

U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt & Choice Board - LESSON PLAN

Learning Objectives: Students will...

1. Understand the structure of the U.S. Constitution.
2. Evaluate the functions of each of the three branches of government.
3. Create a product from the Choice Board, illustrating their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution.

TEKS: 8th Grade Social Studies 15D, 16A

Materials Needed: Copies of the U.S. Constitution (See TMCEC for a class set of pocket-sized Constitutions), U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt PowerPoint, copies of the U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt, copies of the Citizen Creators Choice Board

Vocabulary: federal, state, legislature, judicial, executive, preamble, amendment, constitution, ratification, sovereignty

Teaching Strategy:

1. Pass out copies of the U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt and a pocket-sized U.S. Constitution to each student.
2. Display the U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt PowerPoint to introduce and explain the assignment, reading each of the slides together as a class.
3. After reviewing the PPT, allow students time to work independently or in small groups to complete the scavenger hunt assignment using the copies you have provided (or digital copies).
4. Once students complete the Scavenger Hunt, pass out the Citizen Creators Choice Board for students. Instruct students to choose ONE (1) item from each column to complete. You can adjust the number of choice board items to complete based on the level of difficulty desired.
5. Optional: Have students submit the Scavenger Hunt and their Choice Board assignment for your review, or have students share their Choice Board assignments via student presentations, if time allows.

Student Name: _____

U.S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt

Foundations and General Structure

1. What are the **first three words** of the Constitution, and what important idea do they represent?
2. Which phrase of the **Preamble** most closely aligns with the purpose of traffic safety laws to “keep people generally safe”?
3. What are the **last 3 words** of the 10th Amendment?
4. How many **Articles** are there in the Constitution?
5. Looking through the Constitution, **which Article covers each branch** of government?
 - a. Article I covers - (hint: makes the laws)
 - b. Article II covers - (hint: enforces the laws)
 - c. Article III covers - (hint: interprets the laws)
6. How many **Amendments** are there?
7. What are the **first 10 Amendments** called?
8. In Article VI, what does the Constitution declare to be the “**supreme law of the land**”?
9. In your **pocket Constitution**, how many **pages** does each Article cover?
 - a. # of pages in Article I -
 - b. # of pages in Article II -
 - c. # of pages in Article III -
 - d. What does this suggest the framers of the Constitution thought about the **importance** of each branch? Which branch did they assume would be most important? Least important?

The Legislative Branch (Article I)

10. What is a **bicameral legislature**, and what are the two houses of the U.S. Congress?
11. Complete the graphic organizer below depicting our **bicameral legislature**:



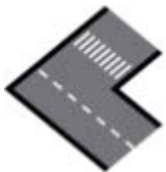
12. How many **Senators** are in the U.S. Senate, and how is that number determined for each state?
13. What are the **age and citizenship requirements** for a member of the House of Representatives versus a member of the Senate?
14. What is the **Vice President's role** in Congress? (Section 3, Clause 4)
15. Section 8 outlines the powers of Congress. **List 3 powers** of Congress:

16. According to the **Commerce Clause**, what specifically does Congress have the power to regulate? (Article I, Section 8, Clauses 3)
17. What is the **"Necessary and Proper Clause"** (also known as the Elastic Clause), and what does it allow Congress to do? (Article I, Section 8, Clauses 18)
18. An example of the Necessary and Proper Clause in action: In response to rising highway fatalities, Congress passed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act in 1966. This act created the precursor to the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** (NHTSA), which is under the **Department of Transportation** (DOT). Did you know that a law passed by *Congress* could create an agency in the *Executive Branch*?
19. Can you name any **other agencies** in the Executive Branch? Name some here:



The Executive Branch (Article II)

