteen.

Draw conclusions about the usefulness of sources

A useful source is one that will add to your understanding of a civics and citizenship inquiry.

The source needs to be relevant to the topic or question asked and must also be reliable. The following are good questions to ask in order to determine the usefulness of a source:

- Is it a reliable source?
- Is there enough information and sufficient detail to help me answer the inquiry question?
- Does the information support and reinforce evidence from other sources?
- Is it balanced or does it present one point of view (bias)?
- Is it based on fact or opinion?
- Is the information current?

Separating fact from opinion

The conclusions you draw about the sources you have found will determine their usefulness. In many cases, this means separating fact from opinion. A fact is something that can be proved: when an event took place, what happened and who was involved. An opinion is based on what a person, or persons, may believe to be true. A simple way to detect whether a statement is fact or opinion is to look closely at the language used. The use of words such as 'might', 'could', 'believe', 'think' and 'suggests' all indicate that an opinion is being expressed.

For example:

- Fact: Australia has compulsory voting.
- Opinion: Australia is a democracy so citizens should have the right to choose if they want to vote in an election rather than be told they have to by law.

Source 2 Separating fact from fiction in civics and citizenship is an important skill.
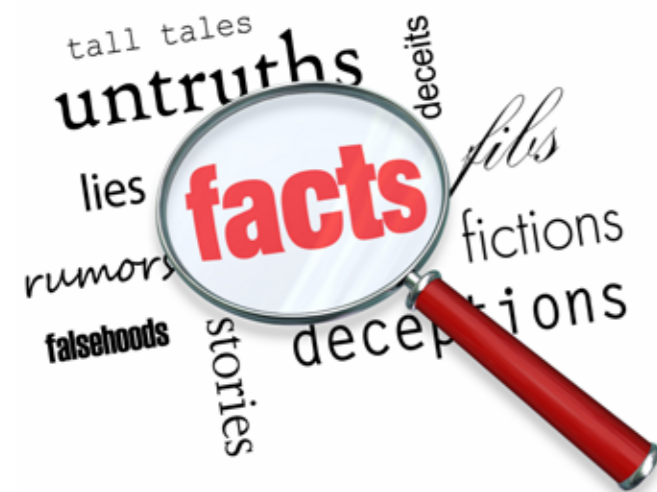
Account for different interpretations and points of view

Perspective and bias is not just limited to the people who create source material. Interpretations of sources can also vary widely from person to person. Age, gender, social position, beliefs and values can affect perspective.

Check your learning 8.3

Remember and understand

1   What is bias?
2   What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?
3   Name five factors that might influence a person's perspective?

Apply and analyse

3   George is researching the political issue of whether or not Australia should accept more refugees. He has found several sources of information. Which of the following should George think of as reliable? Provide a reason for your decision.
    a   a blog called 'Get your own country'
    b   a report released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
    c   the United Nations official website
    d   an article from The Australian newspaper
4   Identify whether the below statement is fact or opinion and explain why.

    Asylum seekers and refugees might be happier if the facilities they stayed in were in better condition.

8.4 Apply strategies to resolve civics and citizenship issues

Recognise and consider multiple perspectives, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues

There's an old saying that before you criticise a person you should walk a mile in their shoes. In civics and citizenship it is important to understand not only what opinion is being expressed but why it is being expressed. It is useful to consider why a person may have a certain point of view. For example, the family of a victim of crime may say to the media that a sentence given to a criminal was insufficient and unjust. This may be true but it's important to consider how the harm or loss of a family member due to crime may influence opinion. Listening and being respectful of opinions that may be different to our own is an important skill to practise in civics and citizenship so that we can discuss issues rationally with others. If we are unable to listen or do not try to understand other people's perspectives we can create conflict. When issues have clear sides or perspectives it can be better to hold open discussions to address people's ideas or to negotiate a middle ground, rather than just escalating the issue by fighting.

