

Rights & Responsibilities | Worksheet



Name: _____ Date: _____

YOUR MISSION: THE CITIZEN HELP DESK. You've just been hired at a law office as a help desk paralegal. You field phone calls from Americans confused about their civic duties. Some callers want to know their rights. Some are trying to dodge responsibilities. One is about to miss a deadline. Watch the episode, then execute the tasks as you take on more responsibility.

Level 1 | NEW HIRE—Learn the Handbook

You can't answer the phones until you know the handbook. As you watch, match each term to its meaning—write the letter in the blank.

1. ____ A right	A. The last day each year to file federal income taxes
2. ____ A responsibility	B. The promise naturalized citizens make to obey U.S. laws and defend the Constitution
3. ____ A privilege	C. A duty citizens must perform, like serving on a jury when called
4. ____ April 15	D. The minimum age for citizens to vote for president
5. ____ Selective Service	E. Something citizens may choose to do, like running for office
6. ____ The Oath of Allegiance	F. Every citizen's way of showing loyalty to the flag and the republic for which it stands
7. ____ The Pledge of Allegiance	G. A guaranteed freedom granted by God that no one—not even the government—can take away
8. ____ 18	H. The registration required of nearly all men ages 18 through 25

Level 2 | THE INBOX—Triage the Calls

*Six calls are on hold, and each one is about a right, a responsibility, or a privilege—three very different things. Mark each case **R** (right: a protected freedom), **D** (duty: required of citizens), or **P** (privilege: yours to use—or not). Careful: one of these is the most commonly missed case at the help desk.*

- ____ Serving on a jury when called
- ____ Practicing any religion or none at all
- ____ Running for public office
- ____ Filing federal income taxes by April 15
- ____ Speaking your mind without fear of punishment by the government
- ____ Voting in an election



The Vote File: callers keep asking who can vote—and it wasn't always everyone. Complete the help desk's timeline: for each amendment, write who gained the vote or what barrier fell.

Amendment	Who gained the vote or what barrier fell
15th Amendment (1870)	
19th Amendment (1920)	
24th Amendment (1964)	
26th Amendment (1971)	

Level 3 | SENIOR STAFF—The Hard Cases

These callers don't want definitions—they want answers. Law offices respond with the rule, not just an opinion. Give each caller a straight answer and cite the duty, right, or amendment that settles it.

The caller says:	Your answer (cite a rule):
CALLER 1: "My jury summons arrived the same week as our family beach trip. It's optional... right?"	_____ _____
CALLER 2: "I'm 17 and better informed than most adults. Can I vote for president this year?"	_____ _____
CALLER 3: "I'm a man who just turned 18. My uncle says I have to register for something—what?"	_____ _____

Level 4 | LEGAL ADVICE BLOGGER—"Dear Citizen"

To promote the firm, your law office has assigned you to write a blog responding to citizens' questions, beginning with: **"Why should I bother voting if it's not even required?"** Write your reply (4–6 sentences). Include all three big ideas—check each box as you use it:

☐ What voting is (and isn't) ☐ Who fought for the vote ☐ Why participation matters

Rank achieved: ☐ New Hire ☐ The Inbox ☐ Senior Staff ☐ Blogger

Answer Key | Rights & Responsibilities

Level 1 | New Hire

1-G, 2-C, 3-E, 4-A, 5-H, 6-B, 7-F, 8-D

Level 2 | The Inbox—Triage the Calls

1-D, 2-R, 3-P, 4-D, 5-R, 6-P. Case 6 is the trap: many students mark voting a duty or simply a right. The episode is precise—the right to vote is protected by constitutional amendments, but voting itself is not required; it is a privilege of citizenship that each citizen chooses to use. Look for students who catch that “protected” and “required” are different things.

The Vote File (timeline):

1. **15th (1870):** No citizen (including black Americans) can be denied the vote because of race.
2. **19th (1920):** Women gained the right to vote.
3. **24th (1964):** Poll taxes eliminated in federal elections—no one has to pay a fee to vote.
4. **26th (1971):** The minimum voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. Look for students noticing the direction of the timeline—eligibility only expanded, “in keeping with the spirit of our founding.”

Level 3 | Senior Staff—The Hard Cases

1. **Sample answer:** No—jury service is a responsibility of citizenship, not an invitation. When called, citizens are required to serve; it’s one of the duties that keeps the justice system working. **Rule:** serving on a jury when called is a responsibility required of U.S. citizens.
2. **Sample answer:** Not this year. The Constitution sets the voting age at 18—the 26th Amendment (1971) lowered it from 21, but no further. At 17, you can still participate: speak up, volunteer for campaigns, and be ready to register. **Rule:** the 26th Amendment—citizens 18 and older may vote.
3. **Sample answer:** Your uncle is right. Nearly all male citizens (and male immigrants) ages 18 through 25 must register for the Selective Service—a sign of willingness to serve the nation in times of conflict if called. **Rule:** Selective Service registration at age 18. Look for answers that cite the rule rather than “you just have to.”

Level 4 | Legal Advice Blogger—“Dear Citizen”

Replies will vary. Mark student responses correct if the reply accurately (1) explains what voting is—a privilege and the most basic way to participate, protected as a right but never required; (2) tells one amendment’s story—Americans fought for decades so that race (15th), sex (19th), wealth (24th), or age over 18 (26th) could not keep a citizen from the ballot; and (3) gives the reader a genuine reason to participate—every citizen’s action “fuels the spirit of our nation.” The strongest replies turn the question around: something so many fought so hard to win is worth using.

Note: This worksheet can be completed with the episode alone or as part of the full lesson—see the accompanying lesson plan.