



# American Experiments



## At-a-glance

Welcome to **American Experiments!**

This quick guide will provide an overview of each of the four activities included with **American Experiments**.

**American Experiments** is offered as an engaging, educational companion to *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*, a traveling exhibition by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. It is comprised of four activity bags and one bag containing the Introduction Panel. All the pieces you will need to play these games are contained within the bags!

Go beyond the bounds of the exhibition and take these activities directly to members of your community! Led by a facilitator, **American Experiments** will allow students, educators, and the general public to discuss ideas critical to our democracy in a fun and informal environment. This game set was designed to be transportable and useful in many different spaces. The facilitator may decide to take one, a few, or all activities.

The role of the facilitator is crucial. Each activity was developed specifically to encourage civil dialogue, participation, and interaction, elements that are important to a healthy democracy. The facilitator will help shape this experience and will be responsible for:

- ★ Setting up the Introduction Panel with the provided base in a prominent place
- ★ Setting up all the games and keeping track of all the materials
- ★ Leading players in the games and discussions
- ★ Explaining to players the connection between **American Experiments** and the larger Smithsonian exhibition, *Voices and Votes*, currently on view in their community!

Explore each of the four activities, gather a group today, and start experimenting!

## **Head to Head**

Players divide into two groups in a bracket-style competition. Groups may work with the game board together or in two separate pieces. Choose one of two topics: “Who Changed America More?” or “Which Food is More American?” Are hot dogs more American than fried chicken? Did Abraham Lincoln change America more than Henry Ford? Determine in your group which word or name will move forward in each matchup until both groups come together again to choose the ultimate winner. What will you do when you don’t agree? Head to Head will lead to lively discussion!

This game is great for teaching civil dialogue, teaching compromise, learning about historical figures, learning about food heritage, and critical thinking.

Recommended for 4 to 10 players; Ages 12 and up

Game pieces: 1 instruction sheet, 1 bracket board in two pieces; 2 game bases (one for each side); 32 food magnets; 32 name magnets; 1 title magnet, 2 topic magnets; 1 winner magnet

## **Ideals and Images**

Four players will be presented with identical decks of Images cards. Another deck of Ideals cards containing words such as equality, community, and citizenship will be centrally-placed. When players are ready, one Ideals card will be flipped over. Each player will choose four Images cards that they feel best represent the word shown. Players will discuss the images they chose and why they chose them. Continue flipping Ideals cards to keep the conversation going!

This game is great for visual learners, visual communication skills, conversation skill-building, and critical thinking.

Recommended for 2 to 4 players; Ages 12 and up

Game pieces: 1 instruction sheet, 4 decks of Images cards (37 total); 1 deck of Ideals cards (16 total)

## **My Fellow Citizens**

What does it mean to be a good citizen? Players first explore the Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America provided on the instruction card. Players will then be given a white board with the phrase “I believe good citizens should...” written at the top. Each person can write their answer on the board to complete the sentence and discuss with the other players. Take a photo of your board and share on social media with the hashtags #MyFellowCitizens and #VoicesVotes.

This game is great for critical reading skills, writing development, conversation skill-building, and introducing civics to beginners.

Recommended for up to 3 players; All ages

Game pieces: 1 instruction sheet, 3 whiteboards with markers

## **Where Do You Stand?**

Explore your beliefs about democracy and face some of the tough questions Americans throughout history have encountered. Floor mats with the following answers will be placed in a room: Strongly Agree, Agree, I’m Not Sure, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. A chosen leader will then read a statement in one of two categories: Protest or Voting. Topics will get players discussing a range of issues such as: Should it be mandatory to vote? Or would you join a protest even if most people I know disagreed with my viewpoint? Get up, move, see where you stand in comparison to others, and discuss why!

This game is great for historical analysis, introducing civics to beginners, and critical thinking.

Recommended for small or large groups; All ages

Game pieces: 1 instruction sheet, 5 floor mats