

## WHO IS A UNITED STATES CITIZEN?

**Directions:** Ask your parent or another adult to help you complete this home worksheet about being a U.S. citizen.

**Definition:** A United States citizen is a person who is born in the United States or has been granted citizenship through naturalization; the person is loyal to the United States and is entitled to its benefits.

1. To be born a United States citizen, one of the following must be true of the person:
  - (a) He/she must be born in one of the 50 states.
  - (b) He/she must be born in one of the United States territories.
  - (c) He/she may be born anywhere in the world, if both parents are United States citizens or if one parent is a citizen who has lived in the United States at least 10 years, at least five years after that parent was 14 years of age.
2. People from other countries can be naturalized United States citizens by taking these steps, which are required by United States law:
  - (a) He/she has learned to read, write, and speak English.
  - (b) He/she knows the basic facts about United States government and history.
  - (c) He/she promises to fulfill the duties of a citizen.

\*\*\*\*\*

1. Are you (the parent or adult) a United States citizen?

(Circle one)      Yes      No

2. If you are not a citizen of the United States, of which country are you a citizen?

- 
3. Were you born a citizen or were you naturalized?

(Circle one)      Citizen by birth      Naturalized

4. Which of the ways in section 1 makes you a citizen?

- 
5. If you are not a United States citizen, would you like to become a naturalized one?

(Circle one)      Yes      No

6. Write five important responsibilities that you have as a citizen.



# CHECKS AND BALANCES WORKSHEET

Checks and balances is a political principle which describes how the branches of government work with each other. The Constitution of the United States established the three branches of the United States government. These branches are the executive, legislative and judicial. The President is the head of the executive branch, which enforces the laws. Congress, made up of the Senate and House of Representatives, is the head of the legislative branch which makes the laws. The judicial branch, which interprets the laws, is made up of the Supreme Court and the federal courts.

## Executive Branch

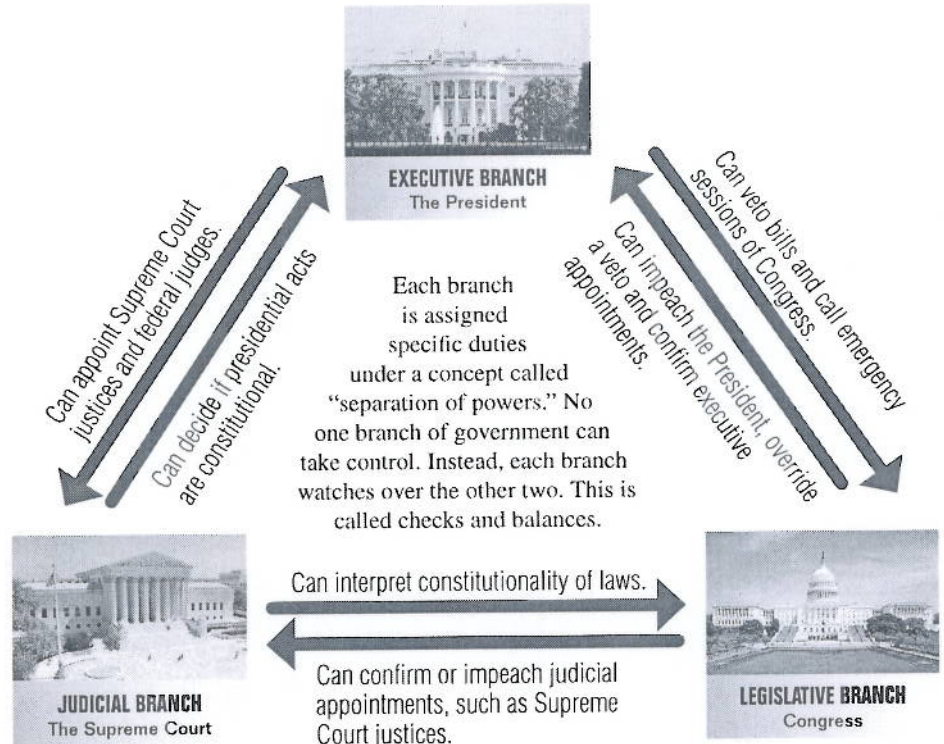
- President
- Vice President
- The Cabinet
- Departments, such as Department of Defense and Department of Education
- Boards and Commissions, such as the National Park Foundation

## Legislative Branch

- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Congressional support organizations, such as the Library of Congress

## Judicial Branch

- Supreme Court
- Lower courts, such as U.S. District Courts
- Special Courts, such as the U.S. Tax Court
- Court Support organizations, such as U.S. Sentencing Commission



## Word Search

Find the hidden words from the list at the right.

