

Join the national conversation!

POLITICS AND PRIVACY: DO WE NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE?

Word Generation - Unit 1.22

Focus Words

candidate | campaign | ethics | issue | display



Weekly Passage

Sam Ellis was a strong supporter of one candidate for President. He agreed with all of her positions. He planned to vote for her in the election. Then, one morning, Sam read in the newspaper that his candidate had once been caught with marijuana. This had happened back when the candidate was in high school, over 25 years earlier. Sam was disappointed. He wondered if she still deserved his vote.

During campaigns, we learn a lot about political candidates. Some have abused alcohol or drugs. Some have cheated on their spouses or stolen money. Do we have a right to know personal details about political candidates? Some people say yes. They point out that a candidate is asking for the public's trust. They ask how we, the public, can understand a candidate's ethics and values if we don't know about his or her personal life.

Others think that if we exclude everyone who ever made a mistake, we

might leave out people who would make good leaders. Some people think we should focus on how candidates will handle crucial issues like terrorism, pollution, and global warming, not how they handle their marriage or their private mistakes. Should some parts of a candidate's personal life be off-limits?

Imagine this: one of your friends posted a photograph of you being a clown and doing something very embarrassing at a party (use your imagination). If one day you decided to run for public office, you could be sure that this photo would be displayed in newspapers, on television, and all over the internet. One funny moment from years earlier would follow you into your future. Would you then feel like your privacy had been invaded? Or would you say that the public has the right to know about your teenage behavior?

Unit 1.22 - Politics and Privacy: Do we need to know everything about a potential candidate?

Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
candidate	(n.) – a person running for office			
campaign	(n.) – a political contest			
display	(v.) – to show			
ethics	(n.) – beliefs about what is morally right			
issue	(n.) – a matter of public concern			

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Problem of the Week

In 2008, New York Governor David Paterson called a press conference to admit to an **ethical** mistake. Years earlier, he confessed, he had several affairs while he was married to his wife. Some people applauded his honesty. Others wondered why he chose to put his mistakes on **display**. When it comes to politicians and political **candidates**, which **issues** should be private, and which should be public?

In March and April 2008, New Yorkers were asked the following question: Do you think the press should report if a married politician has an affair?

- ▶ 33% said: *Yes, always.*
- ▶ 34% said: *Only if the politician used public money to pay for the affair.*
- ▶ 15% said: *Only if the politician ran a **campaign** based on family values.*

Option 1: How many New Yorkers think that the press should always report if a married politician has an affair?

- A) about one in two
- B) about one in three
- C) about one in four
- D) about one in five

Option 2: In the same poll mentioned above, 40% of respondents said that the press should report illegal drug use by a politician under any circumstances, even if the drug use occurred when the person was much younger. Based on this information, are Americans more tolerant of politicians who use drugs, or of politicians having extramarital affairs?

Math Discussion Question: Which of the views above do you find most convincing? When someone decides to become a **candidate** for political office, are they deciding to put their marriage or relationship on **display**? Or should infidelity only become an **issue** if it involves some other **ethical** breach directly related to the candidate's public role, like stealing money or running a hypocritical **campaign**?

Politics and Privacy

Debating the Issue



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A When candidates run for office, their personal lives are fair game. We need to know if they are good people with solid ethics.

B Political candidates should be prepared to have their personal lives on display. It's part of the job. They can explain their embarrassing mistakes, and the voters will understand.

C We should look at some parts of a candidate's personal life. We need to know if they broke the law, but we don't need to know about their marriage or their teenage mistakes.

D We should focus on how candidates will handle important issues like terrorism. Their personal lives should be private.

E _____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

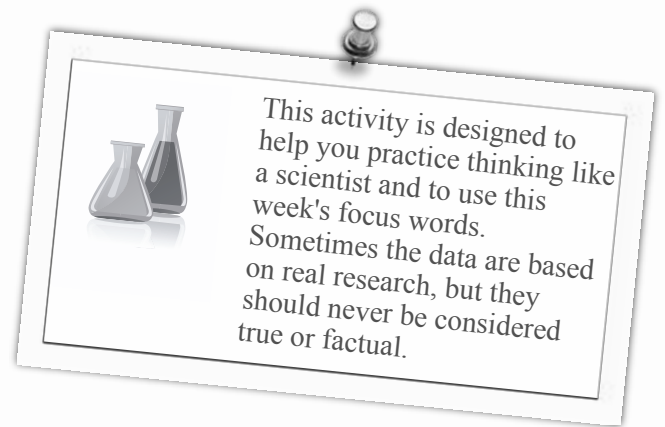
I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

Unit 1.22 - Politics and Privacy: Do we need to know everything about a potential candidate? Science Activity



Bill Clinton was Professor Kahn's favorite president. However, Clinton's presidency included more than one scandal. When he became a presidential **candidate**, his personal life became a popular **issue** in the news. During the **campaign**, a woman named Gennifer Flowers claimed that she and Clinton had an affair. Hundreds of news stories appeared about the affair.

Will people remember President Clinton for his political achievements, or his **ethical** mistakes? Professor Kahn wants to find out.

Question:

Which **issues** will people know more about: President Clinton's political achievements, or his personal scandals?

Hypothesis:

More people will **display** knowledge of Gennifer Flowers than of President Clinton's Welfare Reform Act. (The Welfare Reform Act was one of Clinton's political achievements as president.)

Materials:

- ▶ 100 people
- ▶ A question about Gennifer Flowers
- ▶ A question about the Welfare Reform Act

Procedure:

1. Recruit 100 people.
2. Ask them the questions about Gennifer Flowers.
3. Ask them the question about the Welfare Reform Act.
4. Calculate the percentage of people who answered each question correctly.

Data:

Topic	Percentage of People That Correctly Answered the Question
Gennifer Flowers	81%
Welfare Reform Act	13%

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?

Writing Prompt



Politics and Privacy:
Do we need to know
everything about a potential
candidate?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

candidate | campaign | ethics | issue | display

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stated my own position
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stated my own position clearly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included 1-2 arguments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stated my own position clearly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included 1-2 arguments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included 1 counterargument
<input type="checkbox"/>	Used 2-5 focus words
