HISTORY · THE AMERICAN FOUNDING · QUICK REFERENCE

U.S. Constitution & Government

Grades 9–12 · 8 pages

The founding documents, the Preamble, all seven Articles and 27 amendments, checks and balances, federalism, the three branches, elections, landmark cases, state and local government, citizenship and the naturalization civics test. Quotations are checked word for word against the National Archives text.

1 Roots of liberty · 2 Founding documents · 3 Articles & Convention · 4 The Federalist · 5 Preamble · 6 Seven Articles · 7 Amending · 8 Bill of Rights · 9 All 27 amendments · 10 Separation of powers · 11 Federalism · 12 Congress · 13 Bill to law · 14 President · 15 Elections · 16 Courts · 17 Landmark cases · 18 Expanding rights · 19 State & local · 20 Citizenship · 21 Citizenship test · 22 Key numbers · 23 Terms & mistakes · 24 Who's who

1 ROOTS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

what the founders inherited

English and colonial roots

Year	Source	Idea the founders used
1215	**Magna Carta**	the king is bound by law: no unlawful imprisonment; swift, fair justice
1620	**Mayflower Compact**	settlers covenant to make their own laws
1689	**English Bill of Rights**	no taxes or standing army without Parliament; free elections
1689	**Locke**, *Second Treatise*	natural rights from God; government by consent
1776	**Virginia Declaration of Rights**	rights of the people listed in writing

2 THE FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

independence to Bill of Rights

Founding timeline

Year	Event	Year	Event
1776	**Declaration of Independence** adopted, 4 July	1787–1788	*The Federalist* essays
1781	**Articles of Confederation** ratified	1788	New Hampshire, the ninth state, ratifies
1783	Treaty of Paris: independence recognized	1789	Washington inaugurated
1786	Shays's Rebellion exposes a weak union	1791	**Bill of Rights** ratified
1787	**Constitution** signed, 17 September		

The Declaration (1776)

- Drafted by **Thomas Jefferson**. It states a theory of government, then lists grievances against "the present King of Great Britain."
- Governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Self-evident truths

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

It appeals to "Nature's God" and "divine Providence."

The founders' worldview

- **John Witherspoon**, Madison's teacher at Princeton, taught that because of sin no one should hold unchecked power.
- The Liberty Bell (cast 1753): "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10, KJV).

3 ARTICLES AND CONVENTION

a firmer union

Old plan and new

	Articles of Confederation (1781–1789)	Constitution
Votes in Congress	one per state	House by population; two senators per state
Taxes	could not tax	"To lay and collect Taxes"
Trade	could not regulate	regulates commerce among the states
Amendments	all thirteen states	three fourths of the states

The Convention (1787)

- 55 delegates met in **Philadelphia**; Washington presided; **Madison** took notes.
- **Great Compromise** (Sherman): House by population, two senators per state.

Slavery in the text

- Counted "three fifths of all other Persons" (the enslaved); protected the slave trade until 1808.
- The 13th (1865) ended slavery; the 14th (1868) counts "the whole number of persons."

Ratification

- Nine states needed. **Anti-Federalists** ("Brutus," the "Federal Farmer") wanted a bill of rights.
- Close votes in Virginia and New York. Franklin, as reported: "A republic, if you can keep it."

4 THE FEDERALIST

Publius explains the plan

Who and why

85 essays (1787–1788) by Hamilton, Madison and Jay, signed "Publius," urging New York to ratify.

No. 10 (Madison, 1787): faction

- "There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects."
- A **large republic** with many interests controls its effects.

No. 51 (Madison, 1788): checks

- "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."
- "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."
- Government must "control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."

No. 78 (Hamilton, 1788): courts

- The judiciary is "the least dangerous" branch, with "neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment."
- Judges with life tenure can hold laws to the Constitution.
- The course pairs these essays with Isaiah 33:22: "the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king" (Isaiah 33:22, KJV).

