

AP Government

THE US CONSTITUTION STUDY GUIDE

Directions: Read the US Constitution and complete the following questions directly on this handout.

PART I: THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. Read each article of the Constitution. Summarize the general purpose or subject of each article in one or two sentences .

Article I

Article II

Article III

Article IV

Article V

Article VI

Article VII

2. Identify two powers denied from Congress in the Constitution.

3. How does the House of Representatives determine the rules of proceedings (the ability to debate, riders, etc)

4. Identify two powers the Constitution prohibits from the States.

5. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for members of the House?

6. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for members of the Senate?

7. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for the President?

8. The powers of the Constitution that are specifically granted to the branches of government or to office holders are called express powers.

a. Identify two express powers of the president.

b. What are the express powers of the vice president?

c. Identify two express powers of Congress.

9. According to the principle of checks and balances, each branch of the government must have control over the other branches. Look at the first three articles of the Constitution and identify one of each type of checks and balances. Indicate where each power is listed in the Constitution.

a. A power that the executive branch has over the legislative branch: _____

This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

b. A power that the executive branch holds over the judicial branch. _____ This can

be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

c. A power that the legislative branch holds over the executive branch. _____

This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

d. A power that the legislative branch holds over the judicial branch. _____

This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

e. A power that the judicial branch holds over the executive branch. _____

This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

f. A power that the judicial branch holds over the legislative branch. _____

This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution _____

10. A court of original jurisdiction is the first court that hears a case. Appellate courts hear cases on appeal from lower courts. Although the Supreme Court functions primarily as an appellate court, it is the courts of original jurisdiction in certain kinds of cases. What are those?

11. According to Article I of the Constitution, who has the power to declare war?

12. What power does the Constitution give the President in the area of war?

PART II IMPORTANT CLAUSES

1. Where is the "Commerce Clause" and what does it say?

2. Where is the "Necessary and Proper Clause" and what does it say?

3. Where is the "Supremacy Clause" and what does it say?

4. How might these clauses above have impacted the power of the federal government?

5. What is habeas corpus?

6. Where is the habeas corpus clause and what does it say?

7. Where are bills of attainders discussed and what does it say?

8. What is a bill of attainder? _____

9. Where are ex post facto laws discussed and what does it say?

10. What is an ex post facto law?

11. Where is the full faith and credit clause and what does it say?

PART III MAJORITY AND SUPERMAJORITY

The Constitution requires a simple majority for some actions and a supermajority for others. A simple majority means more than half, while supermajority requirements can involve a 2/3 majority or a 3/4 majority. Most elections in the United States require a plurality, or the most votes, but not necessarily a majority.

1. a. What bodies have the power to override a presidential veto? _____

b. What margin is required to override a presidential veto? _____

c. Where in the Constitution is the veto power described? _____

2. a. What body has the power to ratify treaties? _____

b. What margin is required to ratify treaties? _____

c. Where in the Constitution is the ratification power described? _____

3. To impeach means "to bring charges against" or "to indict".

a. What body has the power to impeach the president? _____

b. What vote is required to impeach? _____

c. What is the standard for impeachment? _____

4. a. What body has the power to convict the president of charges brought against him in the impeachment process and thereby remove him from the presidency? _____

b. What vote is required to convict and remove a president? _____ c. Where in the Constitution is the impeachment power described? _____

5. a. What body has the power to accept or reject a president's nominations to the Supreme Court?

b. What margins is required to elevate a president's nominee to a seat on the Court? _____

c. Where in the Constitution are judicial nominations described? _____

d. What language is used to describe the roll of the Senate in Supreme Court nominations?

6. a. If no candidate for the presidency wins a simple majority of the total number of electoral votes, what body has the power to choose the president? _____

b. What margin is required to choose the president? _____

c. Where in the Constitution is the Electoral College described? (Hint: there are two parts)

7. The Constitution specifies a three-fourths majority for just one process. What?

8. The Constitution has comparatively little to say about the structure and composition of the Supreme Court.

Identify two aspects of the Court's structure and composition that the Constitution does not specify. (The Constitution does specify these two basic aspects of structure and composition for the other two branches).

9. What are two ways that amendments to the Constitution can be proposed?

10. What are two ways that amendments to the Constitution can be ratified?
