



## Laws in the United States | Lesson Plan

How do laws in America balance individual rights and social order, and what impact does this have on personal freedoms?

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Students will learn about the complexities and processes of the American legal system, focusing on the nature of laws, the legislative process, and the delicate balance between liberty and legal constraints. They will explore how laws are created, enforced, and interpreted within the framework of the United States Constitution.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the primary functions of laws in the United States.
- Differentiate between rules and laws and the importance of laws in maintaining social order and protecting individual rights.
- Describe the constitutional process required for a law to be passed, including the roles of the House of Representatives, Senate, and President of the United States.
- Examine the Constitution's role as the supreme law of the land and its implications for state and federal legislation.
- Evaluate the implications of laws on personal freedom and the necessity of a balanced approach to lawmaking.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Laws:** Publicly known official rules that all citizens must follow, enforced through penalties.
- **Congress:** The main legislative or lawmaking body of the United States, consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- **Constitution:** The supreme law of the land, outlining the structure of the government and its powers and safeguarding citizens' rights.
- **Freedom:** A state of liberty rather than confinement or under physical restraint, considered when creating laws to ensure they do not unjustly limit personal freedoms.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

**Academic Subject Areas:** Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Laws in the United States* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Laws in the United States* (Click [Here](#))

Scan to watch episode:



## Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

### Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Ask students to imagine a day in their lives without any rules or laws. Prompt them with questions like, "What would a school day look like?" "How would kids behave in the classroom?" "How would it affect your journey to school with other drivers on the road?"
2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group to brainstorm several examples of laws they encounter daily (e.g., traffic laws, school rules). Encourage them to think about why these laws exist and their purpose.
3. Ask each group to share a few of their best examples with the class, focusing on the reasons behind the laws and their impact on individual behavior and society. This will demonstrate the pervasive role of laws and the balance between individual freedom and social order.
4. Transition to the lesson by explaining how the laws they've discussed are part of a larger system designed to maintain order, protect citizens, and ensure justice. Highlight that today's lesson will delve deeper into how these laws are created, enforced, and interpreted within the American legal system.
5. Give each student a copy of the *Street Smarts: Laws in the United States* worksheet and display it on a screen.

### Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

### Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about laws in the United States.
2. Conclude with a class discussion about the importance of lawmaking in the United States. To encourage students to use the proper vocabulary during the discussion, have students keep track on a sheet of paper the number of times they can correctly incorporate key vocabulary in their responses and give themselves a point each time they use the word correctly. Award the student who has the most points with a classroom cheer.
3. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

## Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.