

## The Bill of Rights

Representatives from twelve states met and wrote the Constitution of the United States in 1787. In order for the Constitution to become the government for the United States, nine states had to ratify it. New Hampshire became the ninth state when it adopted the Constitution on June 21, 1788. It wasn't until May 29, 1790 that all thirteen states had adopted the Constitution. Why weren't the states eager to adopt the Constitution that we revere as the cornerstone of our government today?

American citizens remembered the days of colonialism under British rule when they had no say in the government or taxation. They remembered the long and hard-fought Revolutionary War that was needed to obtain their freedom from unjust rule. They were not necessarily ready to give their independence to a new central federal government. Many leaders and citizens felt that the Constitution did not pay enough attention to the rights of individuals and did not state what the government could not do to its citizens.



Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, was serving in Paris as the U.S. Minister to France when the Constitution was being written. Jefferson was in favor of adding a Bill of Rights of individual citizens to the Constitution and James Madison was the author of the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights is the name given to the first ten Amendments to the Constitution.

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom to assemble. The Second Amendment allows citizens to keep and bear arms. The Third Amendment says the government can't lodge soldiers in private homes during peacetime. The Fourth Amendment prohibits the government from searching and seizing property. The Fifth Amendment says citizens are entitled to proper judicial procedures.

The Sixth Amendment continues with the right to fair and speedy trial and the right to counsel by an attorney. The Seventh Amendment guarantees the right to a trial by a jury in civil cases. The Eighth Amendment says there is to be no excessive bail or cruel and unusual punishment for crimes. The Ninth Amendment implies that citizens have other rights that are not spelled out in the Constitution. The Tenth Amendment limits the power of the federal government.

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

### The Bill of Rights - Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Which state was the ninth state to adopt the Constitution, officially ratifying the new government?
  - a. New York
  - b. New Hampshire
  - c. New Jersey
  - d. North Carolina
  
2. Some of the states were not eager to adopt the Constitution because
  - a. They did not want to give power to a central government
  - b. They wanted to mint their own money
  - c. They wanted to keep their own religion
  - d. All of the above
  
3. Some people were not in favor of the Constitution because
  - a. It favored large states over small states
  - b. It favored small states over large states
  - c. It did not pay enough attention to the rights of individual citizens
  - d. It did not give enough power to the president
  
4. The Bill of Rights is the name given to which amendments to the Constitution?
  - a. The first five amendments
  - b. The first ten amendments
  - c. The first fifteen amendments
  - d. None of the above
  
5. The First Amendment guarantees
  - a. Freedom of religion
  - b. Freedom of the press
  - c. Freedom of speech
  - d. All of the above
  
6. Who is the author of the Bill of Rights?
  - a. Thomas Jefferson
  - b. George Washington
  - c. Benjamin Franklin
  - d. None of the above

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

### **The Bill of Rights - Short Answer Questions**

1. How long did it take for all thirteen states to ratify the Constitution?
  
  
2. Explain why some people and states were not eager to adopt the Constitution.
  
  
3. Explain why Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, did not play an important role in defining the Constitution.
  
  
4. Explain why the Bill of Rights caused some states to finally adopt the Constitution.
  
  
5. Explain what freedom of the press means and why it is important. If you don't know, look up the term freedom of the press.
  
  
6. The Seventh Amendment guarantees the right to a trial by a jury in civil cases. Do some research and explain the difference between a civil case and a criminal case.
  
  
7. Which amendment in the Bill of Rights is most important to you and why.

## The Bill of Rights - Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. a.
3. c.
4. b.
5. d.
6. d.

### Short Answer

1. Representatives from twelve states met and wrote the Constitution of the United States in 1787. It wasn't until May 29, 1790 that all thirteen states had adopted the Constitution.
2. American citizens remembered the days of colonialism under British rule when they had no say in the government or taxation. They remembered the long and hard-fought Revolutionary War that was needed to obtain their freedom from unjust rule. They were not necessarily ready to give their independence to a new central federal government. Many leaders and citizens felt that the Constitution did not pay enough attention to the rights of individuals and did not state what the government could not do to its citizens.
3. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, was serving in Paris as the U.S. Minister to France when the Constitution was being written.
4. Many leaders and citizens felt that the Constitution did not pay enough attention to the rights of individuals and did not state what the government could not do to its citizens. The Bill of Rights focuses on the rights of citizens so these amendments reduced some of the objections to adopting the Constitution.
5. Freedom of the press means that newspapers, TV journalists and Internet sources are free to criticize what is happening in the government. In a dictatorship, for example, people in the news media who are critical of what the government is doing are put in jail or murdered.
6. A civil case is one where no crime has been committed. An example of a civil case is where someone does not abide by a contract. A criminal case means the person has committed a crime like stealing or murder.
7. Individual response

## The Articles of the Constitution

The Constitution of the United States is a surprisingly brief document, just



7,400 words including the Amendments that have been ratified over the last 200 years. The Constitution is divided into a Preamble, seven Articles or sections, followed by the twenty-seven Amendments. The

Preamble explains why the Constitution was written and begins with the famous words, "We the People." These opening words emphasize that the United States government exists for American citizens, not for a monarch or dictator. The Articles explain how the government is supposed to work.

