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ELEMENTS OF
BASIC GOVERNMENT

WHEN THE U.S. WAS NEW

When America was new, every state had its own rules. Money was not the same in all states. Each state had a leader. No one was the leader of all the people. This was not working!

The people wanted one government. The Founding Fathers worked to make a new government that gave the people what they wanted.



People wanted

- the same rules,
- the same money, and
- safety for all people.

The Game: Check (✓) the things that people wanted to be the same.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cars | <input type="checkbox"/> rules | <input type="checkbox"/> safety | <input type="checkbox"/> schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> money | <input type="checkbox"/> jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> homes | <input type="checkbox"/> pizza |

FYI: Ben Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and George Washington were five of the Founding Fathers.



What did you learn from the lesson?

THE THREE BRANCHES

The Founding Fathers made a government with three separate branches.

Break It Down: These branches are

1. Legislative (Congress)
2. Executive (President)
3. Judicial (Supreme Court)



Each branch has different powers. This is called separation of powers. This gives the country a strong federal government and a balance of power. In this form of government, no one branch has all the power.

Charles de Montesquieu had the idea that there should be three parts of government: the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial branches. He said that it was important for these powers to work separately so that no single part had too much power.

The Game: Fill in the blanks with the words below.

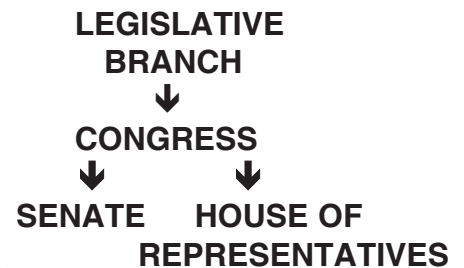
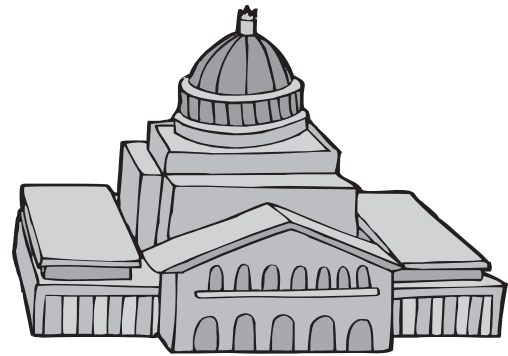
separation of powers balance of power branches
Charles Legislative Executive Judicial Founding Fathers

1. _____ de Montesquieu had the idea that there should be three parts of government.
2. Congress makes up the _____ branch.
3. The Supreme Court makes up the _____ branch.
4. The President is head of the _____ branch.
5. Each branch has different powers, and this is called a _____.
6. The three _____ of government are the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches.
7. When the branches share the power, it is called a _____.
8. The _____ set up our government.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Break It Down: The Legislative branch of government makes laws for our country.

This is how it works. Citizens vote and elect people to Congress. Congress has two groups: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is the only branch of government that can make laws.



The Constitution does not let Congress pass laws about these things:

- a national school system
- rules for marriage and divorce
- the minimum age to get a driver's license
- rules for local governments

Congress cannot put someone in jail without their rights unless there is a real threat to safety. Congress cannot spend our money dishonestly.

Congress cannot make someone the king of the country.

The Game: List five things that Congress cannot do.

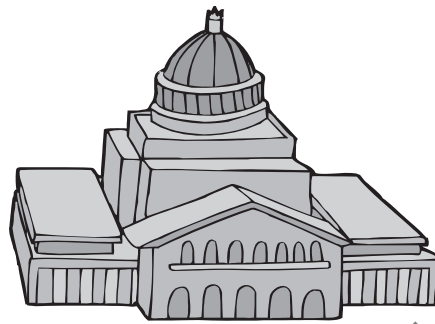
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

THE U.S. CONGRESS

Break It Down: Congress is made up of two groups: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The main job of Congress is to write and vote on bills. The bills are given to the President. If the President agrees with the bills, they become new laws.

Congress has other jobs:

- making coins and paper money
- dealing with the military
- declaring war
- controlling business between states and other countries
- running the postal system
- running the highway system and national parks



U.S. CONGRESS

SENATE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Congress spends federal tax money. Congress watches the President and the people who work with him.

The Game: List five jobs of Congress.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

FYI: Bills are "wanna-be" laws.



The Post Office is part of what system?

MAIN IDEAS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution is a "living document" because it can be changed. However, it has only been changed 27 times in over two hundred years. The Constitution set up a strong government, but it also lets people have rights and freedom.



Break It Down: The Founding Fathers based our government on three main ideas:

- **inherent rights** – the rights that all Americans have
- **self-government** – government by the people
- **separation of powers** – the branches of government have different powers

The U.S. government is a federal democratic republic government.

- We have a government that gives the federal government some of the power and the states some of the power.
- We have a democracy because people govern themselves. It is representative because people pick the leaders by voting.
- It is a republic because the government gets its power from the people.

The first ten changes that were made to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights. Other changes have been made to the Constitution since then.

The Game: Draw a line matching the words with the meanings.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. inherent rights | the first changes to the Constitution |
| 2. separation of powers | people govern themselves |
| 3. democracy | the rights all Americans have |
| 4. Bill of Rights | power is divided |
| 5. republic | government gets its power from the people |