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Constitution Study Pack

A study sheet on the U.S. Constitution (articles, amendments and key principles) from the National Archives text, a guide to finding your own state's constitution requirement, and practice questions with an answer key.

About this pack

Some states expect high school students to pass an exam on the U.S. Constitution, and some add the state's own constitution; homeschool rules differ from state to state. This pack prepares the U.S. part, shows you how to find your state's part, and ends with practice questions and an exam record.

It pairs with American Government (the Constitution, federalism, rights and voting) and History of the United States I (units 5–7: independence and the first governments).

Read the text itself. Summaries here are short and plain; the wording that counts is the Constitution's. The National Archives publishes transcriptions:

- National Archives, "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription": https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript
- National Archives, "The Bill of Rights: A Transcription": https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript
- National Archives, "The Constitution: Amendments 11–27": https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/amendments-11–27
- National Archives, "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription": https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

Part 1. The U.S. Constitution

The Preamble

> “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Six purposes: a more perfect union, justice, domestic tranquility, the common defense, the general welfare and the blessings of liberty.

The seven articles

Article I. The legislative branch

- All legislative powers granted go to Congress: a House of Representatives and a Senate.
- House: members serve two-year terms, must be at least 25, seven years a citizen and a resident of their state; seats are apportioned among the states by population, counted in a census every ten years. The House has the sole power of impeachment, and revenue bills start there.
- Senate: two senators per state, six-year terms, at least 30, nine years a citizen. Originally chosen by state legislatures (changed by the 17th Amendment). The Vice President presides and votes only to break a tie. The Senate tries impeachments; conviction needs two-thirds of the members present.
- A bill becomes law when both houses pass it and the President signs it; a veto can be overridden by two-thirds of each house.
- Section 8 lists Congress's powers, among them to tax, borrow, regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the states, coin money, declare war, raise armies and a navy, and make all laws "necessary and proper" to carry out its powers.
- Section 9 limits Congress (for example, the writ of habeas corpus may be suspended only in rebellion or invasion; no bill of attainder or ex post facto law); Section 10 limits the states.

Article II. The executive branch

- Executive power goes to a President, elected with a Vice President for a four-year term through electors chosen in each state (the Electoral College).
- The President must be a natural-born citizen, at least 35 and fourteen years a resident of the United States.
- The President is commander in chief, makes treaties with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the senators present, and nominates ambassadors, judges and other officers with the Senate's advice and consent.
- The President reports to Congress on the state of the Union and must take care that the laws be faithfully executed.
- The President, Vice President and civil officers can be removed on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.

Article III. The judicial branch

- Judicial power goes to one Supreme Court and the lower courts Congress creates. Judges hold office "during good Behaviour" and their pay cannot be cut while in office.
- Federal courts hear cases arising under the Constitution, federal laws and treaties, and certain cases between states or parties from different states.
- Trials of crimes, except impeachment, are by jury, in the state where the crime was committed.
- Treason is defined narrowly: levying war against the United States or adhering to its enemies, giving them aid and comfort. Conviction needs two witnesses to the same overt act or a confession in open court.

Article IV. The states

- Each state gives full faith and credit to the public acts, records and court proceedings of every other state.
- Citizens of each state have the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states; a person charged with a crime who flees to another state is returned on demand.
- Congress may admit new states; the United States guarantees every state a republican form of government and protects each against invasion.

Article V. Amendments

- An amendment is proposed by two-thirds of both houses of Congress, or by a convention called when two-thirds of the state legislatures apply.
- It is ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, or by conventions in three-fourths of them, as Congress chooses.

Article VI. Supremacy and oaths

- Debts of the United States under the Articles of Confederation remain valid.
- The Constitution, federal laws made under it and treaties are "the supreme Law of the Land"; state judges are bound by them.
- Federal and state officers swear or affirm to support the Constitution, and no religious test may ever be required for any federal office.

Article VII. Ratification

- Ratification by conventions in nine states was enough to establish the Constitution among those states. It was signed in convention on September 17, 1787; New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify on June 21, 1788.

The amendments

The first ten, the Bill of Rights, were ratified on December 15, 1791. Years are the year of ratification, from the National Archives.