5 THE PREAMBLE

why the Constitution exists

The text (original spelling)

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Six purposes

Goal	Meaning
form a more perfect Union	a stronger bond than the Articles
establish Justice	fair laws and courts
insure domestic Tranquility	peace at home
provide for the common defence	protect the nation
promote the general Welfare	the good of all
secure the Blessings of Liberty	freedom now and for "our Posterity"

Key idea

Popular sovereignty: power comes from "We the People." The Preamble states purposes; it grants no powers.

MEMORY TRICK **Six goals in order**

Union, **J**ustice, **T**ranquility, **D**efence, **W**elfare, **L**iberty:

"**U**ncle **J**ake **T**eaches **D**ad **W**ater **L**ore."

6 THE SEVEN ARTICLES

the plan of government

Article by article

Art.	Subject	What it sets up
I	Legislative	Congress: House and Senate; powers (§8) and limits (§9–10)
II	Executive	President and Vice President; electors; powers; impeachment
III	Judicial	Supreme Court and lower courts; judges hold office "during good Behaviour"; treason defined
IV	The states	"Full Faith and Credit" among states; new states; a "Republican Form of Government"
V	Amendment	how to propose and ratify amendments
VI	Supreme law	debts honored; Supremacy Clause; oaths; "no religious Test"
VII	Ratification	nine states needed to establish it

Treason, the only crime defined

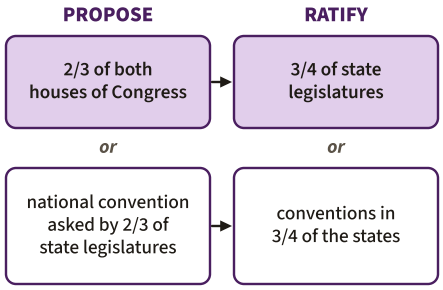
"Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort."

Religion and office

"…no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." Officers swear "(or affirm)" an oath.

7 AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

Article V



Article V: two ways to propose an amendment and two ways to ratify one.

Article V

- Congress proposes amendments "whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary," or calls a convention on the application of two thirds of the state legislatures.
- Ratified by "the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof."
- The 21st Amendment was ratified by state conventions, as its text required.

8 THE BILL OF RIGHTS

ten amendments, 1791

Amendments 1 to 10

#	In one sentence
1	No national established church; free exercise of religion; freedom of speech, press, assembly and petition.
2	The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.
3	No soldier may be quartered in a house in peacetime without the owner's consent.
4	No unreasonable searches and seizures; warrants need probable cause and must be specific.
5	Grand jury for serious crimes; no double jeopardy; no forced self-incrimination; due process; just compensation for taken property.
6	Speedy, public trial by an impartial jury; told the charge; confront witnesses; a lawyer.
7	Jury trial in civil suits over twenty dollars.
8	No excessive bail or fines; no cruel and unusual punishments.
9	Listing some rights does not deny others kept by the people.
10	Powers not given to the nation, nor denied to the states, are reserved to the states or the people.

Origins

- Congress proposed **12** amendments on September 25, 1789; ten were ratified in 1791. One more became the 27th Amendment in 1992.
- **Madison** drafted them, keeping the Federalists' promise. Many echo the English Bill of Rights of 1689.

Reading the First Amendment

- "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…"
- At first it bound only the federal government; later amendments and court decisions applied it to the states.
- Jefferson's phrase "a wall of separation between Church and State" comes from his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists; it is not in the Constitution.

MEMORY TRICK

First Amendment freedoms (Traditional)

RAPPS: Religion, **A**ssembly, **P**ress, **P**etition, **S**peech.