20. What are the **three specific qualifications** a person must meet to become President?
21. What is the overall **main role** of the executive branch?
22. Agencies and departments in the **Executive Branch** (like the ones mentioned above) issue regulations that can have the **effect of law**. In 1968, the federal government mandated that all new passenger vehicles (except buses) be equipped with seatbelts. However, there was still no law requiring people to actually wear them. In 1984, New York became the first state to pass a mandatory seatbelt usage law, followed by many other states. As the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** established safety standards for motor vehicle travel (including demonstrating the effectiveness of seatbelt usage), state and federal laws were passed requiring the implementation of some of these standards. But not everyone was happy with these laws and regulations! Where do you think one can challenge a federal law if they think it violates their personal freedoms? What about a state law? Hint: If laws are primarily *created* in the legislative branch and *enforced* by the executive branch, who is left to *resolve disputes* about the laws?
23. What is the name of the process or **special group of people** used to elect the President?
24. What are four types of **nominations or appointments** the President is authorized to make?
25. Describe the **impeachment process**: Which body has the power to impeach, and which body hears/tries the proceedings?
26. For what specific **offenses** can a President or Vice President be impeached?
27. How can Congress **override a presidential veto**?
28. Which body of government must **consent** to major Presidential appointments, such as Supreme Court Justices?
29. What is **Executive Privilege**, and how can it create tension between the President and Congress?
30. In the case of **U.S. v. Nixon**, how did the principle of "Checks and Balances" affect the President's use of Executive Privilege?



The Judicial Branch (Article III)

31. What is the primary responsibility of the **Judicial Branch**?
32. Who has the authority to **create federal courts** below the Supreme Court?
33. How long do **federal judges** stay on the bench, and under what conditions can they be removed?
34. What landmark Supreme Court case established the power of **Judicial Review** (the power to strike down unconstitutional laws)?
35. How does judicial review limit **executive power**?
36. Think back to the traffic safety examples used in the prior two sections. When traffic safety laws (such as seatbelt laws) were challenged in court, what arguments do you think



opponents to the law made against it? What arguments could you make in favor of those same laws?

37. Through many of these court cases and challenges in the courts, judges determined that states were allowed to require seatbelt usage because they have a reasonable “**public health interest**” in saving lives on the roads. These judicial court decisions established case law (or **precedent**) for other courts to uphold traffic safety laws due to the state’s “public health interest.” What other issues that might fall under “public health interests”?

38. What is the only crime specifically defined and explained in **Article III**?

39. What body (or group) may **increase or decrease** the number of federal courts?



40. What is the **requirement** to be a federal judge?

41. Judicial Power extends **what kinds of cases**? (List 5)

42. What kind of case **does not require** a trial by jury?

43. What is the **definition** of treason?

44. Could **you, personally**, be appointed as a Supreme Court Justice? Why or why not?

Relationships Between the States and Federal Government (Articles IV)

45. What is **extradition**, as described in Article IV?

46. Define **Federalism** as it relates to the relationship between national and state governments.

47. According to Section 1 of Article IV, if you get a Driver’s License in one state that is recognized by state law, should other states recognize and honor that Driver’s License and allow you to drive on their roadways?

The Amendment Process (Article V)

48. What are the **two steps** required to amend the Constitution?

49. Why is **amending** the Constitution so difficult?

50. Draw a **graphic organizer** to illustrate the amendment process:

The Supremacy Clause (Article VI)

51. If a state law conflicts with a national law, which prevails?

The Ratification Process (Article VII)

52. How many **states had to ratify** the Constitution before it could take effect?



CITIZEN CREATORS

choice board

Choose one activity from each column to complete. Think, talk, create, and share your ideas with classmates, teachers, family, and friends.

GENERAL WELFARE GRAPHIC

Using Canva, create an infographic explaining the Preamble clause "promote the general welfare." How does this relate to modern traffic lights and crosswalks?

SAFETY PSA (TIKTOK/REEL STYLE)

Film a 60-second video demonstrating 3 essential bike or pedestrian safety tips. Explain why the government should enforce these rules.

ROAD RULES & SIGNS

Find 3 specific signs or "road rules" in your neighborhood. Identify which "level" of government (Local, State, or Federal) likely created them and explain your thinking.

THE "SAFETY" AMENDMENT

If you could add a 28th Amendment specifically about the right to safe travel, what would it say? Design the official document in Canva with a formal preamble.

THE "RESERVED POWER" PODCAST

Record a 3-minute audio clip explaining how the 10th Amendment (States' Rights) gives your city the power to set speed limits and mandate helmets.