N P R E S I D E N T K E S S C	<b>WORD LIST</b>
Q O J E V E Z C B H V L T K O	APPOINTMENTS
H P I E X H M A O I H Y N C N	BALANCES
O A T T V E L E T U U L E E G	BRANCH
U O V U U A C A R E R X M H R	CHECKS
S D T D N T L U T P T T T C E	CONGRESS
E H J C F S I A T Y U R N R S	CONSTITUTION
B H E H I C N T N I A S I E S	COURT
N S Z G S E Y T S D V F O X B	EXECUTIVE
B A E W S F P O E N P E P T J	HOUSE
W L L A I C I D U J O L P W P	JUDICIAL
B R A N C H S W A L B C A P H	LAWS
S T N Z S R C B E R L M W X E	LEGISLATIVE
H N S N X V P M O U I Y I Z L	PRESIDENT
T B R W E V O B I I D A M Z G	SENATE
	SUPREME
	VETO

## QUIZ

1. Which branch of the government makes laws? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who can veto a bill which Congress passes? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which branch of the government appoints justices to the U.S. Supreme Court? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which branch of the government interprets the laws? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which branch of the government decides if laws are constitutional? \_\_\_\_\_



# United States Government

## Executive Branch - The President

The leader of the Executive Branch is the President of the United States. The President holds all the power for this branch of the government and the other members report to the President. Other parts of the Executive branch include the Vice President, the Executive Office of the President, and the Cabinet.

### The President

The President is seen as the leader of the US Government and is both the head of state and the Commander-in-Chief of the US armed forces.



*White House*  
photo by Ducksters

One of the main powers of the President is the power to sign legislation from Congress into law or to veto it. A veto means that, even though congress voted for the law, the President does not agree. The legislation can still become a law if two-thirds of both the houses of Congress vote to overturn the veto. This is all part of the balance of powers put into place by the Constitution.

One of the jobs of the President is to enforce and implement the laws set in place by Congress. To do this there are federal agencies and departments that work for the President. The President appoints the heads or leaders of these agencies. Some of these people are also on the President's Cabinet.

Other responsibilities of the President include diplomacy with other nations, including signing treaties, and the power to grant pardons to criminals of federal crimes.

To further balance power and to keep too much power from any one person, any person is limited to two four-year terms of being President. The President and the First Family live in the White House in Washington DC.

### **Requirements to Become President**

The Constitution states three requirements for a person to become President:

At least 35 years old.

A natural born US Citizen.

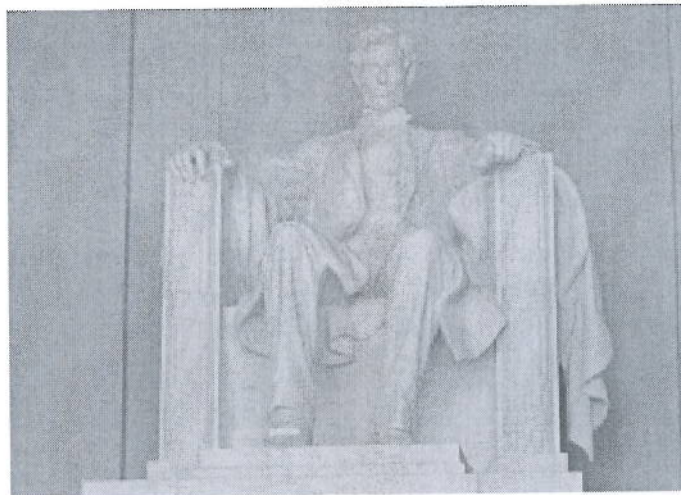
Live in the United States for at least 14 years.

### **Vice President**

The main job of the Vice President is to be ready to take over for the President if something should happen to the President. Other jobs include breaking a tie in voting in the Senate and advising the President.

