

THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

General Guidelines

Liberals/Left Wing Emphasize:

- * Group responsibility
- * General welfare
- * Looking to the future for guidance
- * Change
- * An optimistic view of human nature
- * Personal freedom over order
- * Tolerant of Communists
- * Religious tolerance
- * Trust government

Conservatives/Right Wing Emphasize:

- * Individual accountability
- * Personal rights and responsibility
- * Looking to the past or using tradition for guidance
- * Stability
- * A pessimistic view of human nature
- * Social order over personal freedom
- * Strongly anti-Communist
- * Traditional religious values
- * Trust business

SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE USA

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| * Woman's right to chose | * Rights for the unborn |
| * Gun control to protect society | * No gun restrictions. Punish criminals who use them. |
| * No capital punishment - Killing is wrong even for government. | * Capital punishment for murderers and maybe some others. |
| * Provide "welfare" to the less fortunate | * "Welfare" only for the "truly needy" |
| * Protect U.S. interests through diplomacy | * Protect U.S. interests with the military |
| * Government regulation | * Laissez-faire |
| * Public education | * Private schools and vouchers |
| * Affirmative action | * No preferential programs |

LIBERAL — In general, liberals believe the government must play a big role in society, especially by regulating business and economic life. They believe this is necessary to ensure fair treatment for many groups, especially the poor, and various minorities, such as Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and others. Liberals usually think the wealthy should pay a larger share of their income in taxes. And while many worry about government spending, they usually remain strong supporters of government programs that help the poor or the middle income groups.

CONSERVATIVE — In general, conservatives want to limit the role of government. While liberals emphasize "fairness," conservatives tend to emphasize "freedom." For example, they say businesses and individuals should be as free as possible to make decisions without government interference. They say many regulations add to business costs and slow the economy, hurting rich and poor alike. Many of them want to reduce government spending and cut taxes, too. Often, they believe state governments can solve problems better than the federal government can.

Of the two main political parties, the Democrats are generally seen as more liberal and the Republicans as more conservative. But keep in mind that each party is made up of many groups who do not always agree. This assignment will help you find out how some Democrats and Republicans feel about the big issues facing the country.