



Census

2021 Census lesson guides

Ideas for teaching about the Census



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Introduction

The Census is a snapshot of Australia: who we are and how we are changing. It helps us learn from the past, understand the present and plan for the future. We want everyone to take part, and educators like you are a vital link between us – the Australian Bureau of Statistics (the ABS) – and the community. To help you teach your students about the Census, we've created these lesson guides and activities.



Who are the lesson guides for?

The lesson guides are for anyone who wants to educate others about the Census: what it is, why it's important, and how they can take part.

The activities we suggest focus strongly on the skills that students with English as an additional language (EAL) need to master. They will suit:

- students learning English, including those attending migrant English programs or adult literacy programs
- culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in upper primary and secondary schools and at TAFEs
- any context where people want to learn about Australian culture – for example at community centres, mothers' groups and so on.



ⓘ *Even though children wouldn't normally complete the Census form, the Census is just as important for them as it is for adults. Some school-aged children might help adults in their households who have limited English or low levels of literacy and numeracy fill in the Census form.*

What's in the lesson guides?

The lesson guides are divided into three themes:



1. What is the Census?



2. How the Census helps people



3. How do I fill in the Census form?

We suggest covering all these themes, so that your students understand both *why* they should take part and *how* they can. You don't need to do this all in one lesson – you could introduce the content as it suits your students' needs.

Background information

Each theme starts with some background information. This section includes tips for introducing the theme in the classroom and dealing with issues that may come up – for example, student suspicion of the Census.

❗ *The background information is official information from the ABS, so while you can simplify it for your students, it's important not to change any of the facts or messages in these guides.*

Activities

Following the background information are suggested activities with accompanying, downloadable worksheets. The activities range from those suitable for lower levels to those for more confident students. There are three levels that have general alignment with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) levels 1 to 3 – so, level 1 equals ACSF 1. As such, they can be mapped to a range of EAL curricula used throughout Australia.



❗ *Some level 1 activities contain difficult vocabulary and content that will need more educator support for students to understand it. Where this is the case, we've noted that in the 'Tips' section of the activity.*

Following each main activity is a digital literacy activity that draws on ABS online resources and third-party resources like the SBS Census Explorer. In writing these, we have consulted the new Digital Literacy Skills Framework, which is designed to sit alongside the ACSF.



At the end of the guides we've included suggestions for further activities that are suitable for a range of audiences. These include:

- deep and project-based learning activities that encourage higher order thinking
- extension activities
- activities for mixed-ability classes that encourage peer teaching and interaction.



Feel free to mix and match the activities to meet your students' needs – and we hope that they inspire you to come up with your own!

What about students who don't know much English?

We recognise that some students have very limited English, so you might not be able to explain the concept of the Census to them in English or expect them to fill in the form. On page 6 there is a separate section called 'Ideas for students with limited English'. This has ideas about how you can use ABS 2021 Census in-language resources, other ABS resources and community connections to help your students understand what the Census is all about.



What if my students ask me tricky questions?

We don't expect you to be a Census expert. If you're not sure how to answer a student's tricky question, don't guess. The Census website is a great source of information. And you can encourage students to call the ABS or find answers on the website for themselves.



Ideas for students with limited English

We understand that your students may have trouble understanding what the Census is without some support in their own language. Here are some ideas about how to help them. All of these ideas would be helpful for students at higher levels, too.

Check out the Census website

We have resources to explain the Census in selected languages.

You can either download and print these to share with your students or show them how they can find the resources themselves.

Translated resources cover these topics:

- what the Census means to Australia
- key Census dates and what to expect
- whether people have to take part in the Census
- privacy and confidentiality – what happens to people’s personal information
- how to submit a Census form (paper or online)
- how to contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)
- how to get help to fill in the Census form.

Resources are available in a range of languages. See the Census website for details.



Take advantage of the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

Students from newly arrived, emerging and established migrant groups can call the TIS for help.



Reach out to your community

You could also get in touch with your local migrant resource centre for help – they may have bilingual staff who can come to your classroom and explain the Census to students. If you have students from a range of backgrounds, you may have to do this in multiple sessions.