9 ALL 27 AMENDMENTS

with the year ratified

Amendments and ratification years

#	Year	What it does	#	Year	What it does
1	1791	religion, speech, press, assembly, petition	15	1870	vote not denied by race
2	1791	keep and bear arms	16	1913	federal income tax
3	1791	no quartering of troops	17	1913	senators elected by the people
4	1791	searches and warrants	18	1919	prohibition of alcohol
5	1791	rights of the accused; due process	19	1920	vote not denied by sex
6	1791	speedy jury trial; counsel	20	1933	terms begin in January
7	1791	civil jury trials	21	1933	repeals the 18th
8	1791	bail, fines, punishments	22	1951	two-term limit for President
9	1791	other rights kept by the people	23	1961	electors for Washington, D.C.
10	1791	powers reserved to states, people	24	1964	no poll tax in federal elections
11	1795	limits suits against a state in federal court	25	1967	presidential succession, disability
12	1804	separate electoral votes for President and VP	26	1971	voting age 18
13	1865	abolishes slavery	27	1992	pay raises wait for an election
14	1868	citizenship, due process, equal protection			

Groups to remember

1791: the Bill of Rights (1–10). **1865–1870:** the Civil War amendments (13–15). **Voting:** 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26.

Government: 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 22, 25, 27. The 18th is repealed by the 21st. The 27th, proposed in 1789, was ratified in 1992. Amendments 13, 14 and 15 (1865–1870) are called the Reconstruction amendments.

13th (1865)

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States…"

14th (1868)

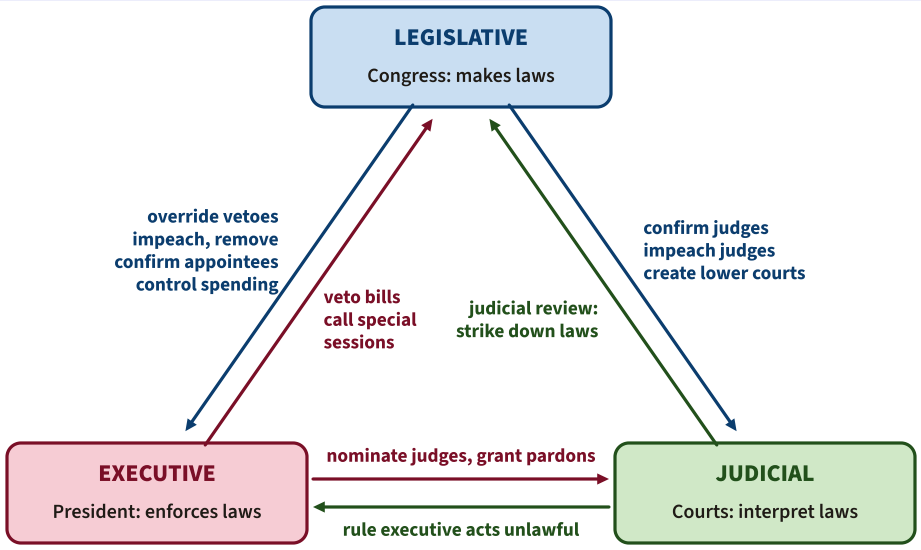
No state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

19th (1920)

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

10 SEPARATION OF POWERS

checks and balances



Each arrow runs from the branch that holds a check to the branch it limits, in the holder's color.

Three vesting clauses

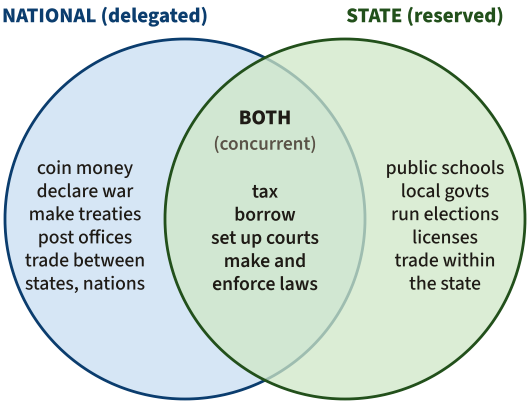
- "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress"
- "The executive Power shall be vested in a President"
- "The judicial Power… shall be vested in one supreme Court"

Why divide power

- **Montesquieu** (*The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748) taught that "power should be a check to power"; the framers quoted him more than any other modern writer.
- Madison (No. 51): "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."

