



Federalism | Lesson Plan

How does the division of power between national and state governments impact our daily lives and protect our freedoms?

Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of federalism as a system of government in which power is divided between the national government and the states.

Learning Objectives:

- Define federalism and its purpose in the U.S. Constitution.
- Identify the roles and powers divided between the federal and state governments.
- Discuss the historical reasons for the creation of federalism and its importance in limiting the power of the central government.
- Analyze modern examples of federalism at work and its impact on everyday governance.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of federalism in balancing power and protecting liberties.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Federalism:** The American system of government where power is divided and shared between a central national government and individual state governments, allowing for local independence while maintaining national unity.
- **Amendment:** A formal change or addition proposed and ratified according to the procedures laid out in the U.S. Constitution.
- **Constitution:** The supreme law of the United States that outlines the national framework of government and fundamental laws, guaranteeing certain basic rights to its citizens.
10th Amendment: The final amendment in the Bill of Rights affirms that any powers not specifically granted to the federal government by the Constitution nor denied to the states are reserved to the states or the people.
- **14th Amendment:** A crucial part of the post-Civil War Reconstruction Amendments, emphasizing the principles of equality before the law and the protection of individual rights against state encroachments.
- **States' Rights:** A core tenet of the American constitutional system designed by the Founding Fathers to safeguard liberty by distributing power across various levels of government, thereby limiting the potential for tyranny.
- **Central Government:** The national governing body established by the Constitution, responsible for managing affairs that affect the entire nation, including defense, foreign relations, and interstate commerce.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Government

Scan to watch episode:



Materials Needed:

- Video: *Street Smarts: Federalism* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Federalism* (Click [Here](#))
- Copies of the U.S. Constitution for each student
- Highlighters or colored pencils

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Present the following scenario to the students: Imagine the class is stranded on a deserted island and must establish a government for survival. The students elect a Governor who initially has absolute authority. The rest of the students are organized into groups, each responsible for essential survival tasks. Explain that the Governor ends up doing the following:
 - Food Hoarding: The Governor decides to keep extra food supplies for himself and his friends, saying he needs more strength to lead effectively.
 - Curfews and Restrictions: The Governor imposes strict curfews on some groups but not on others, clearly favoring one group over another without providing any justification.
 - Unfair Workloads: The Governor assigns heavier and more dangerous tasks to certain groups without any valid reason, claiming it's based on random selection.
 - Silencing Dissent: The Governor punishes those who complain about unfairness or question his decisions by withholding food and assigning extra duties.
2. Explain that this scenario is designed to help students understand the risks of power concentration in a single authority and the potential for abuse in such a governance structure. This reflects the Founding Fathers' intentions of safeguarding individual liberties and promoting fair governance.
3. Define federalism and explain why it was necessary for the United States. Explain the division of powers between the federal and state governments and how this system was designed to protect freedoms and prevent tyranny.
4. Briefly touch upon the historical influences under British rule and how experiences under the Articles of Confederation shaped the decision for a balanced federal system.
5. Distribute copies of the U.S. Constitution. Ask students to locate and read aloud the 10th and 14th Amendments. Divide the class into small groups. Each group discusses the amendments and how they relate to the concept of federalism. Have them highlight key phrases and discuss why these were significant in limiting federal power and protecting state authority.

Watch and Learn: (20 minutes)

1. Show the *Street Smarts: Federalism* episode. Pause after key points to discuss and ensure comprehension.

2. Distribute the "Street Smarts: Federalism Worksheet" and ask students to fill it out during the viewing, focusing on the questions related to federalism's roles and powers.
3. Conduct a quiz about federalism based on the provided Q&A to help reinforce students' understanding and encourage participation.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Facilitate a discussion on how federalism functions today and its relevance in current events. Encourage students to provide examples of how state and federal governments interact in areas like education, health, and transportation.
2. Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of federalism in balancing governmental powers and protecting individual liberties.
3. Summarize the key points discussed in the lesson, emphasizing the importance of federalism in American governance and its role in maintaining a balance of power.
4. Assessment:
 - Collect the completed worksheets to assess understanding and participation.
 - Consider a short written assignment where students express their views on the importance of federalism in contemporary society.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (20 minutes)

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