⚠ If you involve community members in explaining the Census, make sure that they know not to guess if they can’t answer students’ questions. Refer to the Census website for more information.



Theme 1: What is the Census?

Background information

Your students may never have heard of a Census. This theme covers the basics: what it is and when it is. It also covers some key questions students might have:

- whether the information they provide on the Census form is confidential (it is)
- whether it is compulsory to complete the Census (it is)
- whether they can get help to fill in the form (they can).



To introduce the idea of the Census to your students, bring to class a map of the Australian population (search 'population map Australia' online for good images, including those by the ABS), a local bus timetable, and a picture of a local service – for example, a library, a migrant resource centre, or a health care service.



Ask students how we know:

- where people live
- how many buses to provide
- where to build houses
- how much money to give local services.

Answer: We ask people. Every five years, the government asks people questions to help with planning and service delivery.

The way we ask people is by getting them to fill in a form – a Census form.

① *In theme 2, we offer ideas about how your students can explore 'Why' we do the Census in more depth. These activities will help students engage more deeply with the Census and – we hope – ease the concerns of those who are worried about it.*

General information

All worksheets in theme 1 cover the following information in an appropriate level of detail:

- The Census will be on Tuesday, 10 August 2021.
- The ABS conducts the Census.
- The Census measures:
 - o how many people are in Australia
 - o their characteristics
 - o the characteristics of the household they live in.
- It only counts people who are in Australia on Census night. This includes people who are not Australian residents or citizens, children, international students and visitors.
- The Census asks questions about things like where we live and who we live with, how old we are, our ancestry, our religion (optional to answer), our income and our education.



Is the Census compulsory?

In the worksheets, we have simplified this to a simple message: 'Yes'. In practice, this is a bit more involved.

Everyone needs to take part in the Census – that is, **everyone who is in Australia on Census night needs to be included on a form.**



This means that **not everyone will fill in the form.** In most households, one adult will fill in the form for everyone in that household.

Children wouldn't normally fill in the Census form, but there is no minimum age.

Children can fill in the form:



- if they are the person in their household who can best understand and fill out the form
- there is no adult who usually lives at that address.

Explain this to students now if they ask – otherwise, you can cover this as part of the activities in theme 3.

Can students get help to do the Census?



There are many ways students can get help to do the Census:

- the ABS will provide information in different languages – see the Census website
- they can ask their family or friends to help them fill in their Census form
- they can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)
- they can attend fill in the form sessions run by the ABS.

ⓘ It can help to reassure students about this now – and repeat these options when you cover the Census form in theme 3.

Tips for addressing students' concerns

When they learn about the Census, your students might be suspicious. Students who come from countries where governments are mistrusted might be especially concerned. Why we do the Census is covered in theme 2, and basic information about confidentiality is included in the worksheets for this theme, but here are some other ideas that might help.



Explain what the ABS does with people's information

The information people put on the Census form is confidential and secure. No information that can identify a person is given to any other person or government department like:

- police
- Department of Home Affairs
- Australian Taxation Office
- family, housing, or community services
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
- Services Australia (Centrelink).



This is the law.

Everyone can access Census data, like how many people live in a town. However, the data won't show:

- the names or addresses of people who filled in the Census form
- any other information to identify those people.



⚠ *You could show students 2016 Census statistics, to demonstrate how the information doesn't show names and addresses.*

Also, any information you give the ABS can't be read by anyone outside the ABS. For example, if you fill in the Census online, your information is encrypted.

Share some security tips

Tell students they can help make sure their information stays confidential. Here are some tips:

- Don't share your Census number with anyone.
- Don't respond to emails that ask for your personal information. The ABS will never email you to ask for your personal information or to give you a link to the Census website.



Encourage students who know about the Census to talk about their experience

Some students might already know about the Census, and international students may have had censuses in their home country. Encouraging students to share what they know about censuses could be a good place to start. You could ask: have you filled in any other censuses? Where? When?