INTERACTIVE SAFETY MAP

Use a digital map or drawing tool to identify a "danger zone" for pedestrians in your town. Propose a government-funded solution (like a new light or bridge).

SAFE CITIZENS BADGE

Design a "Safe Citizens" badge in Canva. Write a description that includes five things a good citizen does to follow the law and promote public safety.

THE DEBATE: RULES VS. RIGHTS

Write a blog post or record a video: Do mandatory safety laws (such as seatbelt laws) violate personal liberty, or is it the government's duty to protect safety?

SAFETY CAMPAIGN PITCH

Design a set of 3 Canva social media posts for a "Pedestrian Awareness Week." Each post must link a safety rule back to a citizen's right to "Life and Liberty."

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HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED...

why the government can tell you
how fast to drive or that you have to
wear a helmet?

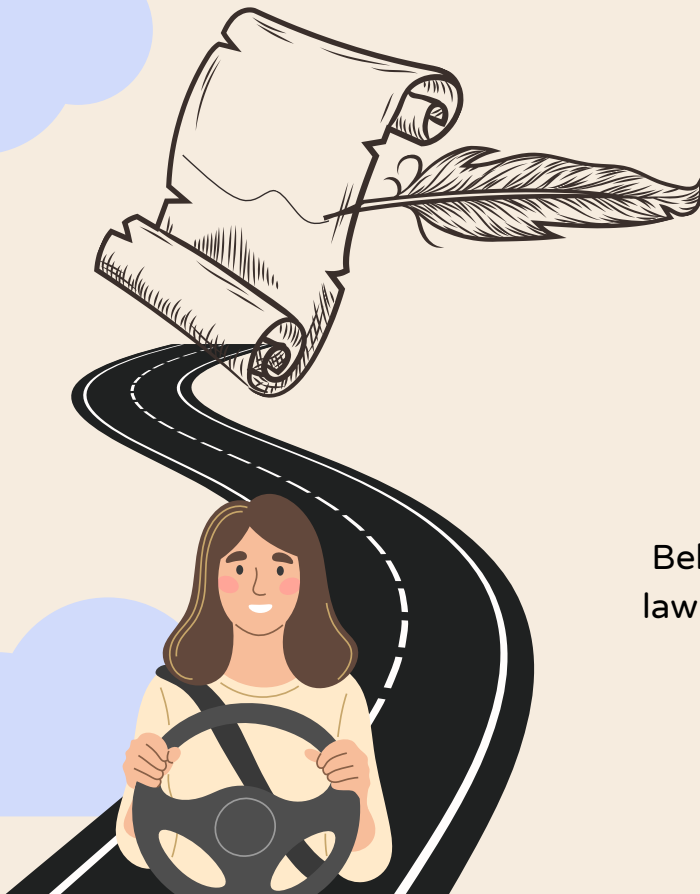


...IT ALL STARTS WITH THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT

Believe it or not, we can trace a path from every
law or regulation from our neighborhood streets
all the way back to the very document that
outlined the structure and function of our
government system!

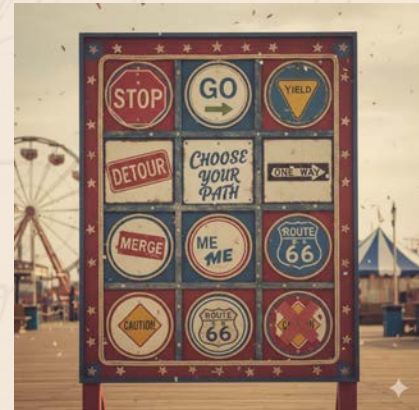


USE THE SCAVENGER HUNT & CHOICE BOARD TO EXPLORE



CONSTITUTION SCAVENGER HUNT

Dive into the U.S. Constitution and learn more about how our government works!



CITIZEN CREATOR CHOICE BOARD

Choose your own adventure and create something to share your learning!



SCAVENGER HUNT

U.S. CONSTITUTION



The Constitution is a complex map of power, rights and responsibilities. Today, you are the detective!

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: CONSTITUTIONAL DETECTIVE



THE GOALS

Explore the text to understand how the government is structured, and how it functions to provide laws that affect our daily lives.