11 FEDERALISM

nation and states share power



Delegated powers belong to the nation, reserved powers to the states, and concurrent powers to both. Examples only.

Supremacy Clause (Art. VI)

- The Constitution, federal laws and treaties "shall be the supreme Law of the Land."

Tenth Amendment

- "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Implied powers

- Laws "necessary and proper" to carry out listed powers (*McCulloch*, 1819). States may not make treaties or coin money.

12 LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Congress, Article I

The two houses

	House of Representatives	Senate
Members	435 (fixed by law since 1929)	100 (two per state)
Term	2 years	6 years; a third elected every 2 years
Minimum age	25	30
Citizen for	7 years	9 years
Elected by	voters of a district	voters of the whole state (17th Am.)
Presiding officer	Speaker of the House	Vice President; President pro tempore
Special powers	starts revenue bills; impeaches	tries impeachments; confirms; treaties (2/3)

Enumerated powers (Art. I, §8)

- Tax, borrow and spend; **regulate commerce** among the states and with foreign nations and Indian tribes.
- Coin money; post offices; patents and copyrights; naturalization; lower courts; **declare war**; armies and a navy.

How seats are set

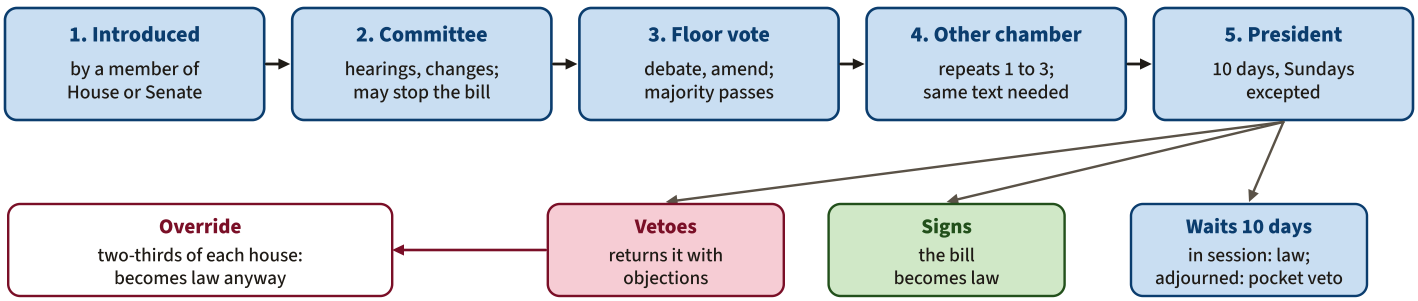
- House seats follow population; a **census** is taken every ten years.
- Each state has at least one representative and exactly **two senators**.
- Senators were chosen by state legislatures until the 17th Amendment (1913).

Leaders and rules

- The House chooses its **Speaker**. The **Vice President** presides over the Senate and votes only to break a tie.
- Each house judges its own members' elections and makes its own rules.

13 HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

from bill to statute



Both houses must pass the same text. Committees hold hearings and may change a bill or let it die.

The ten-day rule

If the President neither signs nor returns a bill "within ten Days (Sundays excepted)," it becomes law, "unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law": the **pocket veto**.

Override

A vetoed bill returns to the house where it began. If "two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill," it goes to the other house; two thirds there makes it law.

Where bills start

Any member may introduce a bill in his or her own house, but "All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives."

14 EXECUTIVE BRANCH

the President, Article II

Qualifications and term

- A "natural born Citizen," at least **35**, and **14** years a resident.
- Four-year term; elected at most **twice** (22nd Amendment, 1951).
- Washington served two terms (1789–1797) and then retired.

Impeachment

- The House impeaches; the Senate tries, and conviction takes two thirds of the senators present. The Chief Justice presides when a President is tried.
- Grounds: "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors."

