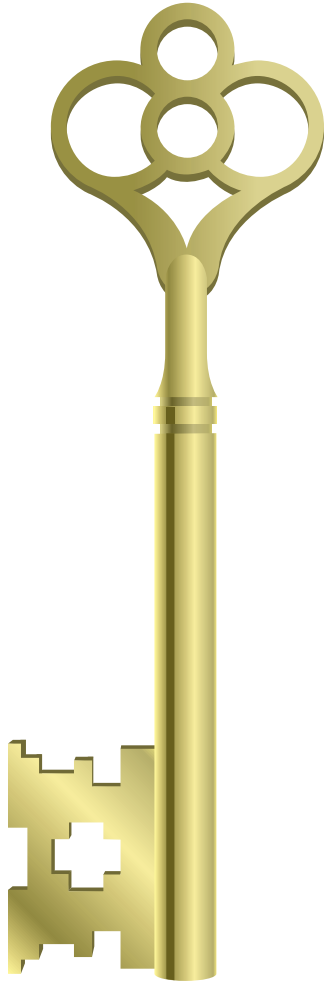


Chapter One: Activities High School



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.