



## Peaceful Transfer of Power: Lesson Plan

Topic	
A peaceful transfer of power is the process of existing leadership conceding power and passing governmental control onto their successor, usually a newly elected representative. As the word “peaceful” suggests, this process is nonviolent and free of conflict, and recognizes the right of the people to select their leaders.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
History, Government, Social Studies, Politics	30-45 Minutes
Video link:	
<a href="https://academy4sc.org/topic/peaceful-transfer-of-power-a-democratic-mandate/">https://academy4sc.org/topic/peaceful-transfer-of-power-a-democratic-mandate/</a>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
Students will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define what a peaceful transfer of power is.</li><li>• Articulate why a peaceful transfer of power is necessary for a strong democracy.</li><li>• Explain how the process of presidential transition works in the United States.</li></ul>	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Executive branch, legislative branch, representative democracy, elections	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet, Internet access	
Before you watch	
<b>Think-pair-share:</b> Ask students to think of their own definition of what the “peaceful transfer of power” is and why it might be important in the American government. Have them discuss and refine these definitions in pairs and then share with the class.	



### While you watch

1. What happens during a peaceful transfer of power?
2. Who is power transferring from? Who does it transfer to?
3. Why is a peaceful transfer of power important for our democracy?

### After you watch/discussion questions

1. How does democratic backsliding weaken our government?
2. What might be the consequences of a contested transfer of power, in which the incumbent representative does not allow the elected candidate to take over?
3. What other mechanisms should exist to ensure a peaceful transfer of power?

### Activity Ideas

- **Contested Election Research:** Instruct students to look up the contested elections of 1800, 1876, and 2000 and complete the Worksheet with their findings.
- **Mock Inauguration Ceremony:** Together as a class, go over the [“Inaugural Events” page](#) of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies website. Then, recreate the eight signature inaugural events one by one, asking different students to volunteer for the roles (president, First Lady/Gentleman, Vice President, Chief Justice, etc.) each time. Discuss the significance of each event, and why it is important (or not) in the process of a peaceful transfer of power. Ask the class to think about why the inauguration ceremony is important in terms of the peaceful transfer of power, why the presidential transition is treated as a celebration and a media spectacle, and how the inauguration sets the stage for the entire presidency.

### Sources/places to learn more

1. Pruitt, Sarah. “How John Adams Established the Peaceful Transfer of Power.” *History*, 17 Sept. 2020, <https://www.history.com/news/peaceful-transfer-power-adams-jefferson>.
2. Iannacci, Nicandro. “‘Nothing less than a miracle’: The Constitution and the peaceful transition of power.” *National Constitution Center*, 21 Oct. 2016, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/nothing-less-than-a-miracle-the-constitution-and-the-peaceful-transition-of>.



3. Zvesper, James. *From Bullets to Ballots: The Election of 1800 and the First Peaceful Transfer of Political Power*. Claremont Institute, 2003.