Powers and duties

- **Commander in Chief** of the armed forces.
- Makes treaties with two thirds of the Senate; appoints judges, ambassadors and officers with the Senate's "Advice and Consent."
- Signs or vetoes bills; grants pardons; reports on "the State of the Union"; must "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed."

The oath (Art. II)

- "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Cabinet and succession

- The heads of the executive departments (the **Cabinet**, since 1789) advise the President.
- The Vice President succeeds a President who dies, resigns or is removed (25th Amendment, 1967); Congress sets the order after that by law.

15 ELECTIONS & ELECTORAL COLLEGE

choosing the President

The Electoral College

- Each state has electors equal to its **senators plus representatives**; members of Congress and federal officers may not be electors.
- D.C. has **3** (23rd Amendment). 435 + 100 + 3 = **538** electors; a majority is **270**.
- The 12th Amendment (1804) has electors vote separately for President and Vice President.

If no one has a majority

- The **House** chooses the President from the top three, each state delegation casting **one vote**.
- The **Senate** chooses the Vice President.
- Terms begin at noon on **January 20** (20th Amendment, 1933).

Widening the vote

- 15th (1870): not denied by race. 17th (1913): voters elect senators. 19th (1920): not denied by sex.
- 23rd (1961): D.C. votes for President. 24th (1964): no poll tax in federal elections. 26th (1971): age 18.

Parties and campaigns

- The Constitution does not mention political parties. In his Farewell Address (1796) Washington warned against faction.
- States run elections; Congress may set the time of federal elections.

16 JUDICIAL BRANCH

the courts, Article III

Structure

- **One Supreme Court** and lower courts that Congress creates.
- Since 1869: a Chief Justice and eight associate justices (**nine**), a number set by law.
- Federal judges are nominated by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serve "during good Behaviour"; their pay cannot be cut.

Jurisdiction

- **Original:** cases "affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party."
- **Appellate:** most other cases, on appeal from lower courts.
- Criminal trials are by jury, "except in Cases of Impeachment."

Judicial review

- Courts may refuse to enforce a law or act that conflicts with the Constitution.
- Established in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) under Chief Justice **John Marshall** (1755–1835).
- A ruling can be changed by a later Court (*Brown* partly overruled *Plessy*) or by amending the Constitution.

17 LANDMARK CASES

what the Court decided

Fifteen decisions, in order

Case	Year	Holding	Case	Year	Holding
Marbury v. Madison	1803	Courts may strike down laws that conflict with the Constitution.	*Mapp v. Ohio*	1961	Illegally seized evidence is excluded in state courts too.
McCulloch v. Maryland	1819	Congress may charter a national bank (implied powers); a state may not tax it.	*Engel v. Vitale*	1962	State officials may not compose an official school prayer.
Gibbons v. Ogden	1824	Congress's commerce power covers interstate shipping.	*Gideon v. Wainwright*	1963	States must provide lawyers to defendants who cannot afford one.
Dred Scott v. Sandford	1857	Held that Black Americans could not be citizens; the 14th Amendment (1868) made persons born here citizens.	*Miranda v. Arizona*	1966	Police must warn suspects of their rights before custodial questioning.
Plessy v. Ferguson	1896	Upheld state segregation laws: "separate but equal."	*Tinker v. Des Moines*	1969	Public school students keep free speech rights at school.
Pierce v. Society of Sisters	1925	Struck down a law requiring all children to attend public school.	*Wisconsin v. Yoder*	1972	Amish children could not be compelled to attend school past 8th grade.
W. Va. Board of Ed. v. Barnette	1943	Students may not be forced to salute the flag.	*United States v. Nixon*	1974	The President had to turn over subpoenaed tapes.
Brown v. Board of Education	1954	State laws segregating public schools violate equal protection.			

Reading a case name

Marbury v. Madison: the party bringing the case, then the other party. The **majority opinion** decides the case; a **dissent** explains why other justices disagree.