THE TOOLS

You will need your Scavenger Hunt Student Document, a copy of the Constitution, and something to write with.



THE TASK

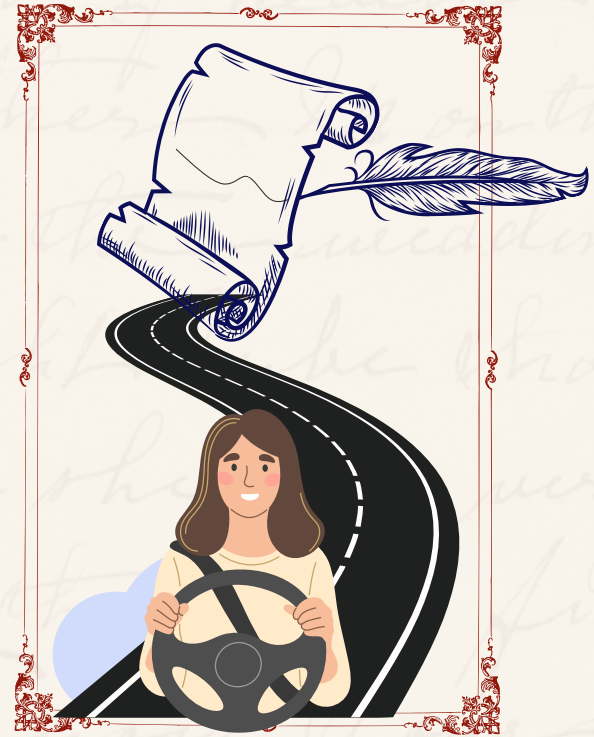
Locate specific Articles, Sections, and Clauses to answer the questions in your Scavenger Hunt!



- 01 Tracing Traffic Safety Laws
- 02 Navigating the Document
- 03 The Preamble
- 04 Introduction to the Articles
- 05 Introduction to the Amendments
- 06 The Main Principles

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

As we search through the Constitution, we will continue to trace how traffic safety laws (and others) have come to exist and where government bodies and agencies get the power to create laws!



01

PREAMBLE

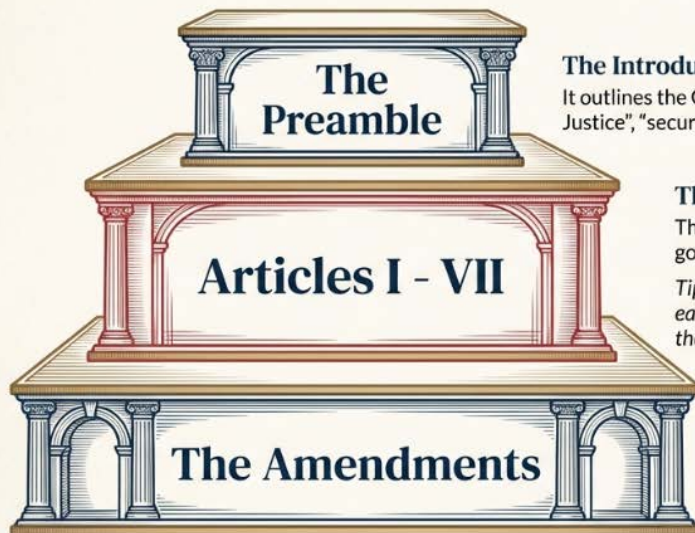
Before we find the detailed road map of legal and legislative authority for traffic laws, we can point to **TWO** obvious places in the Constitution supporting these laws. The first is the Preamble which lists one reason the Framers “ordained and established” the Constitution in the first place – to “promote the general welfare.” Making sure that citizens are safe is a big part of promoting the general welfare!

02

10TH AMENDMENT

The second place that allows states and local governments to make traffic safety laws in their area is the 10th Amendment. The 10th Amendment states that powers not delegated to the U.S. (federal) government by the Constitution are “reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Navigating the Document



The Introduction

It outlines the GOALS (e.g., "establish Justice", "secure the Blessings of Liberty").

The Structure

These sections detail how the government actually works.

Tip for Tab 1: Count the pages of each Article to see which branch the Framers prioritized.

