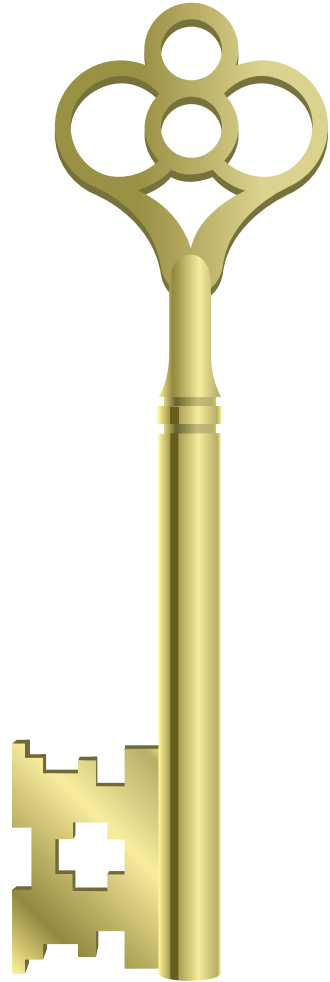


Chapter One: Activities Middle School



Chapter One: Vocabulary

Regulation—an official rule, law, or order stating what may or may not be done or how something must be done

Indigent—person lacking the necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing and shelter)

Grassroots—government that is closest to the people it represents

Accessibility—easily reached

Geography—descriptive science dealing with the surface of the earth, division of land and climate

Cultural heritage—ethnic and educational background of people

Economic development—businesses and industries in a county

Authority—right or power to enforce rules or give orders

County commissioner—elected official who represents one-fourth of the people in a county

County commissioners court—made up of the county judge and four commissioners, who oversee specified budgetary and administrative duties and manage general county operations

Statutory—regulated by a law or statute

County judge—presiding officer of the commissioners court

County clerk—recorder and keeper of records of the county court

District clerk—administrator for the district court, custodian of all court documents that are part of any district case, responsible for the security of the records

Sheriff—chief law enforcement officer of the county

County attorney—represents the state in civil and criminal cases and serves as legal advisor to the county

Tax assessor-collector—calculates the amount of property tax that will be charged to property owners (based on the determination of the value of the property by the appraisal district and the tax rate set by the commissioners court); collects property taxes

Ad valorem— in proportion to value

Treasurer—collects revenue for the county and pays the county's bills

Justice of the peace— elected to preside over local misdemeanor cases and minor civil disputes

Jurisdiction—authority to enforce laws or area over which legal authority extends

Constable—officer of the justice of the peace courts

Auditor—person who inspects and verifies the correctness of financial records and statements

Chapter One: Notes and Review Page

1. There are ____ (number) counties in Texas.
2. These things were required to form and organize Texas counties.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. The main functions of a county government are (list three):
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. A county does/does not have the power to pass general laws.
5. All elected county officials serve for ____ years in their terms of office.
6. A _____ is an appointed county official and not elected.
7. There are _____ (number) commissioners for every county.
8. The _____ is the recorder and keeper of records of the county courts.
9. A _____ serves as the chief law enforcement officer of the county.
10. The duty of a county _____ is to represent the state in civil and criminal cases and serve as legal advisor for the county government.
11. The _____ deposits all revenue collected by the county and keeps receipts for expenditures of county funds.
12. A _____ presides over courts in misdemeanor cases.
13. The members of the county commissioners court are the _____ who presides over the court and four _____.