18 EXPANDING RIGHTS

the promise extended

Milestones

When	What	Result
1865–1870	13th, 14th, 15th Amendments	end slavery; citizenship and equal protection; vote regardless of race
1890s	Jim Crow laws spread	segregation and barriers to voting in the South
1896	*Plessy v. Ferguson*	"separate but equal" upheld
1920	19th Amendment	women's suffrage nationwide
1954	*Brown v. Board of Education*	school segregation ruled unconstitutional
1955–1956	Montgomery bus boycott	ends segregated buses in Montgomery
1957	Little Rock	federal troops protect nine students
1964	Civil Rights Act; 24th Amendment	segregation in public places outlawed; no poll tax
1965	Voting Rights Act	bans racial discrimination in voting
1971	26th Amendment	voting age lowered to 18

The Civil War amendments

The course: together the 13th, 14th and 15th "overturned Dred Scott and wrote the Declaration's promise into the Constitution."

Law and conscience

In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from a Birmingham jail that "an unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law."

How change came

By amendment, by court ruling and by act of Congress: all three tools of the Constitution were used.

19 STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

closer to home

Three branches at every level

Level	Executive	Legislative	Judicial
Nation	President	Congress	Supreme Court and federal courts
State	Governor	State legislature	State supreme court and trial courts
County	Commissioners or board; sheriff	County board	County or district courts
City or town	Mayor or city manager	City council	Municipal courts
Special districts	Superintendent or director	School or district board	

State governments

- Each state has its **own constitution** with three branches; the nation guarantees each "a Republican Form of Government."
- Reserved powers (10th Amendment): schools, police and fire protection, driver's licenses, zoning, most criminal and family law, and running elections.

Local governments

- Counties, cities, towns and school districts are created by their **states** and hold the powers state law gives them.
- Local officials are the government most people meet: schools, roads, water, police, courts and permits.

Taking part

- Attend a city council or school board meeting; read the agenda first.
- Contact officials, serve on a jury, volunteer, and vote in local as well as national elections.

20 CITIZENSHIP

rights and duties

Becoming a citizen

- **By birth:** "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens" (14th Amendment).
- **By naturalization** (USCIS): age **18**+; a permanent resident **5** years (**3** if married to and living with a citizen); English and civics; good moral character; attachment to the Constitution; the **Oath of Allegiance**.

Rights

- Everyone in the country has the freedoms of the Bill of Rights, due process and equal protection.
- Only **citizens** may vote in federal elections, run for federal office, and serve on a federal jury.

Responsibilities

- Vote, stay informed, respect the rights of others, and contact officials (the First Amendment protects petitions).

Duties

- Obey the law; pay taxes (the 16th Amendment, 1913, allows a federal income tax); serve on a jury when called.
- Almost all men aged **18 through 25**, citizens and immigrants, must register with the **Selective Service**.
- New citizens promise to give up loyalty to other countries, obey the laws and defend the Constitution, serving in the military if needed.

21 THE CITIZENSHIP TEST

how the interview works

Practice: cover the answers

Practice question (original)	Answer	Practice question (original)	Answer
Which branch can declare war?	Congress (legislative)	In what city was the Constitution written?	Philadelphia
Each state elects how many senators?	Two	What does the Tenth Amendment keep for the states?	Powers not given to the nation
How many years is one House term?	Two	Name the power of courts to void unconstitutional laws.	Judicial review
Which amendment set the voting age at 18?	26th (1971)	What do we call the first ten amendments?	The Bill of Rights
Who presides over the Senate?	The Vice President	How old must a President be?	At least 35
What did the 13th Amendment end?	Slavery	Which document began "We the People"?	The Constitution (Preamble)
Who wrote most of the Declaration?	Thomas Jefferson	How many votes win the Electoral College?	270

The interview

- A USCIS officer judges spoken English during the interview.
- **Reading:** read aloud one of three sentences correctly. **Writing:** write one of three correctly.
- **Civics:** oral questions from an official list.