⚠ *If talking about students' previous experience of censuses, be sensitive to students whose government may count their people in order to oppress them. It's a good idea to do some research into your students' home countries before opening up that topic. You can also reach out to local community groups who may be able to share insights about the Census in their home countries.*



Activities for Theme 1

Level 1



Help students learn about the Census by getting them to do a vocabulary task, read a short text, and test their understanding with a gap fill exercise. They can use their bilingual dictionary.

Download the worksheet: [What is the Census \(level 1\)](#) 

Tip: Use the vocabulary list at the beginning of this worksheet as the basis of a Census word list that students can build on in other activities.

Digital literacy



1. Help students navigate to the [SBS Census Explorer website](#).

Then, help them find data and maps that might interest them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students might be interested in the map of 'Indigenous Status', while international students might like to find their language in the 'Language' tab.


Tip: Not all students at ACSF level 1 will be able to interpret data and maps. You'll need to decide whether this activity suits them.

2. Help international students to find information in their own language on the Census website. Note that the website will not have information in every language.

Level 2



Help students learn about the Census by getting them to do a vocabulary matching exercise, read a short text, then test their understanding with a true/false activity.

Download the worksheet: [What is the Census \(level 2\)](#) 

Tips

Students who finish early can:

- check their answers with you, then rewrite the false sentences so that they are true
- write a true/false activity for their classmates

Digital literacy



The ideas for level 1 could be used at this level. You could also:

- get students exploring the 'About the Census' section of the website
- revise question syntax (for example, placing the auxiliary 'are' you *before* the subject – 'Are you OK?', not 'You are OK?') and vocabulary (like 'where', 'when', etc.) with your students,


then get them to use an English-language learning chatbot (search 'ESL chatbot') to practice asking questions

Tip: Some chatbots are blocked by education authorities – check with your school or institution about which ones you can use.

Level 3

Help students learn about the Census by getting them to read a Q and A-style text and answer some questions.



Download the worksheet: [What is the Census \(level 3\)](#) 

Tip: Students who finish early can write questions for their classmates, either as a written questionnaire or to ask verbally. This will help them revise their question grammar – which is very useful for the Census form!

Digital literacy

See the ideas for level 1 and 2. You could also get students exploring the ABS website.





Theme 2: How the Census helps people

Background information

We've given 'How the Census helps people' its own theme because it can help address suspicion and help students see the relevance of the Census to their lives. This topic can also lead to excellent self-directed learning activities. For ideas, see further activities on page 22.

Why do we have a Census?

Census information helps the government plan services. For example:

- schools
- health care
- roads
- housing
- transport.



Case studies

Below are some case studies showing the relevance of the Census to two population groups. Different versions of the second and third texts appear in the activities at levels 2 and 3, and you'll need the third text ('How the Census has helped migrants') for the listening cloze task in the worksheet **How the Census helps people (level 3)**.

How the Census has helped plan better health care

The Census helped the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH). The Institute helps Indigenous Australians give health services to other Indigenous Australians.

It's helping to:

- close the gap in life expectancy
- create better education and jobs
- make communities safer.

The Institute uses Census information to know where new health clinics are needed.



How the Census has helped remote communities

The Census helped the Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation (CRAC) in Queensland. CRAC provides a bus service for people in the remote community of Coen to participate in programs. Coen Bus also supports travel to external community events and programs in the wider region. CRAC is a charity.

CRAC uses Census information to plan programs to get local people involved in social activities like bingo nights. The bus also connects people with community programs like health challenges, family respite and men's/women's groups. The Coen bus can help larger families who may not have the car space for each family member to participate in programs and workshops.



How the Census has helped migrants

The Census helped the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC) in Naracoorte, South Australia. Many migrants live in Naracoorte. Jenny Stirling, who works at the AMRC, wanted to start a conversational English class for new women migrants from Afghanistan. She thought this would help them feel more connected to the local community.

Jenny used Census information to show the government:

- how many migrants live in Naracoorte
- how these migrants helped the Naracoorte community – for example, by working in businesses in the community.

This showed the government how important migrants are to Naracoorte. The government then gave the AMRC a grant (money) to run the English class.