Use democratic processes to reach consensus on a course of action relating to a civics or citizenship issue and plan for that action

A democratic process is one in which everyone has an opportunity to have their say. This might include giving all members of a group the opportunity to contribute to a discussion, ensuring that information is conveyed to all group members, providing group members with adequate time and opportunity to respond and vote on an issue.

Source 1 One way to reach a decision that reflects the majority view is to take a vote.

Check your learning 8.4

Remember and understand

1   Why is it important to recognise multiple perspectives on an issue?
2   Describe a democratic process. Why is it a good way to make decisions?

Apply and analyse

3   A PE teacher gives a class the chance to choose what sport they will all play during a double period. The class disagrees about whether or not they should play basketball or soccer. How could this problem be solved?
4   Amy and Todd are arguing about whether or not funding from the local council should go to the kindergarten or the cricket club. After only minutes of discussion, their arguments begin to get personal and offensive. Suggest how they could handle this situation better.

8.5 Communicate your findings and reflect

Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language

Just like in mathematics, a common language is used in civics and citizenship. Source 1 lists and defines some commonly used terms in civics and citizenship; additional civics and citizenship terms can also be found in the glossary at the end of this book.

Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australian, regional and global contexts

Many Australian citizens go beyond the legal responsibilities they have as citizens because they care about the community they live in and believe they have a social responsibility to make it a better place.

Local citizens

At the local level a citizen may give their time or resources to help others in need such as by giving to a local charity or helping out on the local school fete. At the local level a citizen may give their time or resources

to help others in need such as by giving to a local charity or helping out on the local school fete. Lucas Patchett and Nicholas Marchesi are Young Australian volunteers and school friends who decided to set up a mobile laundry service for the homeless in their local community. There are now nine services across Australia providing the 'Orange Sky' laundry experience where the homeless can talk to someone while their washing is being cleaned (Source 2).

Source 2 Lucas Patchett and Nicholas Marchesi serve their local community through their mobile laundry service for the homeless.

citizen	A citizen is a person who legally lives in a geographical area such as a town or country.
citizenship	A person's status as a citizen. In a wider context citizenship encompasses the rights and responsibilities citizens exercise.
civics	The study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and how government works.
diversity	Having many different forms. When referring to people it means that people come from different racial, ethnic, socio-economic, geographic, educational or professional backgrounds.
globalisation	The process that involves all the countries of the world being linked together, resulting in an exchange of views, ideas, products and culture
government	The elected members of parliament who make decisions for a nation or state. The government is made up of the party or coalition that has won a majority of seats in the lower house of parliament. The lower house of federal parliament is the House of Representatives. The lower house of the Victorian state parliament is the Legislative Assembly.
parliament	The national or state law making body that is made up of elected representatives in both the upper and lower house with a head of state. In Australia the national parliament is referred to as the Commonwealth or Federal parliament.
parliamentary democracy	A system of government where people elect representatives to parliament in order to make laws that reflect the majority of voters' views
pluralist society	A diverse society where there is tolerance of different beliefs

Source 1 Some useful civics and citizenship terms

Regional citizens

A regional citizen may often work at a national level to provide a better future for all Australians. One of the most common ways for regional citizens to achieve this is by supporting a charity or cause. Rosie Batty is an example of an Australian citizen who has campaigned to stop domestic violence in Australia after her own son, Luke, was murdered by his father.

Source 3 In 2015 Rosie Batty was appointed Australian of the Year for her work in educating people about the impact of domestic violence and her involvement in establishing the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria.

Global citizens

A citizen may also act on a global level to make the world a better place to live. The late Fred Hollows is an example of a citizen who used his skills to restore eyesight to thousands of people in Australia and in many other countries around the world.

Source 4 Fred Hollows is known for working with people around the world to restore eyesight of those who could not access corrective surgery otherwise.

Check your learning 8.5

Remember and understand

1 Use your own words to define the following terms:
   a civics
   b citizenship

2 Why might someone contribute to society, beyond their usual responsibility as a citizen?

Apply and analyse

3 Suggest a way you could contribute to society as:
   a a local citizen
   b a regional citizen
   c a global citizen.