

538 → The Electoral College

The President of the United States is not elected by the national popular vote. The Founders of the Constitution created the system of the Electoral College, which calls for separate state elections for President. In most of our 50 states the candidate who wins the popular vote will receive all of the electoral votes of that state. However, there are two states, Nebraska and Maine, that reject the winner take all formula and split the electors based on the proportional representation of the popular vote.

State population determines the number of electors each state receives in the Electoral College. For example, California sends the most electors with 55, while Alaska only sends 3. Electors used to be state elected representatives, but now the state Democratic and Republican Party sends their own slate of electors, insuring they will be loyal to their Party's candidate. The total number of electors is 538. This number is based on the total number in the legislative branch, 435 Representatives and 100 Senators, plus three electors from the District of Columbia. Since the total number of electors is 538, the magic number for winning the Presidency is 270. Notice that theoretically there could be a tie in the Electoral College at 269 for each candidate.

According to the Constitution if neither candidate wins the majority of electors the House of Representatives selects the President. This has happened twice, in the elections of Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams. In addition, it is also mathematically possible for the President to win the Electoral College, but lose the popular national vote. This has happened four times in American history, including the John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and most recently in 2000 in the contest between Al Gore and George Bush.

“Blue states”, like California, typically vote for a Democratic candidate for President. “Red states”, like Texas, often choose a Republican candidate. Swing states are those states where the electorate is evenly split between Republican and Democrat voters, or which have a large number of independent voters who could choose a candidate from either party. This is the reason you see a tremendous amount of campaigning in swing states, sometimes called “purple states”, like: Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, New Hampshire, Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Nevada.

270→ Make Your November Presidential Prediction

Partners _____ and _____

<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/>

1. Choose **Election 2012** and click on the **RCP Electoral Map**.
2. Notice the Red States and the Blue States on the battleground map.
3. The swing states are in grey. Click on any of the grey states to look at the Real Clear Politics poll averages for each state. You can also click on the names of any of the polling agencies (e.g. Gallup, Rasmussen, NBC, CNN, FOX, etc.) to learn more about their polling.
4. Explore the RCP **no toss up** map.
5. Now, go to **create your own map**. You can change the color of any of the grey states by turning them blue (Democratic) or red (Republican). As you change each battle ground state, notice how the number of electoral votes also changes.
6. Design a final map with no grey states that you think predicts the November election results. Share your prediction below. Students with the most accurate guess will receive a prize.

Obama's Electoral Votes _____

Romney's Electoral Votes _____

TOTAL = **538**