

# The U.S. Constitution

Men from most of the thirteen colonies met in 1787. (Rhode Island did not send a man.) These men met to decide how the U.S. government would work. The meetings lasted four months. During that time, the men wrote the U.S. Constitution.

They split the government into three parts. Each had equal power. Why? The British king had too much power. The new Americans did not want one person or group to be too strong. So they set up three branches.



The legislative branch makes the nation's laws. The members of Congress make up this branch. Congress has two parts. They are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state picks two senators. The House of Representatives is bigger than the Senate. The number of members from each state is based on how many people live in the state. Some states send two people to the House. Some send two dozen.

The executive branch enforces the laws. The president leads this branch. He picks people for his cabinet. They help him. There are rules about who can run for president. The rules are in the Constitution. It can be a man or a woman. The person must be thirty-five years or older. He or she must be a natural-born citizen of the United States. He or she must have lived in the nation for at least fourteen years.

The judicial branch is made up of all of the nation's courts. The courts say what the laws mean. The highest court is the Supreme Court. It once had six judges. But that caused **deadlocks**. When the Court was split in half, they could not decide. Now there are nine judges. They are called justices. The chief justice is the head. Being picked for this court is a great honor. The judges are chosen for life. They can retire if they want.

The Constitution calls for “checks and balances.” Each branch does its own job. It has some power to “check” the others, too. For example, Congress can pass a bill. But the president can veto it. Also, the president suggests a judge for the Supreme Court. The Senate can say “yes” or “no” to this choice. These are two ways the branches “check” each other.

Some people said the Constitution should tell the people's rights. So the Bill of Rights was added. This was in 1791. It has ten amendments, or additions. The Bill of Rights lists the rights of each American.





# The U.S. Constitution

Men from most of the thirteen colonies met in 1787. (One colony did not send a man. It was Rhode Island.) These men met to decide how the government of the United States would work. The meetings lasted for four months. During that time, the men created the U.S. Constitution.

They split the government into three parts. Each had equal power. Why? The British king had used power against the colonists. The new Americans wanted to be sure that no part of the government got too strong. They did not want one person or group to run the whole country. So they set up the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.



The legislative branch makes the nation's laws. The members of Congress make up this branch. Congress has two parts. They are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state elects two senators. The House of Representatives is larger than the Senate. Each state sends elected officials based on how many people live in the state. Some states send two people. Others send two dozen.

The executive branch enforces the laws. The president leads this branch. He chooses people for his cabinet. They are his helpers. The Constitution has rules about who can run for president. It can be a man or a woman. The person must be at least thirty-five years old. The person must be a natural-born citizen of the United States. He or she must have lived in the nation for at least fourteen years.

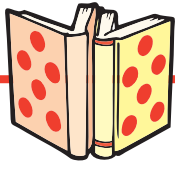
The judicial branch includes all of the nation's courts. The courts say what the laws mean. The highest court is the Supreme Court. At first it had six judges. But that caused **deadlocks**. When the Court was split in half, they could not decide. So now there are nine judges. They are called justices. The chief justice is the head. Being picked for this court is a great honor. The judges are chosen for life. If they want to, they can retire.

The Constitution's writers created "checks and balances." Each branch does its own job. It has some power to "check" the other branches, too. For example, Congress can pass a bill. But the president can veto it. This is one way in which the branches "check" each other. The president suggests a judge for the Supreme Court. The Senate can agree or disagree with the choice. This is another way in which the branches "check" each other.

Some people said the Constitution should tell the people's rights. So the Bill of Rights was added. This was in 1791. It has ten amendments, or additions, to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights lists the rights of each American.







# The U.S. Constitution

Men from most of the thirteen colonies met in 1787. (Rhode Island was the only colony that didn't send a man.) These men met to determine how the government of the United States would function. Their meetings lasted for four months. During that time, the men created the United States Constitution. It is an important document.



They split the government into three parts. Each one had equal power. Why? The British king had used power against the colonists. The new Americans wanted to be certain that no branch of government got too strong. They did not want one person or group to run the whole country. So they set up the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

The legislative branch makes the nation's laws. The members of Congress make up this branch. Congress is made of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state elects two senators. For the House of Representatives, each state sends elected officials based on how many people live in the state. Therefore, some states send two people, and others send two dozen.

The executive branch enforces the laws. The president heads this branch. He chooses people for his cabinet to be his helpers. The Constitution has rules about who can run for president. The man or woman must be at least thirty-five years old and a natural-born citizen of the United States. He or she must have lived in the nation for at least fourteen years.

The judicial branch includes all of the nation's courts. The courts decide what the laws mean. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country. At first it had six judges, but that caused **deadlocks**. When the court was split in half, they could not decide. So now there are nine judges called justices. Being selected to sit on this Court is an honor. The justices can serve for the rest of their lives, or they can retire.

The Constitution's writers created "checks and balances." Each branch does its own job and has some power to "check" the other branches, too. For example, Congress can pass a bill. But the president can veto it. This is one way in which the branches "check" each other. The president suggests a judge for the Supreme Court. The Senate can agree or disagree with the choice. This is another way in which the branches "check" each other.

Some people wanted the Constitution to detail the people's rights. They were afraid the government could mistreat its citizens. So the Bill of Rights was added in 1791. It has ten amendments, or additions, to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights specifies the rights of each American.