### **Executive Office of the President**

The President has a LOT to do. To help with the many duties of the President, the Executive Office of the President (also called the EOP for short) was created in 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The White House Staff heads up the EOP and has many of the President's closest advisors. Some of the EOP positions, like the Office of Management and Budget, are approved by the Senate, other positions are just hired by the President.



*Statue of Abraham Lincoln  
by Ducksters*

The EOP includes the National Security Council, which helps to advise the President on issues such as national security and intelligence. Another part of the EOP is the White

House Communications and Press Secretary. The Press Secretary gives briefings on what the President is doing to the press, or media, so that the people of the US can stay informed.

All in all, the EOP helps to keep the Executive Branch running smoothly despite its wide range of responsibilities.

### **Cabinet**

The Cabinet is an important and powerful part of the Executive Branch. It is made up of the heads of 15 different departments. They all must be approved by the Senate.



# United States Government

## Legislative Branch - Congress

The Legislative Branch is also called the Congress. There are two parts that make up Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The Legislative Branch is the part of the government that writes up and votes on laws, also called legislation. Other powers of the Congress include declaring war, confirming Presidential appointments for groups like the Supreme Court and the Cabinet, and investigating power.



*Capitol of the United States*  
by Ducksters

### House of Representatives

There are 435 total Representatives in the House. Each state has a different number of representatives depending on their total population. States with more people get more representatives.

Representatives are elected every two years. They must be 25 years old, have been a US citizen for at least 7 years, and live in

the state they represent.

The Speaker of the House is the leader of the House of Representatives. The House elects the member they want to be the leader. The Speaker is third in line in succession to the President.

## **The Senate**

The Senate has 100 members. Each state has two Senators.

Senators are elected every 6 years. To become a Senator a person must be at least 30 years old, have been a US citizen for at least 9 years, and must live in the state they represent.

## **Making a Law**

For a law to be made it must go through a bunch of steps called the Legislative Process. The first step is for someone to write a bill. Anyone can write a bill, but only a member of Congress can present it to the Congress.

Next the bill goes to a committee that is an expert on the subject of the bill. Here the bill may be rejected, accepted, or changed. The bill may go to a number of committees. Experts are often brought in to witness and give their opinions on the pros and cons of a bill. Once the bill is ready and the committee agrees, it goes before the entire Congress.

Both the House and the Senate will have their own debates about the bill. Members will speak for or against the bill and then the Congress will vote. A bill must get a majority of the votes from both the Senate and the House of Representatives to pass.

The next step is for the President to sign the bill. The president can sign the bill into law or choose to veto the bill. Once the president vetoes a bill, congress can then try to override the veto by getting two thirds of the vote from both the House and the Senate.

### **Other Powers of Congress**

In addition to making laws, congress has other responsibilities and powers. These include creating an annual budget for the government and taxing the citizens to pay for it. Another important congressional power is the power to declare war.

The Senate has the specific job to ratify treaties with other countries. They also confirm presidential appointments.

Congress also performs government oversight. They are supposed to make sure that the government is spending the tax money on the right things and that the different branches of government are doing their jobs.



4) How many representatives in the House does each state have?

- It depends on the population of the state.
  - Each state has 2 representatives in the House.
  - The number of representatives is based on size of each county, not on the state.
  - It depends on the geographical size of the state.
  - It was decided when the state was admitted into the Union.
- 

5) What is the total number of U.S. Senators and House of Representatives?

- 200 of each
  - 435 of each
  - 434 Senators and 100 Representatives
  - 100 Senators and 435 Representatives
  - It changes every year.
- 

6) Which of the following is not a step that a bill must take to become a law?

- A member of Congress must present the bill to Congress.
  - The bill must be accepted by a congressional special committee.
  - The bill must be voted on and passed by both houses of Congress.
  - The president must sign the bill into law.
  - The governor of each state must sign off on the law.
- 

7) If the president vetoes a bill, what can the Congress do to override his veto and turn the bill into law?

- Once a year congress can choose to bypass the president and turn a bill directly into law.

- They can vote again on the bill and if it passes by a two-thirds majority, then it becomes a law.
  - They can order the army to force the president to sign the law.
  - They can pass the law when the president is on vacation and get the vice president to sign.
  - They can ask the Supreme Court to overrule the president.
- 

8) Which one of the following is NOT a power of the legislative branch?

