

The White House

In this lesson, you will learn some history and interesting facts about the official home of the US president. You will also imagine what it's like to be part of the First Family. What personal touches would you add to the White House?

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Where is the White House located?
2. Who lives in the White House right now?
3. What types of decisions are made in the White House?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. residence | a) the remaking of something that was previously built |
| _____ 2. architect | b) more than one disaster or major problem |
| _____ 3. reconstruction | c) the place where someone lives |
| _____ 4. modification | d) an underground shelter |
| _____ 5. interior | e) a person who designs buildings |
| _____ 6. expansion | f) in another country (esp. across an ocean) |
| _____ 7. monitor | g) a change to an existing design |
| _____ 8. crises (pl.) | h) a formal social gathering |
| _____ 9. abroad | i) the inside of a building |
| _____ 10. reception | j) having historical significance |
| _____ 11. bunker | k) to watch closely for any changes |
| _____ 12. heritage | l) the process of making something bigger |

Reading

1. The White House is the official **residence** and office space of the US president. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC. The White House is recognized worldwide as a symbol of America and its people.
2. George Washington became the first US president in 1789. Shortly after taking office, he selected a site along the Potomac River for the official "President's House." Washington then held a design contest. James Hoban, an Irish-born **architect**, won the bid to design the residence.
3. Construction of Hoban's design began in 1792. By the time it was ready, eight years later, John Adams was president. Adams and his wife were the first official residents. They moved out just a few months later when Thomas Jefferson was elected.
4. After the British burned the President's House to the ground during the War of 1812, the US government called on Hoban to oversee the **reconstruction**. Since then, the White House has received many **modifications** and additions. In 1948, President Truman ordered a complete reconstruction of the **interior** due to structural problems.
5. The White House today is approximately 55,000 square feet. It has six floors: two basement floors, two public floors, and two floors for the First Family. The top two floors are called the Residence. In total, there are about 130 rooms in the house. The interior is redecorated regularly to match the style of the time and its residents.
6. The West Wing is an important part of the White House. Theodore Roosevelt requested this **expansion** because he had six kids and needed more office space. The West Wing contains the Oval Office, the official office of the president. Other offices and conference rooms, including the underground Situation Room (1961), which is used for **monitoring crises** at home and **abroad**, are also in the West Wing.
7. The East Wing features offices and rooms for the First Lady and her staff. Formal **receptions** take place in the East Room. There is also a small theater where the First Family enjoys watching films. Below the East Wing is an underground **bunker**.
8. The exterior South Lawn is adapted regularly based on the needs and preferences of the First Family. It currently features a swimming pool, a tennis/basketball court, a playground, a running track, gardens, and a helicopter pad. The property is a National **Heritage** Site owned by the National Park Service.

"Presidents grow up in the White House. The times shape the man."

—Thomas Friedman, US Journalist

Was it always called the White House?

After the "President's House" was built, the exterior received a coat of lime-based whitewash. It wasn't until 1818 that it was actually painted white. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt officially named the residence the "White House," after its long-held nickname.

Comprehension

A. True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Read the statements below. Write T if the statement is true.
Write F if the statement is false and correct the information
in your notebook. Write NM if the fact is not mentioned.

- _____ 1. The White House used to be green.
- _____ 2. The White House is located along the Potomac River.
- _____ 3. The East Wing was built for the First Lady and her staff.
- _____ 4. The White House has a bunker for emergency purposes.
- _____ 5. James Hoban was the first official resident of the White House.
- _____ 6. President Obama requested a basketball court for the South Lawn.
- _____ 7. Theodore Roosevelt required the addition of the West Wing because he had such a large family.
- _____ 8. The US president owns the White House property while he or she is in office.

B. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1-7).
One item did not happen. Place an X beside this sentence.

- _____ The President's House burned down.
- _____ The interior of the White House was reconstructed due to structural problems.
- _____ George Washington became president.
- _____ James Hoban won a design contest for the President's House.
- _____ George Washington moved into the White House.
- _____ Theodore Roosevelt announced that the White House
was the official name for the president's residence.
- _____ The Situation Room was built.
- _____ John Adams and his wife moved into the President's House.

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. Before she goes to university, she will spend a year _____ .
2. We will _____ the situation for a few days before we make a decision.
3. The earthquake resulted in other _____ including housing and food shortages.
4. The thieves broke into the _____ and stole some electronics.
5. We went into the underground _____ during the tornado warning.
6. They hired an _____ to redesign the kitchen.

B. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. They can't tear down the building because it is a <u>heritage</u> site.
a) inherited
b) historic
c) restricted | 3. Don't make any <u>modifications</u> until the boss looks it over.
a) construction
b) architecture
c) changes | 5. There will be eight lanes when the highway <u>expansion</u> is complete.
a) bunker
b) outside
c) development |
| 2. After the wedding, there was a <u>reception</u> .
a) formal social gathering
b) speech by a priest
c) group discussion | 4. The <u>interior</u> of the house could use some work.
a) grounds
b) plans
c) inside | 6. The <u>reconstruction</u> will begin as soon as the snow melts.
a) monitoring
b) rebuilding
c) model |

If I Were the President...

Each First Family adds their own **personal touches** to the White House. What would you add or change if you were the president? Fill in your ideas in point form. Then survey three other classmates. Share your findings with your class.

Example Questions:

- What would you name the house?
- What would you change about _____?
- What would you add to _____?

	Me			
Name of House				
West Wing				
East Wing				
Residence				
South Lawn				

Grammar Tip

IF I WERE...

In English, the second conditional is used for situations that are unreal or wishful.

Pattern: **If + past, would + base verb**

When used with the Be verb, "was" becomes "were." This is a special mood called *the subjunctive*.

- If I **were** the president, I would paint the White House green.

"It is still the White House, very historic and traditional, but it doesn't have to be uncomfortable."

—Jeremy Bernard,
White House Social Secretary (2011–2015)