! **Higher level students might also get value from the 'Census stories' videos on the [ABS YouTube channel](#). Organisations featured include the Royal Flying Doctor Service; Orange Sky Laundry, a service for people experiencing homelessness; Dinner on the Table, a service that helps people with disability and their families, and many more. We've suggested ways to use these videos in some of the further activities for this theme (see page 22).**



Activities for Theme 2

Level 1



Help students learn about how the Census benefits people by getting them to do a vocabulary task, read a short text, test their understanding by completing sentences, then talk to their classmates about other ways the Census could help. They can use their bilingual dictionary.

Download the worksheet: [How the Census helps people \(level 1\)](#) 

Digital literacy



Help students navigate to the [SBS Census Explorer website](#).


Show them how to find their language on the 'Language' tab or find their suburb in the 'Top language by suburb' map.

Tip: If students did this in theme 1 and are more confident with the website, allow them to browse it for other interesting information.

Level 2



Help students learn about how the Census benefits people by getting them to do a vocabulary exercise, read a short text, have a class discussion and test their understanding by completing sentences.

Download the worksheet: [How the Census helps people \(level 2\)](#) 

Tip: The worksheet has a story about a remote community in Queensland. To give students another example, you could:

- change the story to feature the students' community or communities
- do an additional activity with the 'How the Census has helped plan better health care' and 'How the Census has helped migrants' case studies on pages 12 and 13. For example, you could do a dictogloss, or you could make the text a cloze activity – where you replace entire words or letters with lines and put the missing words in a list for students to choose from.

Digital literacy




- Get students exploring the 'Learn about the Census' section of the website. They can find one fact and share it with the class or a partner.
- Ask students to find their suburb in the 'Top language by suburb' on the [SBS Census Explorer website](#). As a class, discuss: What do the results tell us about the services our suburbs need? Do they have these services?



Level 3

Help students learn about how the Census benefits people by getting them to read a short text, answer questions that ask them to do online research, have class discussions and do a dictogloss.

Download the worksheet: [How the Census helps people \(level 3\)](#) 

Tips

- Students who finish early can view the '[Census stories](#)' case studies on the ABS YouTube channel.
- Task 4 on the worksheet asks students to list ways the Census could help their community. As a follow-up, the class can watch some of the 'Census stories' videos together or separately, then discuss whether any of their ideas were in the videos. What other ideas did they get?

Digital literacy



Students can go on the website of:

- their local library or community centre
- their local migrant resource centre
- another local service that is meaningful to them – it could even be their school!

Ask them to find services their chosen place offers and make a digital presentation for their class – a case study showing how Census data might have helped someone decide to offer that service.

They can include screenshots from and links to the website in their presentations.



Theme 3: How do I fill in the Census form?

Background information

The activities in this section are designed to help students understand the questions on the Census form. We want people to use the online form, but know that some will want to use the paper form. So, in these activities we focus on the **content** of the questions rather than their **format**. This will help make sure students can fill in either form.



Note that students at ACSF levels 1 to 3 are very likely to need help to complete the 'real' form. That being said, lower level students should be able to answer questions relating to their address, marital status, age, and so on, and higher level students will be able to complete more questions.

⚠ *There is no specified minimum age for completing the Census form. So, children could help fill in their household form – for example, by making sure their details are given correctly! Even if children are not filling in the form, teaching them this material will help them understand forms and the questions they ask, and lots of useful vocabulary too.*

Form types

There are two types of forms:

- online forms
- paper forms.

Both the online and paper forms are designed to be answered as a household. However, if one person wishes to answer their Census separately, they can order a personal form. The personal form is available online and in paper form.

⚠ *A sample of the paper household form is available on the ABS website, and we encourage you to use it as much or as little as you think will help your students.*

The mechanics

The activities in this theme could be done at any time of the year – they will help develop your students' skills in form filling and the different ways questions are posed.

Closer to Census time, it would be helpful to take students through the mechanics of the Census. This is not covered in the activities – instead, here are some ideas that can be used for all levels.



Receiving the Census Instructions

Most students will receive Census Instructions in the post. Take them through the different parts of the letter, in particular the instructions for logging in.

Below are details about what to do for both types of form: online and on paper.

Completing the online form

The Census Instructions will include instructions on how to complete the online form.