Chapter One: Notes and Review Page Key

1. There are **254** counties in Texas today.
2. These things were required to form and organize Texas counties.
 - a. **A county had to have a certain number of residents.**
 - b. **A county had to be small enough (generally no more than about 30 square miles) that every citizen could travel to the county seat, vote and return home within a day.**
 - c. **Citizens had to decide where the county seat would be.**
3. The main functions of a county government are:
 - maintaining law and order**
 - recording and maintaining public records**
 - maintaining the general welfare of the county**
 - administering county finances**
 - administering civil court**
 - providing infrastructure**
 - assessing and collecting taxes**
4. A county **does not** have the power to pass general laws.
5. All elected county officials serve for **4** years in their terms of office.
6. A **county extension agent, engineer or auditor** is an appointed county official and not elected.
7. There are **four** commissioners for every county.
8. The **county clerk** is the recorder and keeper of records of the county courts.
9. A **sheriff** serves as the chief law enforcement officer of the county.
10. The duty of a county **attorney** is to represent the state in civil and criminal cases and serve as legal advisor for the county government.
11. The **treasurer** deposits all revenue collected by the county and keeps receipts for expenditures of county funds.
12. A **justice of the peace** presides over courts in misdemeanor cases.
13. The members of the county commissioners court are the **county judge** who presides over the court and four **county commissioners**.

Chapter One: Activity 1

Supplies: copies of *Where in the Courthouse Would You?* and pencils or pens

Directions: Review the position descriptions in Chapter One. Explain that this is information students may need as they get older. Give each student a copy of *Where in the Courthouse Would You?* to complete. You may have students work in teams or individually.

Key:

Where in the courthouse would you...

1. Obtain a marriage license? The county clerk issues marriage licenses.
2. Get a car's license plates? The county tax assessor-collector will have license plates for all motor and other moving vehicles.
3. Pay property taxes? The county tax assessor-collector maintains property tax rolls and is responsible for collecting county and state ad valorem taxes.
4. Register to vote? The tax assessor-collector or an elections administrator.
5. Get a copy of your birth certificate? The county clerk's office maintains record of births. You do have to contact the county where you were born or the Texas Department of Health.
6. Pay a traffic ticket issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety? Contact the office of the justice of the peace named on the traffic citation. If you received a ticket in the city limits, you would contact the municipal court judge.
7. Go to get married? A couple must obtain a marriage license from the county clerk. If they want to have a civil ceremony, any judge or magistrate (including those who are retired) is authorized by law to perform this task. Most of the time the ceremony is performed by a justice of the peace. Ministers may also perform marriages.
8. Visit an inmate in the county jail? The sheriff is the custodian of the jail and its inmates.
9. Learn which grasses would grow well in your yard? Your county Extension office will be happy to furnish information in this subject area.
10. Find out about past due child support? The district clerk can give assistance in this area.

Where in the Courthouse Would You?

Your elected county officials are the key to the public services available to you at the county courthouse. These men and women are ready to assist the public in answering any questions that concern local government. Write the name of the county official (elected or appointed) or county office you would go to for help with these tasks.

Where in the courthouse would you...

1. Obtain a marriage license? _____
2. Get a car license plate? _____
3. Pay property taxes? _____
4. Register to vote? _____
5. Get a copy of your birth certificate? _____
6. Pay a traffic ticket issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety? _____

7. Go to get married? _____
8. Visit an inmate in the county jail? _____
9. Learn which grasses would grow well in your yard? _____
10. Find out about past due child support _____

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Judge | Auditor |
| County Clerk | Judice of the Peace |
| Sheriff | Health Office |
| County Attorney | Juvenile Officer |
| Tax Assessor-Collector | Extension Agent |
| Treasurer | |

Chapter One: Activity 2

Supplies: copies of *How Well Do You Know Your Counties?*, pencils or pens, topographical maps of Texas, Texas map showing county names and boundaries

Directions: Give each student a copy of *How Well Do You Know Your Counties?* to complete. Hand out Texas maps for students to refer to. Explain that this activity is not only about using their map skills but also a review of Texas history. Show how to use maps to figure out area or topographical questions. Students could work in groups or individually to figure out the clues.

