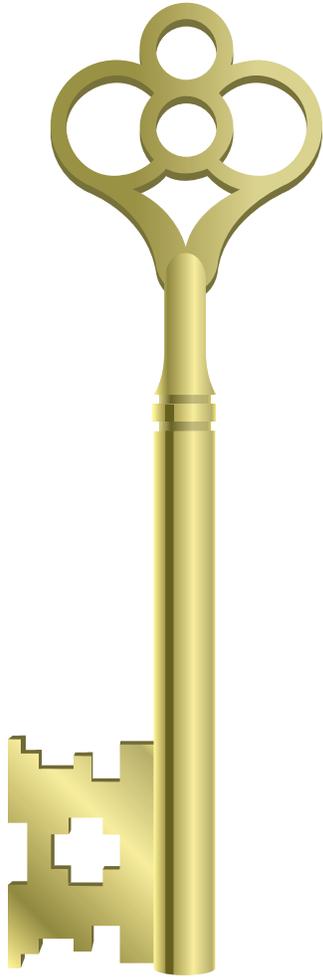


# Chapter One: Activities High School



# 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 responsibilities of the \_\_\_\_\_ are to assess property value and collect ad valorem taxes.
12. The \_\_\_\_\_ deposits all revenue collected by the county and keeps receipts for expenditures of county funds.
13. A \_\_\_\_\_ presides over courts in misdemeanor cases.
14. 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 One

**Supplies:** copy of *What Is Your County IQ?* For each student, pencils

**Directions:** Before teaching *The Keys to County Government*, have students complete this questionnaire as a pretest.

**Key:**

1. e. Spanish
2. d. 254
3. e . All of the above
4. County tax assessor-collector's office
5. January 1 or October 1
6. False
7. Subpoena
8. Justice of the Peace
9. Defendant
10. c. 18
11. d. a set of policies and objectives that represent the views of party members
12. c. Primary, Runoff, General, Special
13. c. Commissioners Court
14. The county judge fills a vacancy in the office of county commissioner. The appointee must be a resident of the precinct in which the vacancy occurs.
15. b. False (county judges may vote at any time)

# What Is Your County I.Q.?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Test your knowledge of county government by answering the following 15 questions. Each question is worth one point.

13-15 points—you are a true Texan!

10-12 points—you are a statesman

7-9 points—you are a patriot

6 points or fewer—you are from out of state

1. The predominant cultural influence on Texas counties was:  
a. American    b. English    c. French    d. German    e. Spanish
2. Today, the number of counties in Texas is:  
a. 150    b. 156    c. 250    d. 254    e. 256
3. Today, the main functions performed by county governments include:  
a. Administering county finance    b. Assessing and collecting taxes  
c. Maintaining law and order    d. a and b  
e. all of the above
4. Where are vehicles registered? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What month does your commissioners court begin the budget process? \_\_\_\_\_
6. A county must always select the lowest bid for an item to be purchased.  
a. True    b. False
7. A court order to appear in court to give testimony is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Small claims are handled by the \_\_\_\_\_ court.
9. A person against whom a legal action is brought is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. A citizen must be \_\_\_\_ years old to be eligible to vote.  
a. 21    b. 17 ½    c. 18    d. 22
11. A party platform consists of:  
a. the candidates who represent a party in the election  
b. private industry that provides a campaign support to party candidates  
c. the stage on which party candidates make their speeches  
d. a set of policies and objectives that represent the views of party members
12. Identify the four types of elections Texas voters can participate in.  
a. primary, secondary, runoff, general    b. national, state, district, local  
c. primary, runoff, general, special    d. primary, special, emergency, local option
13. Who is responsible for setting the budget for the county:  
a. County Auditor    b. County Auditor and County Clerk  
c. Commissioners Court    d. District Judge
14. How is a vacancy in the office of one of the four county commissioners filled? \_\_\_\_\_
15. County judges may vote only to break a tie vote of the commissioners.  
a. True    b. False

# Chapter One: Activity Two

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Using newspapers, the Internet and telephone books, fill out the appropriate information for your county.

County name: \_\_\_\_\_

The county judge is \_\_\_\_\_.

The county commissioners are:

Precinct 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Up for re-election in \_\_\_\_\_

Precinct 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Up for re-election in \_\_\_\_\_

Precinct 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Up for re-election in \_\_\_\_\_

Precinct 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Up for re-election in \_\_\_\_\_

The county clerk is \_\_\_\_\_

The district clerk is \_\_\_\_\_

Our district attorney is \_\_\_\_\_

A district judge is \_\_\_\_\_

The county sheriff is \_\_\_\_\_ Up for re-election in \_\_\_\_\_

The address of the county courthouse is \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, Texas.

The county tax appraisal district's phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

Name five officials or departments that are located in the county courthouse.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Name one official or department that is not located in the county courthouse.

\_\_\_\_\_

The county clerk's office is located at \_\_\_\_\_. This is where I can get marriage licenses and birth certificates.

## Chapter One: Activity Three

**Supplies:** computer with Internet access and projector

**Directions:** Here is a way that 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>.

Show each video clip as the lesson progresses. If students are ELL's, make sure to write down the officials' titles so students will see the written words as well as listening to the lessons and videos.

## Chapter One: Activity Four

**Supplies:** county map, U.S. Census Bureau statistics, Internet-linked computer

**Directions:** Obtain a copy of your county map from the county clerk's office, elections administrator's office, or the Soil Conservation Service.

- Locate the county seat on the map. What is its population? Locate other towns in the county and compare their populations.
- Using U.S. Census Bureau statistics, compare current population statistics to those of the county 10 years ago.
- Identify on the map the four commissioners' precinct lines and the justice of the peace boundaries.