



The President of the USA

The USA is a federal republic and the Head of State and Government is the President. There are presidential elections every four years. The two main political parties are the Democrats and the Republicans. During the elections, the parties nominate candidates who campaign¹ across the country to explain their policies to voters² and participate in debates with other candidates. Election Day is always in November, but the winning³ candidate doesn't become President until 20th January.

The White House in Washington D.C. has been home to US Presidents since 1800. It's got 6 floors, 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, and of course, the President's famous Oval Office. There's also a tennis court, a jogging track, a swimming pool, a bowling lane and even a cinema.

The President and the First Family have to pay for all their personal costs, like food, toothpaste, clothes, etc. As a result, although⁴ the President earns \$400,000 a year, some Presidents leave the White House in debt⁵ at the end of their presidency!

Did you know?

- George Washington became the first US President in 1789.
- Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President, abolished slavery in 1862, and led the North to victory in the American Civil War (1861-1865).
- In 2009, Barack Obama became the first African-American President.
- Four presidents have been assassinated: Abraham Lincoln (1865), James A. Garfield (1881), William McKinley (1901) and John F. Kennedy (1963).



Culture flash

The American Presidential Seal (*sigillo*), used for official correspondence, has an American eagle holding both an olive branch (*ramo*) symbolising peace and 13 arrows (*freccie*) symbolising war.



Glossary

- ¹ campaign: conducono la campagna elettorale
- ² voters: elettori
- ³ winning: vincente
- ⁴ although: anche se
- ⁵ in debt: indebitati



2 **I** Read the sentences and write T (true), F (false) or NG (not given).

- 1 The US presidential elections are every four years. T F NG
- 2 Presidential elections are in January. T F NG
- 3 The First Family usually has a pet. T F NG
- 4 Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery at the end of the American Civil War. T F NG
- 5 The first president to be assassinated was Abraham Lincoln. T F NG

The two main political parties in the USA

The two main American parties are the Republicans and the Democrats. Each party has a symbol - the Republicans have the symbol of an elephant while the democrats have the symbol of a donkey. The parties have a long history - the Democrats formed in 1828 while the Republicans formed in 1854 to oppose slavery [+ p. 102]. The main difference between the parties is that the Republicans are generally considered to be more conservative. Abraham Lincoln was a Republican.

