

LESSON 1 THE CONSTITUTION

1 GET READY

A ^{T028} Listen to the questions. Do you know the answers?

- What is the supreme law of the land? (Question 1)
- What does the Constitution do? (Question 2)
- The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words? (Question 3)
- What is an amendment? (Question 4)
- How many amendments does the Constitution have? (Question 7)
- What is the “rule of law”? (Question 12)

B If you want to check your answers, go to page 202.

2 WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Look at the Constitution of the United States. What are the first three words? Why do you think these words are important to Americans?



3 BEFORE YOU READ

Do you know the words in bold? What do they mean? Circle *a* or *b*.

1. The Constitution is **the supreme law of the land**.
a. the most important law in the U.S. b. the oldest law in the U.S.
2. Everyone in the United States must **obey** the laws.
a. do what they say b. agree with what they say
3. The President is the **leader** of the United States.
a. the person at the top b. the second in command
4. The U.S. government has three **branches**: the executive branch, the judicial branch, and the legislative branch.
a. laws b. parts
5. The Constitution **defines the government**.
a. is against the government b. explains what the government is

4 READ

A ^{T029}  Listen and read the article.

B Read the article again. Answer the questions. Circle *a* or *b*.

1. What does the Constitution do?
a. It organizes the U.S. government. b. It follows the laws.
2. How many amendments does the U.S. Constitution have?
a. ten b. twenty-seven
3. What does the rule of law mean?
a. No one is above the law. b. Everyone is above the law.
4. What is an amendment?
a. a new Constitution b. an addition to the Constitution
5. Who wrote the U.S. Constitution?
a. The Founding Fathers b. We the people
6. Who runs the government?
a. The Founding Fathers b. We the people
7. What are the first ten amendments called?
a. The Articles of the Constitution b. The Bill of Rights

On December 7, 1787, Delaware became the first of the original 13 states to approve the new Constitution.

The Supreme Law of the Land

The United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land. No law is higher than the Constitution in the United States. The Constitution was written in 1787 by the Founding Fathers. It defines the government and protects the basic rights of all Americans. The Constitution is divided into three parts: the Preamble, the Articles of the Constitution, and the Amendments.

Preamble

The first three words of the Constitution are *We the people*. This means the country is run by the people. It explains the idea of self-government. If the people do not like what the government is doing, they can change the government. The government works for the people.

Articles of the Constitution

This part of the Constitution organizes the government. Article I defines the legislative branch, the part of the government that makes laws. Article II defines the executive branch, which includes the positions of President and Vice President. Article III defines the judicial branch, the part of government that explains the laws. Each branch has specific responsibilities.

Amendments

The writers of the Constitution knew that over time people would need to make small changes to the Constitution. A change or addition to the Constitution is an amendment. The Founding Fathers set up a special part of the Constitution for amendments. Now there are twenty-seven amendments to the Constitution. The first ten amendments are called The Bill of Rights. These amendments were written to protect the basic rights of everyone in the United States.

The Rule of Law

The Founding Fathers wrote the U.S. Constitution because they believed in the rule of law. They believed no one is above the law. Everyone must follow the law. Leaders must obey the law. The government must obey the law. The President, the members of Congress, and the Justices of the Supreme Court all must follow the rule of law.



5 CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read the article. Then complete the sentences. Use the words in the box.

amendment	Bill of Rights	Constitution	self-government
the Founding Fathers	the rule of law	We the people	

1. The supreme law of the land is the _____.
2. The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called the _____.
3. The first three words of the U.S. Constitution are _____.
4. The U.S. Constitution was written by _____.
5. _____ says that everyone must follow the law.
6. A change to the U.S. Constitution is called an _____.
7. The power to govern that comes from the people is called _____.

6 READ AND WRITE

- A READ.** Go to page 174. Read sentences 27–28 aloud and check your pronunciation.
- B WRITE.** Go to page 176. Listen and write sentences 27–28.

7 CIVICS IN ACTION

DISCUSS. What kind of document describes the laws of your country?
How is it similar to or different than the U.S. Constitution?

Connect to Your Active Book



Use e-flashcards to prepare for the civics test.

Do the record-and-compare exercises to prepare for the reading test.

Do the writing dictation exercises to prepare for the writing test.

Can you... answer the questions on page 55 about the U.S. Constitution?