Students need to:

- visit the Census website
- enter the 16-digit Census number
- create a password
- start the Census.

Make sure that students know that the 16-digit Census number in the Census Instructions is unique for each address. This information may reassure students who are concerned about data security.

Once students have submitted their Census online, they will receive a receipt number. They should keep the number as proof that they have done the Census.

Addressing students' concerns about the online form

Students may be concerned about doing the online form because they think:

- **It will be difficult.** You can tell them there will be drop down lists with options for questions like address and occupation and the form will be easy to navigate around.
- **If they are too slow, the form will time out and they'll lose their work.** Reassure students that the online form does not have to be completed in one session. Even if the form times out, they won't lose information you have entered. They can save and exit the Census form at any time. Then when they are ready to continue, they can use the password and the 16-digit Census number to go back to their form.



What form type will students receive?

Most students will only receive the Census Instructions. However, some students will receive a paper form in the mail. This may be because they live in an area where:

- the ABS doesn't have accurate addresses
- postal services are limited
- there's an unreliable internet connection
- people are more likely to use the paper form.



Ordering a paper form

The Census instructions explain how to request a paper form. If you have your instructions you can show them what it says; otherwise you can tell students they can get a paper form by:

- calling the 24-hour automated paper form request service

- ordering the form from the Census website.

The paper form will come with a reply-paid envelope. You may need to explain that 'reply-paid' means postage is free – all they need to do is put the form in the envelope, seal it, and put it in an Australia Post mailbox.



Support available

Now is a good time to remind students that the form is in English and must be completed in English, but that there's a lot of support available to them. They can:

- access translating and interpreting services by calling the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)
- attend a fill in the form session at places like community centres and libraries
- go to the Census website for:
 - o Census information in a range of languages
 - o how-to videos.

They can also get family and friends to help them.





Activities for Theme 3

Level 1

Help students understand vocabulary about places and addresses, as well as the concepts of 'usually' and 'less than'. Then help them to fill in the questions about their address on Census night and usual address.

Jodi French
Unit 2, 18 Grahm Avenue
Chippendale NSW
2008

Download the worksheet: [Learning about the Census form \(level 1\)](#)

Tips

- In the worksheet, we have given the question instructions as they appear on the Census form so that students are not surprised when they see it. These are very complex for this level, so reassure students that they don't need to understand every word to answer the question. Make sure you are there to answer their questions. Tricky aspects are:
 - **Task 4, 'What is the address of this dwelling?' Census question.** You will need to explain that this is the address where they are when they fill in the form - on Census night, they might not be at home.
If students aren't doing this activity at Census time, they can assume the 'address of this dwelling' is *the same as it is when they do the activity* – they don't have to work out where they will be on Census night!
 - **Task 5, 'Where does the person usually live?' Census question and task 6.** Task 6 helps students fill in the 'usual address' question in task 5. Within task 6, questions 2 and 3 tell students to ask you if they're not sure.
For question 2, you'll need to explain that if students are visiting Australia for less than one year, they need to mark 'Other country'. For question 3, you'll need to explain that 'usual address' is 'the address at which the person has lived, or intends to live, for a total of six months or more in 2021'.
If students aren't doing this activity at Census time, they can assume that their 'usual address' is *the same as it is when they do the activity*.
- Once students have done the worksheet, you can choose other questions and use a similar approach to the one used in the worksheet. Get students to consult their bilingual dictionaries or each other to cover key vocabulary, then attempt the questions. Start with questions you think students will find easiest first, to build their confidence, then work up to more difficult ones.

Digital literacy



Before Census time

1. Help consolidate students' knowledge of common form questions with an activity from Cambridge English.¹ **Tip:** Not all students at ACSF level 1 will be able to do this. You'll need to decide whether this activity suits them.
2. Get students to answer basic questions in a digital form. Use a free online resource like **JotForm** to create a form tailored to your students' needs.


At Census time

Tip: Don't pressure students to make the decision to fill in one type of form over another – they may find it easier to decide then attend a relevant ABS fill in the form session.