Key:

1. The person who discovered electricity — Franklin
2. Native Texas tree — Live Oak
3. County with the largest area — Brewster
4. Maker of honey — Bee
5. Soft native rock — Limestone
6. Shines in the night sky — Starr
7. Our first U.S. President — Washington
8. A favorite breakfast juice — Orange
9. Important independence battle — San Jacinto
10. Favorite soda — Coke
11. Name of another state — Colorado
12. The state capital — Austin
13. Author of the Texas Declaration of Independence — Childress
14. County with the smallest area — Rockwall
15. First elected president of Texas — Houston
16. A reigning monarch — King
17. Aggieland is here — Brazos
18. Smart — Wise
19. Long-lived Queen of England — Victoria
20. County with the highest average elevation in Texas — Jeff Davis

How Well Do You Know Your Counties?

Fill in the blanks with the names of the Texas counties. Refer to various Texas maps for help.

1. The person who discovered electricity _____
2. Native Texas tree _____
3. County with the largest area _____
4. Maker of honey _____
5. Soft native rock that is white and chalky _____
6. Shines in the night sky _____
7. Our first U.S. President _____
8. A favorite breakfast juice _____
9. Important independence battle _____
10. Favorite soda _____
11. Name of another state _____
12. The state capitol _____
13. Author of the Texas Declaration of Independence _____
14. County with the smallest area _____
15. First elected president of Texas _____
16. A reigning monarch _____
17. Aggieland is here _____
18. Smart _____
19. Queen of England who ruled a long time _____
20. County with the highest average elevation in Texas _____

Chapter One: Activity 3

Supplies: Computer with Internet access and projector

Directions: Here is a way students can really see what county officials do. As you teach about specific officials, or about the functions of county government, show the videos at this site:
<http://www.county.org/counties/video/index.asp>.

If students are English Language Learners, be sure to write down the officials' titles so students will see the written words as well as listening to the lesson and videos.

Chapter One: Activity 4

Supplies: copies of *Who's Who in My County Government?*, pencils

Directions: Give each student a copy of the questionnaire to complete.

Who's Who in my County Government?

Using resources such as the Internet and telephone books, fill in the blanks about your county.

My county is _____

My county judge _____

I live in precinct number _____

My county commissioner's name is _____

The county sheriff is _____

The county tax assessor-collector is _____

Does my county have a separate county appraisal office? Yes/No

The county clerk is _____

Address of the county courthouse _____

The justice of the peace for my precinct is _____

The address for the justice of the peace is _____

Does my county have a health department? Yes/No

What is the address of the Texas Agrilife Extension office for my county?

Chapter One: Activity 5

Supplies: state, city and county signs; *Government Positions and Functions* cards copied onto cardstock and cut apart, plasti-tak or tape

Directions: Attach the state, city and county signs to the wall, after filling in the right answers for your county and city. Divide students into two teams. Mix up the function cards and give half of the cards to each team. Explain to the students that they are to decide whether each position or function is part of state, city or county government, then use plasti-tak or tape to attach each card to the correct sign. When the students have finished, discuss each answer, having students come to agreement. Then mix up the cards again and conduct a race to see which team can remember the answers faster.

Key:

State — Texas Ranger, court of appeals, pass laws and constitutional amendments, set policy for education, map out freeways, set guidelines for solid waste disposal, appoint a congressional commission on a regional issue, governor

City — police officer, municipal court, set a juvenile curfew, pay your utility bill, fix potholes in streets, choose which day trash will be picked up, set up a committee on tourism, mayor

County — build county roads, sheriff's deputy, county court, impose a burn ban, collect vehicle registrations, decide where to put a county dump, appoint a road engineer, commissioners court

Government Positions and Functions

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Build local roads | Police officer | Texas Ranger |
| Sheriff's deputy | Municipal court | County court |
| Court of Appeals | Pass laws and constitutional amendments | Impose a burn ban |
| Set a juvenile curfew | Set policy for education | Collect vehicle registrations |
| Pay your utility bill | Map out freeways | Fix potholes in streets |
| Set guidelines for solid waste disposal | Decide where to put the county dump | Choose which day trash will be picked up |
| Appoint a congressional commission on a regional issue | Appoint a road engineer | Set up a committee on tourism |
| Governor | Commissioners Court | Mayor |

State of Texas

County of

City of

