



The States | Lesson Plan

How are powers divided between federal and state governments?

Students will understand the foundational principles behind states' rights in America, including the historical context that led to the establishment of state powers and autonomy as articulated in the Articles of Confederation and the 10th Amendment.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the concept of states' rights and explain why the Founding Fathers believed states were better suited to address local needs than the federal government.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of a governor in state government as compared to the President in the federal government.
- Summarize the main points of the Articles of Confederation and their impact on the relationship between state and federal powers.
- Explain the significance of the 10th Amendment in maintaining state autonomy within the federal system of the United States.
- Compare and contrast the governance structure of individual states with that of the federal government, focusing on the similarities and differences in their constitutions.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current balance of power between state and federal governments, using examples from historical and contemporary issues.
- Discuss the process and implications of how new states are admitted to the Union, referencing the admission of Alaska and Hawaii in 1959 as case studies.

Key Vocabulary:

- **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.
- **Founding Fathers:** The group of leaders who united the Thirteen Colonies, led the war for independence from Great Britain, and framed the Constitution.
- **Governor:** The elected leader of a state's executive branch.
- **Articles of Confederation:** The first constitution of the United States, ratified in 1781, which emphasized state sovereignty.
- **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.
- **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.
- **League of Friendship:** A term used in the Articles of Confederation indicating a loose alliance of the states for mutual benefit and defense while maintaining significant independence.



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

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Political Science, Liberty, Freedom

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The States* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The States* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm Up: (10 mins.)

1. Begin by introducing the enduring question. Explain that for students to understand states' rights adequately, they must first understand that different powers are granted to the federal government and the states.
2. Provide a brief overview of the concept of federalism. Federal powers are those listed specifically in the Constitution, such as the power to declare war, establish a federal court system, or regulate interstate commerce. States powers, also known as reserved powers, are those that are not mentioned explicitly in the the Constitution and are therefore left to the states to decide. This includes things like establishing local government structures, managing public health and safety, and regulating intrastate commerce.
3. Explain how the Founding Fathers believed that states were more apt at handling local issues, a principle enshrined in our nation's first governing document, the Articles of Confederation.
4. Elaborate on the governor's role as the executive leader of a state, analogous to the President's role at the federal level.
5. Highlight the importance of state constitutions, explaining that each state has its own constitution, crafted to reflect the unique culture and values of its people, serving as the foundational document for state governance.
6. Go over the language of the 10th Amendment with the students. Explain that this amendment is vital as it preserves state autonomy by stating that powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states or the people.
7. Discuss the process for admitting new states to the Union. Explain that Congress must approve new states, a process that reflects our democratic principles, as seen with Alaska and Hawaii.
8. Explain that students will have the opportunity to play along as they watch an episode of *Street Smarts*, a game show that tests kids' knowledge of civics.
9. Hand out the "Street Smarts: The States Worksheet" and prepare the episode for display.

Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. Watch the video *Street Smarts: The States*. Pause after key segments to discuss and relate to warm-up topics.
2. Ask students to fill out their worksheets as the video progresses.

Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

1. After watching the video, summarize the main points covered in the lesson.
2. Give students an opportunity to ask questions or share reflections on the topic of states' rights.
3. Conclude by reminding students that they are an integral part of what is happening in the United States and that their participation is necessary to retain liberty for the next generation.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 mins.)

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