

Constitution Day Lesson Fifth Grade

Structure of the Constitution

Main ideas of this lesson:

- The Constitution contains only 4,543 words, a small number considering the importance of the document.
- Words were carefully chosen by the Framers on the Constitution.
- The Constitution is divided into three main parts: a Preamble, or introduction; Articles; and Amendments, or changes that have been made to it.

Basic Ideas about the Constitution for fifth graders:

- The Constitution is the highest law in the United States. The Constitution creates the federal government in Washington, D.C.. The Constitution gives the federal government specific powers, and everything else left to the states. All other federal laws come from the Constitution. It says how the government works. It creates the President. It creates the Congress. It creates the Supreme Court. Each state also has a constitution which creates its own government.
- The Constitution can be changed. The Constitution is changed by an "amendment." Among the amendments is a list of the rights of the people. By listing these rights, they are made special. It is illegal for the government to violate those rights. There are 27 amendments. Not all of them involve rights, but many do. The first ten amendments are special. They are called the Bill of Rights.

Activity:

- Divide students in pairs and give each pair a copy of the Activity Sheet. Go over the topics of the first four Articles of the Constitution. Then, have partners work together to come up with one idea they think was included in each article. For example, do students think Article II included an age requirement for the President?
- Explain that the Constitution had 3 more Articles. Ask students to predict the Topics for these three articles and added them to the Activity Sheet.
- When students are finished give them a copy of the completed "Structure of the Constitution" sheet. Discuss how their ideas compare to the actual topics and descriptions of the Constitution.

• Structure of the Constitution

Activity Sheet

Article	Topic	What is one idea you think was included in this Article?
I (1)	Congress	
II (2)	The President	
III (3)	The Court System	
IV (4)	Relations Among the States	

	What other Topics do you think were included in the Constitution?
V (5)	
VI (6)	
VII (7)	

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Article	Topic	Description
I	Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives Congress the power to make laws.• Explains about the Senate and House of Representatives• Describes who can be a Senator or Representative• Explains how Senators and Representatives are elected and how long they can hold office• Describes what Congress can and cannot do• The States can do anything not given to the Congress or banned by the Constitution
II	The President	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives the President the power to enforce the laws.• Explains who may be elected President• Explains how elections are held• Explains the powers of the President
III	The Court System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives the Supreme Court the power to interpret the law.• Provides for a Supreme Court• Explains that the Congress can establish lower federal courts
IV	Relations Among the States	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explains that citizens of each state will be treated the same• Gives citizens the same rights and responsibilities no matter where they live• Explains how new states may be added to the United States
V	Amendment Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explains how to change, or amend, the Constitution

VI	Supremacy of the Constitution and Federal Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explains how the Constitution and laws passed by Congress are the Supreme Law of the Land
VII	Ratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explains how the Constitution was to be accepted, or ratified, by the states