

Name(s) & Class Section:

Intro. to Gerrymandering

What is gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is when voting districts are drawn to help one political party win more elections. It was started in 1812 by a governor named Elbridge Gerry and is still used today.

How does gerrymandering work?

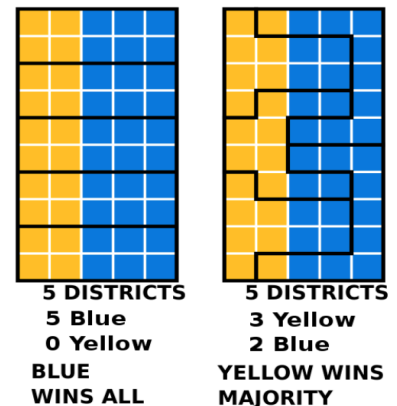
The government conducts a census survey every ten *years*. This survey counts the number of people living in each state and gathers other important information.

After the census, *reapportionment* happens. This means the government decides how many representatives each state gets based on population. When this is done, the next step is *redistricting*. This is when the boundaries of voting districts are redrawn, ensuring each district has about the same number of people.

However, gerrymandering occurs when these district lines are drawn to give one party an unfair advantage.

There are two main ways gerrymandering happens:

1. **Cracking** occurs when one group of people is split into several different districts, making it harder for them to impact the vote significantly.
2. **Packing** is when one group of people is put into one district, so their votes are “packed” into one area and don't affect the surrounding districts.



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"). The districts must be connected (not separated by other districts). Try to make the results fit the scenario.

The election is a tie

X wins the election

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

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	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?

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

Gerrymandering can make voting districts look very different from a state's actual political makeup. Both Democrats and Republicans use it, which means politicians choose who votes for them instead of voters choosing their representatives.

Some ideas to stop gerrymandering have been suggested, like using committees without political parties to draw the boundaries or using math to ensure fairness. But these ideas can also have problems, like making elections too predictable. The Supreme Court has even considered the issue, but it hasn't found a perfect solution yet.

Does gerrymandering make elections less fair? Explain your thinking.

Do you think “safe” elections (where the same people keep winning) or drawing district boundaries based on luck is better than gerrymandering? Explain your answer.

How does gerrymandering show the power of boundaries?

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

Intro. to Gerrymandering

What is gerrymandering?

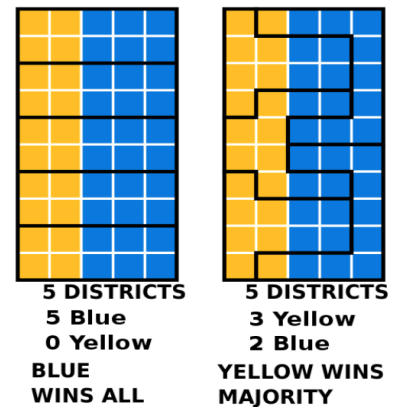
Gerrymandering is the practice of drawing voting district boundaries in a way that allows one political party to gain an advantage over another. It was started in 1812 by Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry and is still used today in the United States.

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.