- Power to declare war
  - Power to tax citizens
  - Power to select the vice president
  - Power to ratify treaties with other countries
  - Power to oversee the government
- 

9) What is the primary job of the legislative branch?

- To write up and vote on laws
  - To command the armed forces and fight wars
  - To determine if laws are constitutional
  - To hear court cases and issue rulings
  - To hire and fire members of the cabinet
- 

10) How often are Senators and Representatives elected?

- Both are elected every 4 years
- Senators every 2 years and Representatives every 4 years
- Both are elected every 2 years
- Senators every 6 years and Representatives every 2 years
- Both are elected every 6 years



## Three Levels of Government

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



There are three different levels of government: local, **state** and **federal**. Each level of government has its own elected officials who have specific jobs to do. Adult American citizens have a voice in all three levels of government. Their voice is their vote.

Local government is the level that is closest to the community. People in the neighborhood elect a mayor and city council members. Town meetings allow the people to bring their concerns to their elected leaders. The mayor and city council members pass **laws**. The laws affect the city and the people who live there.

State government is in charge of writing and enforcing laws for all the people within one state. The people of the state elect a governor and representatives who handle business for the state. Special state departments handle issues for the state. They protect the health and safety of state citizens.

The federal government is in charge of writing and enforcing laws for the people in the United States. The people of the United States elect a president, senators, and representatives. These officials handle business that affects the whole country. The federal level of government is able to do some things the other levels cannot. It can print money. It can negotiate with other countries. It can declare war on another country.

Each level of government has specific officials and duties. The people entrust their power to their leaders. It is their responsibility to protect the interests and safety of the people.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) What are the three levels of government?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) How does the average person have a voice in government? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Which level of government has the ability to print money? \_\_\_\_\_

4) Which level of government has a governor?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5) Which level of government is closest to the community? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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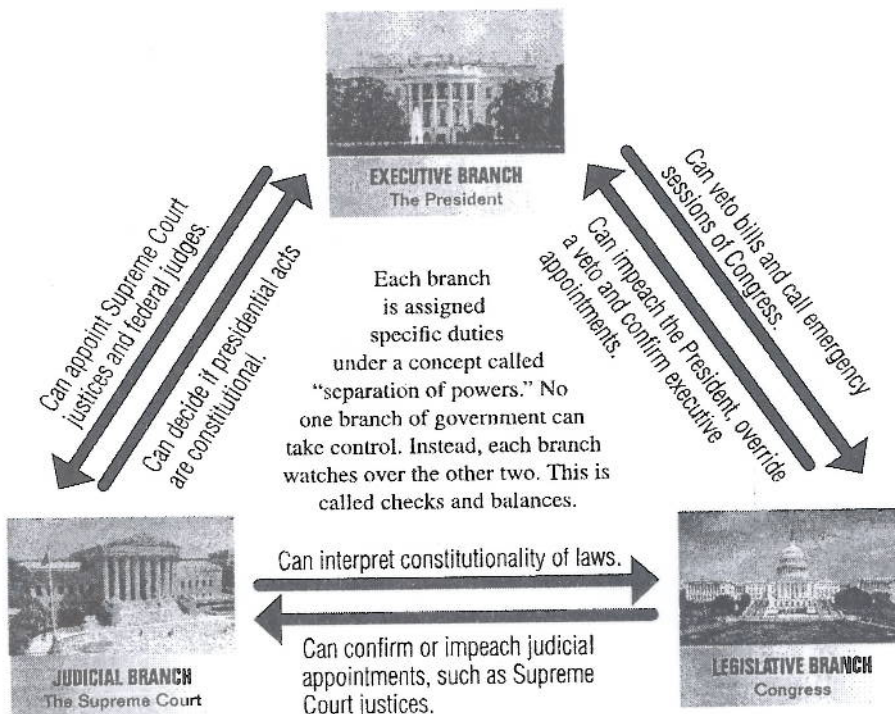
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 O A T T V E L E T U U L E E G  
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 T B R W E V O B I I D A M Z G

### WORD LIST

APPOINTMENTS  
 BALANCES  
 BRANCH  
 CHECKS  
 CONGRESS  
 CONSTITUTION  
 COURT  
 EXECUTIVE  
 HOUSE  
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 VETO

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