



Controller-General

You are the Controller-General for France. This is the most important government position beside the king and queen. Appointed by King Louis XVI, you are responsible for the financial health of the nation. You collect and keep track of taxes paid to the government and advise the king on how to make France wealthy and economically strong.

- Step 1:** Read this background information about France during the reign of King Louis XVI: King Louis XIV ruled France from 1638–1715 and built the enormously extravagant Palace of Versailles. The king invited nobles to stay at the Palace and showered them with parties and royal attention. At the same time, Louis XIV transferred all political power into his own hands. From 1754 to the late 1780s, Louis XIV’s grandson, King Louis XVI, ruled the French nation. Louis XVI married Marie Antoinette, a member of the royal family in Austria, who became Queen of France. The noble lords of France owned much of the farming land, which they allowed the peasants to use in exchange for food. Nobles had the privilege of not being taxed and the duty to protect their peasants. The Catholic clergy provided religious support and social services for the poor. The clergy were not allowed to be taxed by the government, and they also collected a tithe, a 10 percent tax on all income.
- Step 2:** Listen to the questions your teacher asks about France during the reign of Louis XVI. Use the information you just read in Step 1 to help you answer the questions.
- Step 3:** As the peasants work to produce food, chat with the king and queen, relax, quietly watch, and/or provide words of encouragement.
- Step 4:** After the Clergy have collected their church tithe from each noble Lord, go to each manor to collect 50 percent of the food tokens as the government tax. After collecting the taxes, show the “revenue” you collected to the king and queen. Then return to your seat.
- Step 5:** When the teacher instructs you to, read the following statement in a very serious tone: *“Fellow citizens, though we have collected taxes this year, France is still in a grave financial crisis. The king and queen need the full support of French citizens to resolve this problem. I ask you, citizens, to consider how you can help your country.”*



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You are the Controller-General for France, appointed by King Louis XVI. Due to the urgent financial crisis facing France, the king has decided to assemble the Estates General, a group that serves as representatives for the people of France. When last used 175 years ago to advise the king, the Estates General met as three separate Estates, or orders, with one vote each. The First Estate is the clergy, the Second Estate is the nobility, and the Third Estate represents the rest of France (peasants, workers, and other commoners). Now, in the 1780s, some people question whether the Estates General should be changed to have all the Estates meet together and allow each representative one vote.

- Step 1:** Listen carefully to the king's speech. Applaud respectfully when he finishes.
- Step 2:** Once the Three Estates begin working on their tasks, visit the First and Second Estates with the king and queen. Remind those Estates that voting "by order" will help them preserve their privileges. Afterward, relax and talk quietly with the king and queen.
- Step 3:** Listen as a spokesperson from each Estate kneels before the king and queen and presents the Estate's proposal.
- Step 4:** Listen to the king's proposal for the Estates General to consider. Nod in agreement.
- Step 5:** Listen as each Estate announces its vote on the king's proposal.
- Step 6:** Listen to your teacher's announcement.
- Step 7:** Listen carefully to the class discussion. Respond honestly when called upon.



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The French Revolution has begun. King Louis XVI reluctantly accepted the Constitution of 1791 because he had no other choice. The king no longer has absolute power to rule France, but he remains the head of France and can still veto (reject) laws passed by the new government, the National Assembly. France is still in a worsening financial crisis.

Step 1: Listen silently as King Louis XVI makes an announcement. Applaud respectfully at the end.

Step 2: When the teacher directs you, read this statement about the continuing financial crisis:

“French citizens, though we have a new constitution, we have the same financial crisis. We don’t have enough money to even pay the interests on our loans. In addition, Austrian troops have invaded France, and we need money for our armies. The National Assembly must pass legislation immediately to raise money for our great country.”

Step 3: Listen as members of the National Assembly propose solutions to the financial crisis. Support your king by nodding in agreement with any action he takes on the National Assembly’s proposals.

Step 4: Listen to the new proposal.

Step 5: When asked to, speak in defense of the king, to whom you have always been loyal.

Step 6: Work with the members of the National Assembly to create a new constitution.

Step 7: Listen and watch quietly.