

CONSTITUTION: ARTICLES II & III

The United States Constitution serves as the foundation of our government, establishing three distinct branches to ensure a system of checks and balances. Today, we will explore Articles 2 and 3, which establish the Executive and Judicial branches of our government.

Article 2: The Executive Branch

The Executive Branch, led by the President of the United States, holds significant responsibilities in governing our nation. To become President, a candidate must meet specific qualifications outlined in the Constitution. The President must be at least thirty-five years old, a natural-born citizen of the United States, and have resided in the country for at least fourteen years. These requirements were



established by the Founding Fathers to ensure that the nation's leader would have sufficient maturity, loyalty, and understanding of American life.

The process of choosing a President is complex and involves the Electoral College system. Rather than being elected directly by the popular vote, presidents are chosen through electoral votes from each state. The number of electoral votes a state receives is determined by adding its total number of Senators (always two) and Representatives (based on population). To win the presidency, a candidate must secure at least 270 electoral votes out of the total 538. The Vice President runs on the same ticket as the President and assumes office alongside them.

The President's duties are extensive and crucial to the functioning of our government. As Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the President leads our military and makes critical decisions regarding national defense. They have the power to make treaties with other nations, though these must be approved by two-thirds of the Senate. The President also nominates Supreme Court Justices when vacancies occur, ensuring the continued functioning of the judicial system.

Additional presidential responsibilities include delivering the annual State of the Union address to Congress, signing or vetoing legislation, appointing Cabinet members and ambassadors, and ensuring federal laws are properly enforced. The President can also grant pardons and reprieves for federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment.

Speaking of impeachment, the Constitution provides a process for removing a President from office if they commit serious offenses. The grounds for impeachment include treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. The process begins in the House of Representatives, which votes to impeach. If approved, the case moves to the Senate for trial, where the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presides. A two-thirds majority vote in the Senate is required to remove the President from office.

Article 3: The Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch, established by Article 3, serves as the interpreter of laws and the Constitution. At its head is the Supreme Court, but the federal court system includes several levels. The Supreme Court represents the highest court in the land, while Courts of Appeals (also known as Circuit Courts) operate at the regional level. There are thirteen circuit courts throughout the country. Below these are the District Courts, with ninety-four districts spread across the United States. Additionally, specialized courts handle specific types of cases, such as bankruptcy or international trade disputes.

The Supreme Court plays a vital role in our democracy by handling cases of constitutional significance. These might include disputes between states, interpretations of federal law, cases involving ambassadors, maritime law issues, or conflicts between citizens of different states. The Court's decisions set precedents that influence law interpretation throughout the country.

Voting Rights and Requirements

While not directly part of Articles 2 or 3, understanding voting rights is crucial as they relate to our participation in selecting leaders of these branches. The 26th Amendment established that all citizens eighteen years or older have the right to vote. However, voters must meet certain requirements: they must be United States citizens, meet their state's residency requirements, and be properly registered to vote. States may disqualify individuals from voting due to criminal convictions, though specific rules vary by state.

The Constitutional Amendment Process

The Constitution can be modified through a careful amendment process that requires broad consensus. Amendments may be proposed in one of two ways: either two-thirds of both houses of Congress must approve the proposal, or two-thirds of state legislatures must call for a constitutional convention. After proposal, the amendment must be ratified. This can occur either through approval by three-fourths of state legislatures or by conventions in three-fourths of the states.



Throughout American history, this process has led to twenty-seven amendments, including the Bill of Rights. The process intentionally requires significant agreement among both federal and state governments, ensuring that changes to our founding document reflect broad national consensus rather than temporary political trends.

These fundamental aspects of our government structure continue to shape American democracy today. The Executive Branch leads our nation, while the Judicial Branch ensures laws align with constitutional principles. Together with Congress, these branches form the robust system of checks and balances that has governed our nation for over two centuries.

Constitution Activity: Articles II & III



The United States Constitution divides our government into three branches to make sure power is balanced. Today, you will learn about Articles 2 and 3, which create the Executive Branch (led by the President) and the Judicial Branch (led by the Supreme Court).

Fill in the Blank: Fill in the blank with the correct words.

1. The Executive Branch is led by the _____ of the United States.
2. To become President, a person must be at least _____ years old.
3. The Judicial Branch is headed by the _____ Court.
4. The _____ College is used to elect the President, not the direct popular vote.
5. The 26th Amendment gave citizens _____ years and older the right to vote.

Word Bank: 35, Supreme, 18, President, Electoral

Multiple Choice Questions: Choose the correct answer for each question.

1. Who approves treaties made by the President?
 - a) The House of Representatives
 - b) The Senate
 - c) The Supreme Court
 - d) The Vice President

2. How many electoral votes must a candidate win to become President?
 - a) 100
 - b) 270
 - c) 538
 - d) 435

3. Who has the power to impeach the President?
 - a) The Senate
 - b) The House of Representatives
 - c) The Supreme Court
 - d) The Cabinet

4. What is the highest court in the United States?
 - a) District Court
 - b) Circuit Court
 - c) Supreme Court
 - d) Appeals Court

5. Which branch interprets the laws and the Constitution?
 - a) Executive
 - b) Legislative
 - c) Judicial
 - d) Military

Open-Ended Questions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why do you think the Founding Fathers set specific requirements for becoming President?

2. What is the purpose of the Supreme Court, and how does it affect the country?

3. Describe the process for amending the Constitution.

ANSWER KEY

Fill in the Blank

1. President
2. 35
3. Supreme
4. Electoral
5. 18

Multiple Choice Questions

1. b) The Senate
2. b) 270
3. b) The House of Representatives
4. c) Supreme Court
5. c) Judicial

Open-Ended Questions (Sample Answers)

1. The Founding Fathers wanted to make sure the President was experienced, loyal, and had a good understanding of the country, so they set age and citizenship rules.
2. The Supreme Court makes sure laws and government actions follow the Constitution. Its decisions impact the whole country by setting important legal precedents.
3. To amend the Constitution, an amendment must be proposed by two-thirds of Congress or state legislatures, then ratified by three-fourths of the states.