Current format (2025 test)

- For applications filed on or after Oct. 20, 2025: up to **20** questions from a list of **128**; **12** correct passes, and **9** wrong fails. The officer stops once either is reached.
- Two attempts: a failed part is retested 60 to 90 days later.
- Answers change (who holds an office): check uscis.gov first.

How to study

- Study from the official USCIS list and study guide, and say each answer **aloud**.
- Learn the *why*, not only the words: the sections of this guide follow the same topics.
- Practice with a partner who asks questions in random order.

22 KEY NUMBERS

worth memorizing

At a glance

Number	Meaning	Number	Meaning
3	branches of government	9	Supreme Court justices (set by law)
7	articles in the Constitution	2 / 6 / 4	years: House, Senate, President terms
27	amendments (10 in the Bill of Rights)	25 / 30 / 35	minimum ages: House, Senate, President
435	voting members of the House	2/3	of each house to override a veto or propose an amendment
100	senators, two per state	3/4	of the states to ratify an amendment
538	electors; **270** to win	10	days (Sundays excepted) for the President to act on a bill

MEMORY TRICK **Ages climb by five**

House **25**, Senate **30**, President **35**:

each step up the ladder adds five years.

MEMORY TRICK **Terms: two, six, four**

House **2**, Senate **6**, President **4**:

the Senate is the longest, so it changes slowest.

23 KEY TERMS & COMMON MISTAKES

words and myths

Vocabulary

Term	Meaning	Term	Meaning
Republic	the people rule through elected representatives	Concurrent powers	powers held by both nation and states
Popular sovereignty	power comes from the people	Due process	fair legal procedures before life, liberty or property is taken
Limited government	government has only the powers granted to it	Ratify	formally approve
Rule of law	everyone, rulers included, is under the law	Veto	the President's refusal to sign a bill
Enumerated powers	powers listed for Congress (Art. I, §8)	Impeach	to charge an official; the Senate then tries the case
Implied powers	powers "necessary and proper" to use the listed ones	Suffrage	the right to vote
Reserved powers	powers kept by the states or the people (10th Am.)	Naturalization	the legal process of becoming a citizen

Common mistakes

Mistake	Correction (from the course)
The First Amendment banned religion from public life.	It barred a national established church; Congress itself hired chaplains.
The Bill of Rights first limited the states.	It limited only the federal government until later amendments and court decisions.
The three-fifths clause called slaves three-fifths human.	It reduced slaveholding states' representation; antislavery delegates wanted slaves not counted at all.
All the founders agreed.	The ratification debate was hard fought and close.
The Emancipation Proclamation freed every slave.	It applied to rebel areas; the 13th Amendment ended slavery everywhere in 1865.
The words "wall of separation" are in the Constitution.	They come from Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists.

24 WHO'S WHO

founders and thinkers

People to know

Person	Life	Remember	Person	Life	Remember
George Washington	1732–1799	presided at the Convention; President 1789–1797	**John Marshall**	1755–1835	Chief Justice 1801–1835; *Marbury*, *McCulloch*
John Adams	1735–1826	Vice President 1789–1797; President 1797–1801	**Roger Sherman**	1721–1793	Great Compromise; signed all four great state papers
Thomas Jefferson	1743–1826	drafted the Declaration; Virginia Statute (1786); President 1801–1809	**John Locke**	1632–1704	natural rights, property and consent; *Second Treatise* (1689)
James Madison	1751–1836	Convention notes; Federalist; drafted the Bill of Rights; President 1809–1817	**Montesquieu**	1689–1755	separation of powers
Alexander Hamilton	d. 1804	Federalist No. 78 and others; Secretary of the Treasury 1789–1795	**William Blackstone**	1723–1780	*Commentaries on the Laws of England*
John Jay	1745–1829	Federalist essays; Chief Justice 1789–1795	**Thomas Paine**	1737–1809	*Common Sense* (January 1776)
Benjamin Franklin	1706–1790	oldest delegate at the Convention			