No.	Ratified	What it does
1	1791	Freedom of religion (no establishment; free exercise), speech, the press, peaceable assembly and petition.
2	1791	"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."
3	1791	No soldier may be quartered in a house in peacetime without the owner's consent, nor in wartime except as law prescribes.
4	1791	No unreasonable searches and seizures; warrants require probable cause and must describe the place and the persons or things.
5	1791	Grand jury for serious federal crimes; no double jeopardy; no one compelled to be a witness against himself; due process of law; just compensation when private property is taken for public use.
6	1791	In criminal cases: a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury, notice of the charges, confronting witnesses, compulsory process for one's own witnesses, and the assistance of counsel.
7	1791	Jury trial in federal civil suits where the value in controversy exceeds twenty dollars.
8	1791	No excessive bail, no excessive fines, no cruel and unusual punishments.
9	1791	Listing certain rights does not deny or disparage others retained by the people.
10	1791	Powers not delegated to the United States, nor prohibited to the states, are reserved to the states or to the people.
11	1795	Federal courts may not hear suits against a state by citizens of another state or of a foreign country.
12	1804	Electors cast separate ballots for President and for Vice President.
13	1865	Abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime.
14	1868	Citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the United States; no state may abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens, deny due process of law, or deny any person the equal protection of the laws. Also apportionment, disqualification from office and public debt.
15	1870	The right to vote may not be denied on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.
16	1913	Congress may tax incomes without apportionment among the states.
17	1913	Senators are elected directly by the people of each state.
18	1919	Prohibition of intoxicating liquors. Repealed by the 21st Amendment.
19	1920	The right to vote may not be denied on account of sex.
20	1933	Presidential terms end at noon on January 20, congressional terms at noon on January 3; Congress meets at least once a year; succession if a President-elect dies.
21	1933	Repeals the 18th Amendment.
22	1951	No one may be elected President more than twice.
23	1961	The District of Columbia appoints electors for President and Vice President.
24	1964	No poll tax or other tax as a condition of voting in federal elections.
25	1967	Presidential succession and disability: the Vice President becomes President if the President is removed, dies or resigns; a vacant vice presidency is filled by the President's nominee, confirmed by a majority of both houses.

No.	Ratified	What it does
26	1971	The right to vote may not be denied on account of age to citizens 18 or older.
27	1992	A law changing the pay of senators and representatives takes effect only after the next House election. Proposed in 1789.

Key principles

Popular sovereignty. Government's power comes from the people: "We the People ... do ordain and establish this Constitution." The Declaration of Independence puts it as governments "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Limited government. The national government has only the powers the Constitution grants, and the Constitution itself limits them (Article I, Section 9; the Bill of Rights).

Separation of powers. Legislative, executive and judicial powers are given to three separate branches (Articles I, II and III).

Checks and balances. Each branch can restrain the others: the President vetoes bills and Congress can override; the Senate confirms nominees and approves treaties; the House impeaches and the Senate tries; judges hold office during good behavior.

Federalism. Power is divided between the national government and the states. Federal law made under the Constitution is supreme (Article VI), and powers not delegated are reserved to the states or the people (10th Amendment).

Individual rights. The Bill of Rights and later amendments protect rights against the national government and, through the 14th Amendment, against the states.

Judicial review. Courts can decline to apply a law that conflicts with the Constitution. The text does not state this power in so many words; the Supreme Court set it out in Marbury v. Madison (1803).

Key numbers

House term / minimum age	2 years / 25
Senate term / minimum age	6 years / 30
Senators per state	2
President's term / minimum age / residency	4 years / 35 / 14 years
Federal judges' term	During good behavior
Override a veto	2/3 of each house
Approve a treaty	2/3 of senators present
Convict on impeachment	2/3 of senators present
Propose an amendment	2/3 of both houses, or a convention on application of 2/3 of state legislatures
Ratify an amendment	3/4 of the states
States needed to ratify the Constitution	9 of 13
Amendments	27; the first ten (the Bill of Rights) ratified December 15, 1791

The Declaration of Independence

- Adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776; Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft.
- Its parts: an opening that explains why a people must "declare the causes" of separation; a statement of principles ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..."); a list of

grievances against the King of Great Britain; and the resolution that the colonies "are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."
- It is not part of the Constitution and creates no government; it states the principles the later governments claimed.

Part 2. Find your state’s requirement

Rules differ by state, and they change, so this guide shows you where to look rather than telling you what your state requires. Read the official sources yourself; when in doubt, ask your state’s department of education.

