The Two-Party System



Name _____ Date _____

1 Recall, then make a connection.

Start from memory. Write a meaning or quick example for each term.

political party	coalition	plurality

How might a political party seek a coalition under a plurality election rule? Explain why winning the most votes is not the same as winning a majority.

Context for the task

Political parties organize people around candidates and policy priorities. They can recruit candidates, coordinate campaigns, develop platforms, and help voters identify broad choices. Parties are not branches of government, and the Constitution does not require exactly two parties. American party coalitions and names have changed over time. The early Federalist and Democratic-Republican competition should not be treated as a simple set of identical labels for today's parties.

2 Organize the records.

Party organization or government power?

Classify each role as described.

Sort the cards.

A. Party organizing activity
B. Governmental action requiring public authority

Write the category letter beside each record.

1. ___ Developing a campaign platform.

2. ___ Recruiting candidates to seek office.

3. ___ Passing a statute through a legislature.

4. ___ Issuing a court judgment in a case.

5. ___ Coordinating volunteers for a campaign.

6. ___ Administering a public program under law.

Evidence, application & transfer.



3 Read the evidence closely.

Did the coalition change the platform?

A fictional coalition claims that joining two groups changed the party's transit and park priorities.

Select every record directly useful for checking that claim.

A. The platform before negotiations and the final adopted platform.

B. Meeting records identifying which proposed priorities were added, revised, or rejected.

C. An opinion poll that asks only whether people recognize the party's name.

D. The number of posters printed before negotiations began.

Selections: _____ Explain your reasoning:

4 Apply the idea.

Correct the two-party shortcut

A summary says, "The same two parties have always existed, and no other political organization can matter." The Library of Congress documents early parties emerging from disputes over federal power and policy.

Which correction is accurate?

A. Party systems and coalitions have changed; two-party dominance does not mean the Constitution requires two parties or that other organizations have no influence.

B. Every party has kept the same members and platform since 1787.

C. Political parties are the legislative and judicial branches under different names.

My choice: _____ Explain why it fits:

5 Carry the idea forward.

Explain how the fictional election rule could encourage coalition building. Include the 42% result, one benefit of a broad coalition, one unresolved trade-off, and a correction to the claim that two parties are constitutionally required.