

Principles of the US Constitution

Seven Principles of the Constitution

The framers of the US Constitution wanted a central government, but didn't want the government to have too much power and be tyrannical; they did just leave the harsh rule of a king after all.

The framers decided on _____ core principles to include in the _____ to keep power with the states and limit the power of the central government.

1) _____

- The framers of the Constitution lived at a time when monarchs claimed that their power came from God. The Preamble, with its talk of "_____", reflects a revolutionary new idea: that a government gets its authority from the people.
- This principle, known as **popular sovereignty**, states that the people have the right to alter or abolish their government.

2) _____

- The Constitution provides for a republican form of government. Instead of taking part directly in government, citizens _____ representatives to carry out their will. Once in office, representatives vote according to their own judgment. However, they must remain open to the opinions of the people they _____.
- For that reason, members of Congress maintain offices in their home districts.

3) _____

- The Constitution also establishes the principle of federalism, or _____ between the federal government and the states.
- Powers shared between central government (federal) and individual states
 - _____ Powers = printing money, declaring war, regulate trade between the states
 - _____ Powers = running elections, creating/ maintaining education, regulate trade within their own borders
 - _____ Powers = shared between federal and state (collecting taxes)

4) _____

By adding a strong executive branch to the US government, many were concerned about the executive wielding too much power over the army, and being too powerful. Would a federal government with more power overall soon become tyrannical?

- Their solution was to separate the powers of government among three branches (_____, _____, _____) so that each branch had to cooperate with the others in order to accomplish policy-making goals
 - Pros = prevents the government from quickly making up laws to benefit themselves (or their party) since the law must pass through many branches and people
 - Cons = passing laws (policymaking) takes a very long time, due to this process

5) _____

- In addition to separation of powers, the framers gave each branch the power to check (_____) the actions of the other two branches in meaningful ways
- This system of checks and balances keeps each branch of government from overstepping its bounds and keeping the federal government from becoming too powerful
 - If a government official commits a crime or abuses power of their office, they may be _____(removed from office)
 - No one is above the law, not even the highest public officials

6) _____

- The colonists had lived under the harsh rule of a king. To avoid such tyranny in their new government, the framers made _____ government a principle of the Constitution.
- In a limited government, the government has only the powers that the Constitution gives it. Just as important, everyone from you to the _____ must obey the law.

7) _____

- The Constitution protects individual rights, which are basic _____ the government agrees to protect.
- Examples of these rights are freedom of _____, freedom of _____, and the right to trial by jury.
 - We will talk more about the rights protected by the Constitution later in this unit.

Reflection Time!

- Which of the seven principles do YOU think is most important?
- Why did you choose that principle?