Level 2



Teach students terms found in the form with comprehension activities and have them answer three questions: about their address, about who spent the night there and about where the student usually lives.

Download the worksheet: **[Learning about the Census form \(level 2\)](#)** 

Tips

- If students are finding tasks 7 and 8 difficult, you could give them task 6 in the level 1 worksheet, which steps them through the usual address question – this is especially relevant for international students. As with level 1, students might need support with the concept of 'usual' and how it applies to them.
- If students aren't doing this activity at Census time, when completing it they can assume the 'address of this dwelling' and 'usual address' are *the same as it is when they do the activity*. They don't have to work out where they will be and what their usual address will be on Census night!
- As an extension, get students to fill in other parts of the form, supporting them as necessary and using the techniques shown in the worksheets to help them understand the concepts. If you think seeing the entire form will overwhelm students, you can break it into smaller parts.

A full version of the household paper form is available and we encourage you to use it as much or as little as you think will help your students.

¹ Cambridge Assessment English, Filling in a form: <www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/activities-for-learners/a1w004-filling-in-a-form>

Digital literacy



Before Census time

1. Get students to answer basic questions in a digital form. Use a free online resource like **JotForm** to create a form tailored to your students' needs.
2. Then, show students how to log in to the form creation website and make their own forms, which they can send to their classmates to try.

At Census time


See level 1.

Level 3



Get students to do the level 2 worksheet, to revise and learn some key terms. Then ask them to do the level 3 worksheet, dealing with two questions: one about the names of people at home on Census night, then a more complex one about the relationships between those people.



Download the worksheet: **[Learning about the Census form \(level 3\)](#)** 

Tip: As an extension, get students to fill in other parts of the form, supporting them as necessary and using the techniques shown in the worksheets to help them understand the concepts. If you think seeing the entire form will overwhelm students, you can chop it into smaller parts.

A full version of the household paper form is available and we encourage you to use it as much or as little as you think will help your students.

Answers to task 3

Person 1: Amina Jones; Person 2: Rob Jones; People 3–6 can be in any order but it's more likely Betty would be Person 6 as she arrived home on 11 August. Example order for these people:

Person 3: Sandy Jones; Person 4: Bindi Jones; Person 5: Annika Rouhani; Person 6: Betty Jones.

Answers to task 4 (assuming order of names as given above)

Person 1 (Amina): No answer needed; Person 2 (Rob): Husband of Person 1; Person 3 (Sandy): Stepchild of Person 1; Person 4 (Bindi): Child of Person 1; Person 5 (Annika): Specify 'Mother'; Person 6 (Betty): Specify 'Mother in law'.

Digital literacy



Before Census time

Show students how to sign up to a free online resource like **JotForm** and have them create their own forms that cover similar topics to the Census form.

At Census time

See level 1.

Further activities for all students



Theme 1: What is the Census?

Engage with Census data with videos



Share one of these videos, which show statistics about Australia that have come from the Census. Watch the videos yourself first, to check whether you think your students will understand them. Also, consider teaching them key vocabulary beforehand, including words associated with statistics like 'per cent'. Pause the videos to check students' comprehension and discuss certain statistics:

- **Australia Today:** A snapshot of the Australian population based on 2016 Census data (ABS)²
- **If Australia was 100 people** (Fairfax)³

After watching the video, put students in groups and ask them to write down the statistics they remember. Watch the video again to check whether they were right (this could be a class competition!).

Explore Census documents

1. Bring to class Census infographics. You can download these resources from the [Census Media Hub](#).
2. Put students in pairs and assign one document to each pair, doubling up as needed. The students read the document together and find one new fact about the Census.
3. Then, put students in small groups and ask them to share 'their' fact.
4. Ask students to write facts about the Census on the board.

Some documents will be harder to understand than others. Put students in mixed ability groups and have them help each other.

Peer challenges



Instruction and question language is important for understanding the Census form. So, have students set each other challenges to research Census information. These could be phrased either as instructions; for example, 'Go to the ABS website and find out how many people completed the Census in 2016' or as questions; for example, 'How many people completed the Census in 2016?'. They can either write the questions or instructions down and give them to their classmates or issue the challenges verbally.

