

The Constitution consists of the Preamble, seven original articles, and 27 amendments. This summary will aid you in gaining an overview of the Constitution or as an index to finding the particular portion of the Constitution that you wish to study. You will find a copy of the entire Constitution in the back of your history book or in the library. Free copies of the federal Constitution and your state constitution are available from the secretary of state in your state capital or on the internet.

The Seven Articles

The main body of the Constitution is the seven Articles. The Articles establish the branches of federal government and explain how the government works. The Articles are the guide to how the federal government interacts with the citizens, states, and people of the country.

Article 1 – Legislative Branch - Outlines the legislative branch, lawmaking requirements for Congress, the elastic clause, and forbidden powers. It is the longest article in the Constitution.

Article 2 – Executive Branch - Explains the presidential and vice presidential duties, terms of office, succession, impeachment, oath of office, and specific executive powers.

Article 3 – Judicial Branch - Addresses the judicial powers of the United States, the Supreme Court and other courts, and specifics about judges. It also defines treason.

Article 4 – States and the Union - Discusses how the states fit in with the plan of the federal government. It sets requirements for new states and requirements of the federal government in respect to states.

Article 5 – Amendments - This article outlines how to amend the Constitution.

Article 6 – United States Constitution Supreme - Makes it clear that the federal Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

Article 7 – Ratifying Procedure - Explains how the Constitution was ratified.

The 27 Amendments

The first 10 amendments were adopted in 1791 and are known as the *Bill of Rights*. A summary of each additional amendment is preceded by the year it was adopted.

No.	Year Adopted	Summary
1st	Bill of Rights - 1791 - First 10 Amendments	Freedom of expression, religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.
2nd		Protects the rights of individual citizens to keep and bear arms. Establishes a militia that is necessary for a free state.
3rd		Prohibits soldiers from temporarily residing (quartering) in private homes during peace time without getting the permission and consent of the owner.

No.	Year Adopted	Summary	
4th	Bill of Rights - 1791 - First 10 Amendments	Protects people from unreasonable searches and seizures by the government.	
5th		No person tried without the grand jury indictment or punished twice for same offense. Prohibits being a witness against yourself and guarantees due process of law.	
6th		Rights of accused in criminal cases, including legal representation and a fair and speedy trial.	
7th		Guarantees a trial by jury.	
8th		Insures that punishments for crimes are not excessive, cruel, or unusual.	
9th		People retain rights not listed in the United States Constitution.	
10th		Power not given to the federal government is given to the people or states (very important for state government).	
11th		1795	Individual cannot sue a state in federal courts.
12th		1804	Repeals part of Article 2, Section 1, of the Constitution. Electoral College must cast separate ballots for president and vice president. In 1800, there was difficulty when Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same amount of votes in the Electoral College, even though the electors meant Burr's votes to be for the position of vice president. The election had to go to the House of Representatives where Jefferson won, thanks to support of Alexander Hamilton. This helps explain why Hamilton and Burr later dueled and Hamilton was killed.
13th		1865	Abolished slavery and involuntary servitude.
14th	1868	All persons born or naturalized in the United States enjoy full rights. This was done to protect the rights of freed slaves and minorities after the Civil War, but it applies equally to all Americans. This amendment also made certain rules concerning the southern states after the Civil War.	
15th	1870	Protects the rights of Americans to vote in elections. States cannot prevent a person from voting because of race, creed, or color. The right to vote is known as <i>suffrage</i> .	

No.	Year Adopted	Summary
16th	1913	Establishes Congress's right to impose a federal income tax.
17th	1913	Provides for popular election of United States senators. Repeals part of Article 1, Section 3. In the past, senators were elected by state legislatures.
18th	1919	Prohibition. No alcoholic beverages to be bought or sold in the United States (to be later repealed).
19th	1920	Woman suffrage. Some states had already given women the right to vote in some elections. This amendment gives all women, who are U.S. citizens, the right to vote in all elections.
20th	1933	Changed the date the president takes office from March 4th to January 20th (four-year term). Also changed the start of Congress to January 3rd and ended old second session (end of Lame Duck Congress).
21st	1933	Repealed prohibition and voided the 18th Amendment (the only amendment to repeal another amendment).
22nd	1951	No person shall be elected to the office of president more than twice (2 terms).
23rd	1961	Gave residents of Washington, D.C., the right to vote in presidential elections.
24th	1964	Anti-poll tax amendment. Forbids taxing voters before they vote in national elections.
25th	1967	Established the process by which an ailing president may pass the duties of office to the vice president and for the filling of the vice president's office, when vacant. Any vacancy in the vice presidency is filled by an appointment made by the president, with approval by a majority of both houses of Congress.
26th	1971	18-year-olds are allowed to vote in federal and state elections.
27th	1992	Prohibits Congress from voting itself mid-term pay raises.

Hidden Meanings in the Constitution

The Constitution is filled with hidden techniques and ideas. An example is the election chart (shown in the column to the right) prescribed by the Constitution. It uses different ways to choose some officers, different lengths of a term, and different age requirements.

While the president is elected like the members of the Senate and the House, the Electoral College, not the people, actually elect the president. And while the Senate and House are both elected by the people, senators are elected by the vote of all people in the state. Representatives are elected by people from one area of the state. Federal judges are not to be elected by the people at all. These are just some examples.

How do we elect government officials?

	CONGRESS		PRESIDENT	SUPREME COURT
	HOUSE	SENATE		
How Chosen	Elected	Elected	Elected	Appt. by President
Term of Office	2 Years	6 Years	4 Years	Life or Retirement
Age Req.	Minimum 25	Minimum 30	Minimum 35	None

**As described in later units, this chart shows that the Constitution affects how elected officials are selected, the terms they serve, and the minimum age requirements.*

QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER

1. Which part of the Constitution tells how to amend the Constitution? _____
2. Where would you look to find the goals of the Constitution? _____
3. The Constitution has a Preamble, _____ original articles, and _____ amendments.
4. The first amendment was passed in _____, and the last was passed in _____.
5. Which group of government officials are NOT elected, but rather appointed? _____

MATCH THE AMENDMENT. Write the letter of the corresponding amendment from **Section B** in the space that matches the subject matter in **Section A**.

A

- ___ 1. 18-year-olds are allowed to vote.
- ___ 2. Abolished slavery.
- ___ 3. States cannot prevent a person from voting based on race.
- ___ 4. All persons born or naturalized in the United States enjoy full rights.
- ___ 5. Gave all women the right to vote.
- ___ 6. Limits the number of presidential terms.

B

- a. 13th
- b. 14th
- c. 15th
- d. 19th
- e. 22nd
- f. 26th