1. **Find your state's homeschool law.** Start at your state department of education's homeschool or nonpublic-school page, then read the law itself on the state legislature's website (search its statutes for "home school", "home instruction" or "private school"). Note whether the law lists subjects a homeschool must teach, and whether civics, the U.S. Constitution or the state constitution is among them.
2. **Find the public-school rule, for reference.** Find your state board of education's high school graduation requirements, and search the state's school code for "constitution" and "examination". Public-school graduation rules often do not bind homeschools, but they show what your state expects of its own graduates. If your student may enroll in a public school later, ask the school how it handles the requirement for transfer students.
3. **Get the official text of your state constitution.** Use an official source: the state legislature's website, the secretary of state or the state archives or library. Make sure it is the current text, with amendments, and note the year it was adopted.
4. **Study it with the worksheet.** Fill in the worksheet on the next page from the text itself. Many state constitutions are long; the worksheet covers the parts most exams and civics courses ask about.
5. **Give the exam and keep the record.** Use your state's own exam if it publishes one; otherwise write one from the worksheet, add the U.S. practice questions in this pack, and set a passing score before the student takes it. Record the result on the exam record and keep it with the transcript records.

> Advocacy groups, other families and websites can point you to the right law, but they are not the law. Check what they say against the statute and the official constitution text.

My state’s constitution: worksheet

Student _____ State _____ Date _____

Official name of the constitution and the year it was adopted	
Where you found the official text (website and date)	
Number of articles; whether it has been amended, and how often (if stated)	
What the preamble says the constitution is for	
The bill or declaration of rights: three rights it protects that the U.S. Constitution does not state in the same words	
The legislature: names of the two houses (or one), number of members, terms of office	
The executive: the governor's term, qualifications and any other elected executive officers	
The courts: name of the highest court and how its judges are chosen	
How a bill becomes law and how a veto is overridden	
Who may vote, and any state voting qualifications in the text	
How the constitution is amended, and whether voters must approve amendments	
What it says about public education	
What it says about local government (counties, cities, townships)	
One provision the parent and student found surprising, and why	

Part 3. Practice questions: the U.S. Constitution

30 questions. Circle one answer for each. The answer key follows on a separate page.

1. Which article of the Constitution establishes Congress?
   A. Article I
   B. Article II
   C. Article III
   D. Article IV
2. What is the minimum age for a member of the House of Representatives?
   A. 21
   B. 25
   C. 30
   D. 35
3. How long is a senator's term?
   A. Two years
   B. Four years
   C. Six years
   D. During good behavior
4. Under the original Constitution, who chose U.S. senators?
   A. The voters of each state
   B. The state legislatures
   C. The House of Representatives
   D. The President
5. Which body has the sole power of impeachment?
   A. The Senate
   B. The Supreme Court
   C. The House of Representatives
   D. The Vice President
6. What vote does the Senate need to convict on impeachment?
   A. A simple majority
   B. Three-fifths of the members
   C. Two-thirds of the members present
   D. Three-fourths of the members
7. How can Congress pass a bill over the President's veto?
   A. A two-thirds vote in each house
   B. A simple majority in each house
   C. A three-fourths vote of the Senate only
   D. Approval of the Supreme Court
8. Which of these powers does Article I, Section 8 give to Congress?
   A. To command the armed forces
   B. To declare war
   C. To grant pardons
   D. To nominate judges

9. Who presides over the Senate under Article I?
    A. The Speaker of the House
    B. The Chief Justice
    C. The Vice President
    D. The senior senator
10. Which is a qualification to be President?
    A. At least 30 years old
    B. A natural-born citizen
    C. Seven years a resident
    D. Previous service in Congress
11. Treaties made by the President take effect with the consent of:
    A. A majority of the House
    B. Two-thirds of the senators present
    C. Both houses by majority vote
    D. Three-fourths of the states
12. How long do federal judges hold office?
    A. Ten years
    B. Until age 70
    C. During good behavior
    D. Until the next presidential election
13. Under Article III, a conviction for treason requires:
    A. A two-thirds vote of Congress
    B. Two witnesses to the same overt act, or a confession in open court
    C. A unanimous Supreme Court
    D. A declaration of war
14. Which clause requires each state to respect the public acts, records and court proceedings of other states?
    A. Supremacy clause
    B. Full faith and credit clause
    C. Necessary and proper clause
    D. Commerce clause
15. Under Article V, an amendment is ratified by:
    A. Two-thirds of Congress alone
    B. The President's signature
    C. Three-fourths of the states
    D. A national popular vote
16. The statement that the Constitution, federal laws and treaties are "the supreme Law of the Land" is in:
    A. The Preamble
    B. Article III
    C. Article VI
    D. The 10th Amendment