The Changes

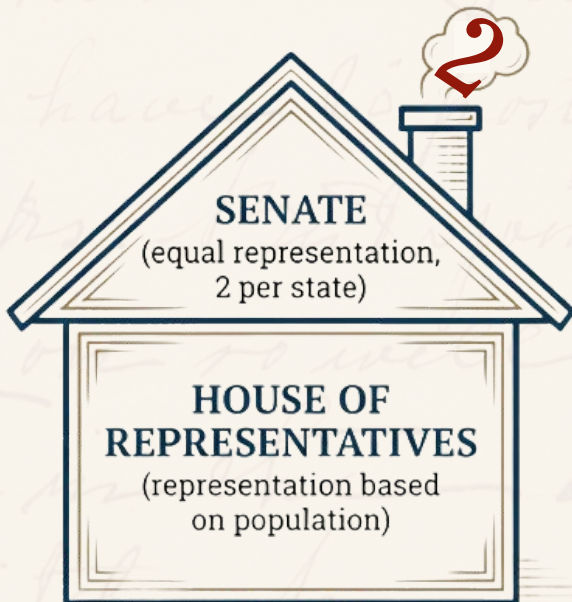
Includes the Bill of Rights (first 10) and 17 others added over time.

Pro Tip:

Look at Article VI specifically—it declares this document the "Supreme Law of the Land."

ARTICLE I

The Legislative Branch



Clues

Structure: A "Bicameral" legislature (Two houses).

The Power Source: Article I, Section 8 lists what Congress can actually DO.

Crucial Clauses to Find:

1. **Commerce Clause:** Congress regulates trade (giving them broad power).
2. **Necessary and Proper Clause:** Also known as the "Elastic Clause." It allows Congress to stretch its powers to pass necessary laws (e.g., creating the Dept. of Transportation).

ARTICLE II

The Executive Branch



President
Vice President
Cabinet
Administrative Agencies

ARTICLE III

The Judicial Branch

**The Supreme Court of the United States
and all Federal Courts**



The primary role of the courts is to:

- interpret the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States (providing guidance as well as checks and balances)
- and to resolve conflicts among lower courts, (providing uniformity & consistency across the nation).

Connecting the States & The Future

The Fine Print (Articles IV - VII)



Article IV (Relations): How states get along. Look for **Extradition** (sending a criminal back to the state where the crime occurred).



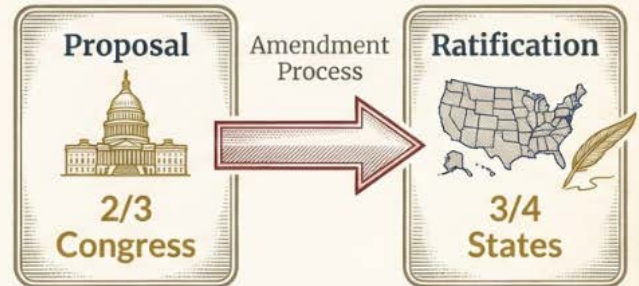
Article V (Amendments): Changing the Constitution is difficult by design. Requires **2/3 of Congress** to propose and **3/4 of States** to ratify.



Article VI (Supremacy): The Constitution is the "Supreme Law of the Land." It ranks above state laws.



Article VII (Ratification): Original approval required 9 of the 13 states.



AMENDMENTS 1-10

The first 10 Amendments are called the **Bill of Rights** and were added to the Constitution in 1789 to safeguard individual liberties.



AMENDMENTS 11-27

Amendments 11-28 have each been passed over the years to change the Constitution in some way to meet the needs of the American government at the time.

The 7 Guiding Principles

-  **1. Popular Sovereignty:**
Power comes from the people.
-  **2. Republicanism:**
We elect representatives.
-  **3. Federalism:**
Power is shared between National and State governments.
-  **4. Separation of Powers:**
3 distinct branches with different jobs.
-  **5. Checks and Balances:**
Each branch limits the others.
-  **6. Limited Government:**
The Constitution creates a boundary the government cannot cross.
-  **7. Individual Rights:**
Liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.



NOW CHECK OUT THE
CHOICE BOARD AND
CHOOSE YOUR
ADVENTURE!