



## The Constitution | Lesson Plan

What is the United States Constitution and how did it shape the structure of the federal government?

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Students learn about the United States Constitution, a founding document that established the governing principles of our country. They'll join Uncle Sam as he quizzes kid contestants about the Constitution and complete a fun follow-along worksheet.

### Learning Objectives:

- Define what the Preamble of the Constitution is.
- Describe how the Constitution limits the powers of government through the separation of powers and checks and balances.
- Recognize that the Bill of Rights comprises the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
- Distinguish how the Constitution safeguards and limits individual rights.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **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. It established the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) and incorporated systems of checks and balances and federalism.
- **Preamble:** This is the introductory statement that sets forth the foundational principles and purposes of the document. It begins with the iconic phrase "We the People," indicating that the government derives its power from the citizens and outlines the aims of the government, including establishing justice, ensuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty for present and future generations.
- **Amendment:** An amendment is a term used to describe a change to the Constitution.
- **The Bill of Rights:** The Bill of Rights is the name of the first ten amendments to the Constitution.
- **Checks and Balances:** A system in which different branches of government share power and can prevent each other from taking certain actions. This system is designed to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

**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, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4

**Academic Subject Areas:** Civics, American Values, U.S. History



## What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Constitution* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Constitution* (Click [Here](#))
- List of classroom or school rules poster, U.S. Constitution example, or simple text version

## Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

### Warm Up: (10 minutes)

1. Use the classroom rules and school rules as a guide for discussion. Begin by setting the stage through connection to prior knowledge by explicitly stating that just as classroom rules are designed to ensure fairness and safety for the school and the individual classrooms, the U.S. Constitution establishes guidelines to ensure justice, peace, and liberty in the broader society.
2. After discussing the purpose of classroom and school rules, directly compare these to specific functions of the Constitution. For example, discuss how the Constitution's Preamble mirrors the intentions behind school rules by aiming to create a stable and just society.
3. Extend the discussion to include not only what is expected from the students but also what they can expect from others, mirroring how the Constitution not only imposes duties but also protects rights. This can segue into the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights and the responsibilities of government branches as outlined in the Constitution.
4. Incorporate questions that prompt deeper thinking, such as:
  - How might our classroom look if no one followed the rules? How might our country look if there were no Constitution?
  - Why do you think the Founders of our country felt it was important to write down the rules in the Constitution?
5. Explain that students will watch a game-show-style video to learn more about the Constitution. Pass out student copies of *Street Smarts: The Constitution* worksheet.

### Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, confirming or correcting answers 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.
3. Encourage students to share their answers and insights as they work through the video and worksheet.

### Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned regarding the Constitution of the U.S.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

3. Summarize the lesson by reinforcing how the Constitution, much like school rules, is essential for maintaining order and protecting rights within a society. Highlight the importance of each student's role in upholding and understanding these fundamental principles.

Extension Activity:

If appropriate and feasible, consider connecting to recent judicial decisions that illustrate the Constitution in action. Additionally, many teachers find value in having students memorize the Preamble to the Constitution through song or recitation.

**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.