17. What does Article VI say about religious tests?
    A. Officers must belong to a church
    B. No religious test shall ever be required for federal office
    C. Each state sets its own test for federal office
    D. It says nothing about religion
18. How many state ratifications did Article VII require to establish the Constitution?
    A. Seven
    B. Nine
    C. Twelve
    D. Thirteen
19. Which amendment protects freedom of speech, the press, religion, assembly and petition?
    A. First
    B. Second
    C. Fourth
    D. Ninth
20. Which amendment requires warrants to be supported by probable cause?
    A. Third
    B. Fourth
    C. Fifth
    D. Sixth
21. The protection against being "compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself" is in the:
    A. Fourth Amendment
    B. Fifth Amendment
    C. Sixth Amendment
    D. Eighth Amendment
22. The right to the assistance of counsel in a criminal prosecution is in the:
    A. Fifth Amendment
    B. Sixth Amendment
    C. Seventh Amendment
    D. Fourteenth Amendment
23. Powers not delegated to the United States, nor prohibited to the states, are reserved to the states or the people by the:
    A. Ninth Amendment
    B. Tenth Amendment
    C. Eleventh Amendment
    D. Fourteenth Amendment
24. Which amendment abolished slavery?
    A. Thirteenth
    B. Fourteenth
    C. Fifteenth
    D. Nineteenth

25. The equal protection clause is in the:
    A. Fifth Amendment
    B. Tenth Amendment
    C. Fourteenth Amendment
    D. Fifteenth Amendment
26. Which amendment says the right to vote shall not be denied on account of sex?
    A. Fifteenth
    B. Seventeenth
    C. Nineteenth
    D. Twenty-sixth
27. Which amendment repealed Prohibition?
    A. Eighteenth
    B. Twentieth
    C. Twenty-first
    D. Twenty-second
28. Which amendment limits a person to being elected President twice?
    A. Twelfth
    B. Twentieth
    C. Twenty-second
    D. Twenty-fifth
29. The President nominates a Supreme Court justice and the Senate votes to confirm. This is an example of:
    A. Federalism
    B. Checks and balances
    C. Popular sovereignty
    D. Judicial review
30. The power of courts to refuse to apply a law that conflicts with the Constitution was set out by the Supreme Court in:
    A. Marbury v. Madison (1803)
    B. McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
    C. Gibbons v. Ogden (1824)
    D. Article VII

Answer key

No.	Answer	Where it is
1	**A** Article I	Article I, Section 1 vests all legislative powers granted in a Congress.
2	**B** 25	Article I, Section 2: at least 25, seven years a citizen.
3	**C** Six years	Article I, Section 3.
4	**B** The state legislatures	Article I, Section 3; the 17th Amendment (1913) made the election direct.
5	**C** The House of Representatives	Article I, Section 2. The Senate tries impeachments (Section 3).
6	**C** Two-thirds of the members present	Article I, Section 3.
7	**A** A two-thirds vote in each house	Article I, Section 7.
8	**B** To declare war	Congress declares war; the President is commander in chief, grants pardons and nominates judges (Article II, Section 2).
9	**C** The Vice President	Article I, Section 3: the Vice President is President of the Senate and votes only when the Senate is equally divided.
10	**B** A natural-born citizen	Article II, Section 1: natural-born citizen, at least 35, fourteen years a resident.
11	**B** Two-thirds of the senators present	Article II, Section 2.
12	**C** During good behavior	Article III, Section 1.
13	**B** Two witnesses to the same overt act, or a confession in open court	Article III, Section 3.
14	**B** Full faith and credit clause	Article IV, Section 1.
15	**C** Three-fourths of the states	By the legislatures of, or conventions in, three-fourths of the states.
16	**C** Article VI	Article VI, the supremacy clause.
17	**B** No religious test shall ever be required for federal office	Article VI, clause 3.
18	**B** Nine	Article VII.
19	**A** First	Amendment I (1791).
20	**B** Fourth	Amendment IV.
21	**B** Fifth Amendment	Amendment V, which also bars double jeopardy and requires due process and just compensation.
22	**B** Sixth Amendment	Amendment VI.
23	**B** Tenth Amendment	Amendment X.
24	**A** Thirteenth	Amendment XIII (1865).
25	**C** Fourteenth Amendment	Amendment XIV, Section 1 (1868).
26	**C** Nineteenth	Amendment XIX (1920).
27	**C** Twenty-first	Amendment XXI (1933) repealed the 18th.
28	**C** Twenty-second	Amendment XXII (1951).

No.	Answer	Where it is
29	**B** Checks and balances	One branch's action needs another branch's consent (Article II, Section 2).
30	**A** Marbury v. Madison (1803)	Judicial review is not stated in the text in so many words; Marbury v. Madison set it out.

Exam record

Fill in one record for each part of the exam the student takes. Set the passing score before the exam.

Part	Date	Exam used (source)	Passing score	Score	Passed?
U.S. Constitution					
Declaration of Independence					
State constitution					

Student _____ Parent signature _____ Date _____

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