

# Featured Activity: Let's Get the Count Right

**Topic(s):**

Counting, state population,  
"more than" vs. "less than"

**Grade Level:**

K-2

**Approx. Time Required:**

40 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Build vocabulary.
- Recognize and count numbers up to 100.
- Compare quantities using the terms "more than," "less than," and "equal to."
- Understand the concept of population and how distributing resources relates to the quantity of people living in a community.
- Understand the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census.

## Introduction

The 2020 Census Statistics in Schools (SIS) program is designed to educate students about the decennial census and to teach them educational concepts and skills, such as data literacy, through use of census data in the classroom. Responding to the census helps your community get its fair share of funding. Census data guides how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year. These funds support vital community programs that help children, such as schools, hospitals, housing, and food assistance. By educating students about the 2020 Census, you can help encourage a complete count.

The 2020 Census SIS program can be used with educational standards across the United States. You can use the topics and learning objectives above to determine which subject and unit plan or theme this activity will best fit into.

## About the 2020 Census

In addition to the information that is built into instructions for this activity, the following points provide an easy, grade-appropriate way to explain the census to your students.

- The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States that occurs every 10 years.
- It is important that every person be counted to make sure the government can provide money to each community for things like roads and parks.
- Make sure an adult in your home counts you in the 2020 Census.





## About the Modifications

- **This activity is a modified version of the 2020 SIS Featured Activity: Let's Get the Count Right for kindergarten through second grade classrooms. It has been modified to accommodate K-12 English language learners (ELLs).**
- **Sections have been added to this teaching guide that call out modifications made specifically for ELLs.**

## Materials Required

- **Printed ELL student worksheets**
- A projector or interactive whiteboard connected to the internet to display the following song:
  - **"Everyone Counts!"** song (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources/pre-k.html>)
- One marker (or another substitutable resource) for each student (**Note:** Students do not need to draw with the marker. It will be used to show how resources are distributed.)

## Worksheet Description

This worksheet focuses on how the decennial census benefits students, their families, and their communities, highlighting why participation is important. Use this worksheet in your classroom as a starting point or introduction to the 2020 Census. For students in kindergarten through second grade, this worksheet focuses on basic concepts, such as what the U.S. Census Bureau does and how the census helps the students' community.

## Before the Activity—10 Minutes

**For ELLs: Before the lesson, when you hand out student worksheets and activity items to all students, hand out the Key Vocabulary to English language learners as well. Introduce key vocabulary to your students. Use your discretion in choosing which concepts are already understood and which require previewing. Direct students to follow along and view images.**

### Key Vocabulary for ELLs:

- **Population:** The number of people who live in an area.
- **Census:** A process of counting all the people in a country, city, or town and collecting information about them.
- **Survey:** Questions to gather information.
- **Resources:** Money and services to help people in the community.





1. Listen to the song “Everyone Counts!” with the class.
2. After playing the song, explain that the census is a count of all people living in the United States and that it happens every 10 years. Tell students that the census shows the government where to spend money on roads, schools, hospitals, and other programs.

Tell the class that the next census will happen soon, in 2020. Explain that it’s important that the 2020 Census count everyone accurately, so that our schools, community, and state get the resources they need.

**For ELLs: Ask students, “Why is it important to participate in the Census?” Provide students with sentence starter, “It is important because \_\_\_\_\_.” Possible answers include, “It helps us get what we need, helps us get the resources we need, helps us to get a count of everyone in our country.”**

## During the Activity—25 Minutes

1. **For ELLs: In the non-English language learner version of this worksheet, teachers would pass out student worksheets at this time. For classrooms with English language learners, worksheets should already be passed out. Do what suits your classroom best.**
2. Split the class into two groups of different sizes and have the two groups move to two different areas in the room.
3. Take all the markers (one for each student in the class) and split them in half. Give each group the same number of markers. (One group should get too many and the other group should not get enough for each student to have one.) Ask each group if they have enough markers for everyone in the group. Ask if they have too many markers or not enough.

**For ELLs: Answers (with sentence starter): “Yes, we have enough because \_\_\_\_\_.” “No, we don’t have enough because \_\_\_\_\_.” Answers should include a comparison using “more” or “less.” For example, “No we need more money, or resources, because we have more people.”**



4. Ask students, “What happens if we give both groups the same number of markers without counting how many students are in each group?” Have students answer, encouraging them to draw the conclusion that there may be too many or not enough markers if you don’t count each group. Then take the markers back and tell students you are going to hand them out again—this time, based on the **population** of each group.

**For ELLs: Lead students in a group discussion. Students can answer using the sentence starter, “If we don’t count first, then \_\_\_\_\_.” Possible answer: “We won’t have enough markers. Not everyone gets what they need.”**

5. Explain that “population” means the number of people in an area.
6. Tell the students you’re going to count the population of each group first, before passing out supplies. This way, you know exactly how many markers every group needs.

Lead students in counting out loud the number of students in each group. Then have them fill in the chart on their student worksheet, recording the number of students in each group and the number in the entire class. Next, count the appropriate number of markers for each group and hand them out. Have students answer Questions #2 and #3 on their student worksheet.

Question #2: At first, did your group have the right amount of supplies for everyone?

*Students should circle the frowning face to record that their group had an incorrect number of markers.*

Question #3: When your teacher passed out the supplies a second time, did your group have enough to give one to each person? (circle one)

*Students should circle the smiley face to show that their group had the correct number of markers.*

7. Explain to students that, in the same way that they counted the population of the class, the government counts the population of the entire United States. Ensure that students understand the following concepts:
- This count happens once every 10 years and is called the decennial census.
  - The government needs to count every person living in the country to make sure people have the things that they need—like schools, fire stations, and parks—just like it was important for the class to correctly count the number of people in each group to make sure everyone got a marker.
  - It’s important that everyone be counted in the 2020 Census, so that their community has all the resources it needs.



8. Tell students that one piece of information the Census Bureau collects is how many people live in each home. Then they use that information to figure out what the average household size is. The average household size is 3 people.

Direct students to Question #4 on their student worksheets and ask them whether their household is bigger or smaller than 3 people.

*Students should circle “bigger,” “3,” or “smaller” based on the size of their household.*

9. Give students 5-10 minutes to draw a picture of all the people who live in their home.

## After the Activity—5 Minutes

Listen to the song “Everyone Counts!” a second time with the class to reinforce concepts about the 2020 Census for students.

## Home Extension

Teachers, please read the instructions for the students’ homework assignment out loud to the class:

*Take your worksheet home and share it with an adult in your home. Show them your drawing and make sure they know to count every person in the picture on the census, including you!*

*Bonus: Share the “Everyone Counts!” song with your parents or other adults in your home. You can listen to the song here: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources/pre-k.html>*