Article One establishes the legislative branch of government where federal laws are made. The legislative branch is called the Congress which has two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of the House of Representatives are elected to serve for two years and the number of Representatives a state has depends on population. Every state has two Senators who serve for six years. Senators were originally appointed by the state government but now are elected. Article Two establishes the executive branch of government that includes the president and vice president while Article Three sets up the judicial branch which is the court system.

Article Four defines the powers and limits of the states. Article Four requires states to treat citizens from other states fairly and to return fugitives from justice back to the state where they are wanted for crimes. Article Four also gives Congress the power to create new states.

The authors of the Constitution recognized that the document may not be complete and would need to be revised over time. Article Five explains how the Constitution can be changed or amended. In order to change the Constitution, first two-thirds of the House and two-thirds of the Senate must agree to the amendment followed by three-quarters of the states.

Article Six discusses the power of the federal government. The Constitution is the highest law in the country, followed by federal laws and treaties. Article Seven states that the new government defined by the Constitution would not begin until nine states ratify (accept) the Constitution.

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

**The Articles of the Constitution - Multiple Choice Questions**

Circle the correct answer.

1. The legislative branch of the United States government includes
  - a. The Congress
  - b. President and vice president
  - c. Courts
  - d. All of the above
  
2. Senators are elected to serve for
  - a. 2 years
  - b. 4 years
  - c. 6 years
  - d. 8 years
  
3. Article Four of the Constitution gives Congress the power to
  - a. Appoint Senators
  - b. Create states
  - c. Negotiate treaties
  - d. All of the above
  
4. In order to amend the Constitution, how many states must approve?
  - a. Nine
  - b. Half
  - c. Two-thirds
  - d. Three-quarters
  
5. The highest law in the United States is
  - a. Returning fugitives to their home state
  - b. Treaties
  - c. Federal law
  - d. The Constitution
  
6. The Preamble to the Constitution occurs
  - a. At the beginning
  - b. After the Articles
  - c. Before the Amendments
  - d. After the Amendments

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

### **The Articles of the Constitution - Short Answer Questions**

1. Describe how the Constitution is organized.
  
  
  
2. Read the Preamble to the Constitution. Explain the six reasons given in the Preamble why the Constitution was written.
  
  
  
3. Explain how members of Congress are allocated for each state.
  
  
  
4. Members of the House of Representatives serve for two years, the president is elected for four years and senators serve for six years. Why do you think that the authors of the Constitution set up the government this way?
  
  
  
5. Why do you think the authors of the Constitution gave Congress, the legislative branch of government, the power to create new states instead of the president or the courts?
  
  
  
6. Article Seven requires that nine states ratify the Constitution in order for the new government to begin. What percent of the states needed to approve? How does that compare with the three-quarters needed to approve an amendment?
  
  
  
7. Article One of the Constitution establishes the Congress, Article Two defines the presidency and Article Three sets up the court system. The authors of the Constitution were very careful in how they wrote the document. Write a short essay on why you think they defined the government in that order.

## The Articles of the Constitution - Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

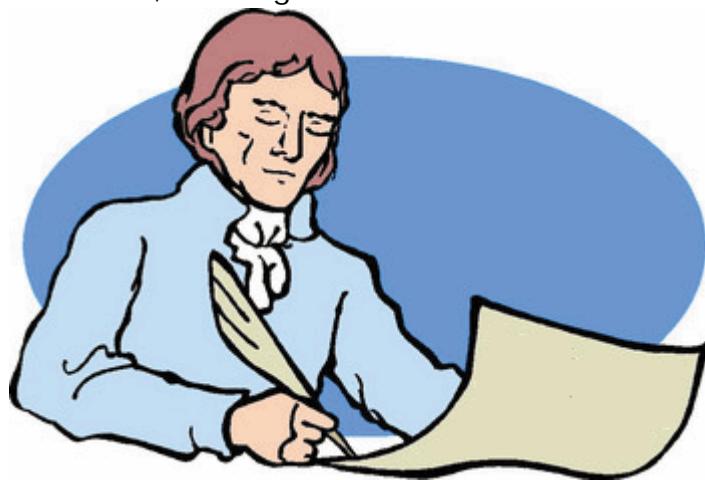
1. a.
2. c.
3. b.
4. d.
5. d.
6. a.