² ABS, Australia today: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLgKg5mmXwU>.

³ Fairfax, If Australia was 100 people: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBPnay87F8Y>.

Dictogloss



For students at levels 2 and 3, do a dictogloss with the information text given in the worksheets. You could do this instead of having students read the text, or you could do it with the same text on a different day, to see how much students have remembered (just check students are not cheating by looking at their worksheets!).

1. Read the text out loud. Students listen to the text and take notes on the main points.
2. They then write the information in their own words, either alone or with a partner.

Repeat the text three times.

Census presentations



Get students to do their own research about a Census topic – for example, ancestry or languages spoken – then create a short digital presentation or video for their classmates. Information sources could be the ABS website or SBS Census Explorer.

Programs you could use include Adobe Spark, Wakelet, Flipgrid, Padlet, PowerPoint and Prezi.



Theme 2: How the Census helps people

Data in action: Part 1

Show students some ABS ‘Census stories’ video case studies on the [ABS YouTube channel](#). Then, as a class, discuss how Census data could help your school or community. Get students to work in pairs to think of an issue in their school or local community, then present that to the class.

Once students have learnt more about the Census form in theme 3, they can design a questionnaire that will capture the information needed to explore the issue they’ve identified – see ‘Data in action: Part 2’ on page 24.



Who uses the information?

Most of the activities above ask students to consider how Census data is used. Take this a step further to help students think about *who* uses the data.



1. Make four cards, each with one of these texts:

- where to build roads and railways
- where to offer affordable housing
- how many buses to run on different routes
- what social groups to run
- where to locate maternity clinics
- where to build new schools.

- Put students in four groups – each with a range of abilities if appropriate – and ask them to work together to understand the words on the cards. Check their understanding.
- Write these headings on the board:

- Transport departments
- Community housing providers
- Council transport planners
- Community centres
- Health departments
- Education departments.



Discuss what these departments and organisations are and do. Write students' ideas down.

- Ask students where their group's card goes. Give them time to discuss it, then ask a representative from each group to go to the board and place their card under the correct heading.
- Ask students which Census data would help these departments and organisations make these decisions.

For lower levels, you could use pictures instead of words on the cards. Students at higher levels could do more research, for example by visiting local council or state or federal government websites, to make a similar matching game for their classmates.



Theme 3: How do I fill in the Census form?

Data in action: Part 2

- Review the issues the students presented in the first part of this activity – see 'Data in action: Part 1' on page 23.
- Get students to come up with questions, using their own vocabulary, that will capture the information they need to explore the issue they've identified.
- Take students around the school or in their community to ask their questions. Make sure they record the responses.
- Back in the classroom, students compile the data and find ways to present them.
- Students discuss how the data would help solve the issue they identified. How could the data be used to inform better services for their school or community? What services would these be?



Create a class Census



Students use a free online resource like **JotForm** to co-create a Census-like questionnaire for class members to complete. Unlike the activity above, they don't need to identify an issue beforehand.

They then look at the data and create statements about their class – for example, 'The government could provide money to buy computers for students'; 'We need more buses from XX than XX'; 'It would be better to have a school in XX than in XX'; 'We will need more level/year XX teachers in 20XX'; and so on.

Analysing Census questions



Look at each Census question in turn and ask why it's being asked. Some ideas:

- What is the person's date of birth and age? *To decide where playgroups, schools and retirement homes are needed.*
- Where did the person usually live one year ago? *To find out where people are moving to and from. This in turn will inform services.*

Question workshop

Choose a group of questions that you think will be especially tricky to answer and teach students just that group of questions. You could take a class poll to determine the questions you focus on. Good options might be:

- the questions about where people usually *live and lived* (questions 12–14 of the paper form)
- the questions about health (questions 24–28)
- the questions about education (questions 29–36)
- the questions about income and work (questions 38–52 – this may require several lessons!)

Be careful to respect students' privacy in teaching this content, especially the health questions. Don't ask them to share information if they're not comfortable doing so.



Help and resources

People needing help can:



Go to the ABS website for Census information.



Call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).



Attend a fill in the form session. Search the Census website for locations.