

Name(s) & Class Section:

Intro. to Gerrymandering

What is gerrymandering?

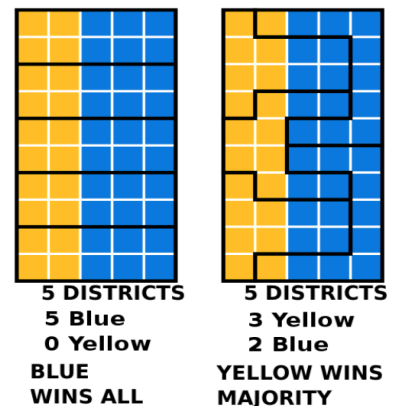
Gerrymandering is the practice of drawing voting district boundaries to give one political party an advantage over another. It was started in 1812 by Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry and is still used today in the United States.

How does gerrymandering work?

The US Federal Government conducts the **census every ten years**. This survey counts the country's population and collects demographic information.

Based on the information from the census, **reapportionment** occurs. In the US, each state elects a certain number of Representatives based on its population. Reapportionment is when Congress assigns a number of seats to each state. It must happen every time there is a census because population shifts occur over time.

Once reapportionment is complete, **redistricting** takes place. Each voting district elects one representative, so the number of representatives a state is allotted through reapportionment determines the number of voting districts it needs. Redistricting is the process of redrawing voting district boundaries, typically conducted by the state legislature. Each voting district must be contiguous (connected) and contain roughly the same number of people so that everyone's vote counts equally, no matter where they live. However, with gerrymandering, districts are drawn in a way that groups people with specific characteristics together, giving one party a better chance of winning seats.



There are two main ways to gerrymander the boundaries of a voting district to give one party an edge over another: cracking and packing. *Cracking* occurs when the voters of a particular group are divided into several districts. This reduces the influence of their votes. *Packing* is when the members of a specific group are packed into a single district. This means their votes do not impact the other districts, decreasing their influence.

Define each of the following terms in your own words:

Gerrymandering →

Census →

Reapportionment →

Redistricting →

Explain the process of gerrymandering in 2-3 sentences, using your own words.

Gerrymander, the following area should fit the desired outcome described above each grid. Each district should have five voters (represented by either an “X” or an “O”) and be contiguous (connected, not divided by any other district).

The election is a tie

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

X wins the election

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

O wins the election

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

What techniques did you use to achieve the desired results in the exercise above? Explain.

Why is gerrymandering controversial, and what has been done about it?

Gerrymandering can result in voting districts that don't reflect the political makeup of a state. Both Democrats and Republicans engage in a process that effectively allows representatives to choose their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives.

There have been multiple proposals for preventing gerrymandering from occurring. These included using bipartisan or nonpartisan committees or math equations to draw the boundaries, or drawing the boundaries in a way that closely reflects the political will of the population. Still, it was said that such means could lead to elections based on luck or “safe” elections, where the same people are repeatedly elected. The issue was even brought before the Supreme Court, but they were unable to devise a viable solution.

Does gerrymandering make elections less fair? Explain your thinking.

Do you think “safe” elections or drawing district boundaries that may favor one party over another based on luck is better than gerrymandering? Explain your thinking.

How does gerrymandering demonstrate the power of boundaries? Explain.

Name(s) & Class Section: **ANSWER KEY**

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What is gerrymandering?

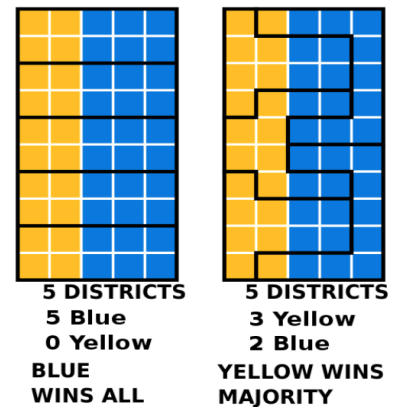
Gerrymandering is the practice of drawing voting district boundaries in a way that allows one political party to gain an advantage over another. It was started in 1812 by Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry and is still used today in the United States.

How does gerrymandering work?

Every ten years, the US Federal Government conducts the **census**. This survey counts the population of the country, among other things.

Based on the information from the census, **reapportionment** occurs. In the US, each state elects a certain number of Representatives based on their population. Reapportionment is when Congress assigns that number of seats to each state. It needs to happen every time there is a census because population shifts occur over time.

Once reapportionment is done, **redistricting** occurs. Each voting district elects one representative, so, depending on how many representatives a state was allotted through reapportionment, that is how many voting districts it needs to have. Redistricting is the redrawing of voting district boundaries (usually by the state legislature). Each voting district must be contiguous (connected) and must contain roughly the same number of people, so that everyone's vote counts equally, no matter where they live. However, with gerrymandering, districts are drawn in a way that groups people with certain characteristics together so that one party has a better chance of winning seats.



There are two main ways to gerrymander the boundaries of a voting district to give one party an edge over another: cracking and packing.

Cracking is when the voters of a particular group are broken up into several districts. This makes their votes have less influence. Packing is where the members of a particular group are gathered into a single district. This means that their votes do not impact the other districts, decreasing their influence.

Define each of the following terms in 1-2 sentences, using your own words:

Gerrymandering → **Should mention the manipulation of voting district boundaries to benefit one group**

Census → **Should mention the purpose of the census (population count)**

Reapportionment → **Should mention how seats are allocated**

Redistricting → **Should mention redrawing boundaries**

Explain the process of gerrymandering in 2-3 sentences, using your own words.

Explanation should include the census, reapportionment, and redistricting to manipulate voting district boundaries to achieve an advantage for one group.

Gerrymander the following area to fit the desired outcome described above each grid.

Each district should contain five voters (voters are represented as either an "X" or an "O") and must be contiguous (connected - not divided by any other district). *These are possible solutions, but there could be others*

The election is a tie

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

X wins the election

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

O wins the election

X	O	X	O	X
X	O	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	O
O	X	O	X	X
O	O	X	O	O
X	X	X	O	X
O	X	O	X	O
O	O	O	X	O
X	X	O	X	O
O	X	X	O	X

What techniques did you use to achieve the desired results in the previous exercise? Explain.

Should describe cracking and packing

Why is gerrymandering controversial, and what has been done about it?

Gerrymandering can result in voting districts that don't actually reflect the political makeup of a state. Both Democrats and Republicans engage in this process that effectively allows representatives to choose their voters instead of voters getting to choose their representatives.

There have been multiple proposals as to how to stop gerrymandering from occurring. These included using bipartisan or nonpartisan committees or math equations to draw the boundaries or drawing the boundaries in a way that closely reflects the political will of the population but it was said that such means could lead to election based on luck or "safe" elections where the same people get elected over and over. The issue was even brought before the Supreme Court but they could come up with no viable solution.

Does gerrymandering make elections less fair? Explain your thinking. - Answers will vary.

Do you think that "safe" elections or drawing district boundaries that may favor one party over another based on luck is a better option than gerrymandering? Explain your thinking. - Answers will vary.

How does gerrymandering demonstrate the power of boundaries? Explain.

Influence election results, can be used to silence minority voices, importance of state legislature elections since they have the power to draw the boundaries, etc.