### Short Answer

1. The Constitution is divided into a Preamble, seven Articles or sections, followed by the twenty-seven Amendments.
2. *We the People of the United States, (1) in Order to form a more perfect Union, (2) establish Justice, (3) insure domestic Tranquility, (4) provide for the common defense, (5) promote the general Welfare, and (6) secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America*
3. Members of the House of Representatives are elected to serve for two years and the number of Representatives a state has depends on population. Every state has two Senators who serve for six years.
4. Individual response
5. Individual response
6.  $9 \text{ approve}/13 \text{ existing states} = 0.69 * 100 = 69\%$  It takes 75% of the states to approve an amendment.
7. Individual response

## Amending the Constitution

Fifty-five delegates from twelve states met in Philadelphia in 1787 and wrote the Constitution for the United States, defining the framework for the American government and the rights of its citizens. The delegates worked for months on the Constitution, making many compromises along the way in order to produce the best document that they could. The delegates recognized that the Constitution would need to change over time, especially as the country grew larger. For example, today we have just about four times as many states as there were in 1787.



The writers of the Constitution had the foresight to build into the Constitution the rules for changing it when needed, but it is not an easy process. First and foremost, no one can change the wording in the Constitution; all changes to the Constitution take the form of amendments that are listed at the end of the document. In this way, future generations will always see the same words that were originally written over two hundred years ago.

When an amendment to the Constitution is needed, for example to allow women to vote, the amendment must first be proposed. One way to get an amendment proposed is through the Congress, with two-thirds of Representatives and two-thirds of Senators approving the amendment. Or two-thirds of the states could hold a Constitutional Convention to work on an amendment but this has never been done. Once an amendment has been proposed, it needs to be ratified, that is approved, by three-fourths of the states by vote of the state legislature. The ratification process can take years to complete.

To date, there have been 27 amendments to the Constitution. The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights was inspired by Thomas Jefferson and written by James Madison. The Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791.

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

### **Amending the Constitution - Multiple Choice Questions**

Circle the correct answer.

1. The way the Constitution of the United States can be changed is
  - a. By vote of the Congress
  - b. By rewriting a part of it
  - c. By placing an addendum to it
  - d. By adding an amendment to it
  
2. The original wording of the Constitution
  - a. Can be changed by the president
  - b. Can be changed by Congress
  - c. Can be changed by two-thirds of the states
  - d. Cannot be changed
  
3. In order to change the Constitution
  - a. Changes are proposed with approval of two-thirds of Congress
  - b. Changes must be ratified by three-quarters of the states
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
  
4. States can convene a Constitutional Convention and
  - a. The Bill of Rights was written this way
  - b. This is how women got the right to vote
  - c. This method of changing the constitution has never been used
  - d. None of the above
  
5. How many amendments to the Constitution are there?
  - a. 10
  - b. 14
  - c. 22
  - d. None of the above
  
6. The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called
  - a. The Bill of Rights
  - b. The Declaration of Independence
  - c. The Gettysburg Address
  - d. None of the above

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

### **Amending the Constitution - Short Answer Questions**

1. Why did the writers of the Constitution plan on the fact that there would be changes needed to it over time?
  
2. Describe the process needed to modify the Constitution.
  
3. Changing the Constitution can take years before an amendment is ratified by the states. Why do you think that the writers of the Constitution made it so difficult to change?
  
4. How many states today must approve an amendment to the Constitution before it is ratified??
  
5. How many Senators must vote their approval of a constitutional amendment for it to pass in the Senate?
  
6. The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified on July 1, 1971. Do some research and explain what the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment does.
  
7. The 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment was proposed on September 25, 1789 and ratified on June 26, 1992. How many states needed to ratify the amendment when it was proposed in 1789 and how many needed to ratify it in 1992?

## **Amending the Constitution - Answer Key**

### **Multiple Choice**

1. d.
2. d.
3. c.
4. c.
5. d.
6. a.

### **Short Answer**

1. They knew that the country would grow.
2. When an amendment to the Constitution is needed, the amendment must first be proposed. One way to get an amendment proposed is through the Congress, with two-thirds of Representatives and two-thirds of Senators approving the amendment. Or two-thirds of the states could hold a Constitutional Convention to work on an amendment but this has never been done. Once an amendment has been proposed, it needs to be ratified, that is approved, by three-fourths of the states by vote of the state legislature.
3. Individual response
4.  $50 \text{ states} * \frac{3}{4} \text{ majority} = 38 \text{ states to ratify}$
5.  $100 \text{ Senators} * \frac{2}{3} \text{ majority} = 67$
6. The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment lowers the federal voting age to 18.
7. Nine states needed to ratify the 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1789 and 38 states to ratify in 1992.