

Get to Know Our Constitution

The Constitution is the supreme law of our country. It is a set of basic laws organizing, granting and limiting the powers of our government. It is something that we all share.

Basic facts

- It was created in Philadelphia ...
- during the summer of 1787...
- in secret, in 87 days.
- It has 39 signers ...
- and comprises a preamble, seven articles and 27 amendments that were added later.

The Constitution is handwritten on four parchment pages. Each page is about 29 inches high and 24 inches wide. The original is on display at the National Archives building in Washington, D.C. An **archive** is a place where important documents are preserved.

What are the big ideas?

Inside the Constitution are several big ideas:

- Separation of powers:** The delegates feared that giving too much power to any person or group could be dangerous. So they created three **branches**, or parts, of government: executive, legislative and judicial.
- Checks and balances:** This limits the power of each government branch. No single branch can overpower the others. Often, each branch needs the help of the others to do its job.
- Enumerated** (e-NOOM-er-ate-ed) **powers:** the listed powers of government.
- Implied powers:** the powers that are not listed but suggested.
- Federalism:** the idea that our system



The Assembly Room in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is where the Constitution was debated and signed.

divides powers among the national government and the state governments.

The Constitution's parts

This historic document has:

- A **preamble** (an introduction)
- Seven **articles** (sections), covering:
 - Article I:** The Congress (legislative branch)
 - Article II:** The president (executive branch)
 - Article III:** The judges and national courts (judicial branch)
 - Article IV:** How states relate to each other and the national government.
 - Article V:** How the Constitution can be **amended**, or changed.
 - Article VI:** The Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
 - Article VII:** **Ratification**, or approval.
- The signatures of 39 delegates.

James Madison

James Madison was a student of government and a great statesman. He is called the Father of the Constitution.

Madison, 36 when the Constitution was written, influenced what went on at the Constitutional Convention more than any other delegate.

He wrote the Virginia Plan, a plan for the new government. Many of his ideas were adopted. He spoke often, and the delegates listened.

He also took many notes and wrote detailed reports. His records are our best sources of what went on. These were not published until after his death.

Madison worked very hard for ratification. He is credited with 29 of the Federalist Papers, a collection of essays supporting the Constitution.

He later served as a Virginia congressman and proposed the first 10 amendments (the Bill of Rights).

After serving as secretary of state under Thomas Jefferson, he was elected as our fourth president. He lived longer than any of the other signers. He died at the age of 85 in 1836.

In 2005, Betty Debnam, creator of The Mini Page, worked closely with the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to create a nine-part series of issues about our U.S. Constitution. Fifteen years later, we are renewing the series. It will continue once a month until Election Day 2020.

Resources

On the Web:

- archives.gov/founding-docs

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Constitution are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

AMENDMENT, ARCHIVES, ARTICLES, BALANCES, BRANCHES, CHECKS, CONSTITUTION, CONVENTION, ENUMERATED, FEDERALISM, LAWS, MADISON, PHILADELPHIA, POWERS, PREAMBLE, SEPARATION.

B S R E F E D E R A L I S M L
N E H S E P A R A T I O N A Q
O C C O N V E N T I O N W A C
S N V E L B M A E R P S Y R H
I A N O I T U T I T S N O C E
D L E T S E L C I T R A A H C
A A I H P L E D A L I H P I K
M B J H A M E N D M E N T V S
B R A N C H E S R E W O P E P
B T D E T A R E M U N E F S K



Cook's Corner

Creamy Buttermilk Mashed Potatoes

You'll need:

- 2 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup low-fat buttermilk, plus more as needed
- 2 tablespoons powdered ranch dressing mix

What to do:

- Place potatoes in large saucepan and add enough water to cover by about 2 inches. Set pan over high heat and bring to a boil. Boil for 10 minutes or until potatoes are fork-tender.
- Drain and return potatoes to pan. Add buttermilk, dressing mix and oil. Using a potato masher, mash together until blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and fold in herbs if using.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives and/or parsley (optional)



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- know well (10) _____
- you blow them with gum (7) _____
- shirt part on your arm (6) _____
- you write one about a book (6) _____
- mom or dad (6) _____
- create (6) _____
- without end (7) _____

INV	FOR	ORT	BLES
ERS	TAND	ENT	ENT
SLE	REP	UND	EV
ER	BUB	PAR	EVE



Answers: understand, bubbles, sleeve, report, parent, invent, forever.

Mini Jokes

Eddie: What's an electrician's favorite flavor of ice cream?

Ellen: Shock-a-lot!

Eco Note

A species is critically endangered when only a few hundred are left. **Whaling** (hunting whales for oil, meat or bones) was a major industry from the 1700s to the mid-1900s. By 1960, species such as blue and gray whales faced extinction. In the 1970s, the conservation group Greenpeace confronted whaling ships to highlight what was happening. As a result, many people persuaded their governments that whaling should stop.

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For later:

Look through your newspaper for articles that mention the Constitution.

Teachers: Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!



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