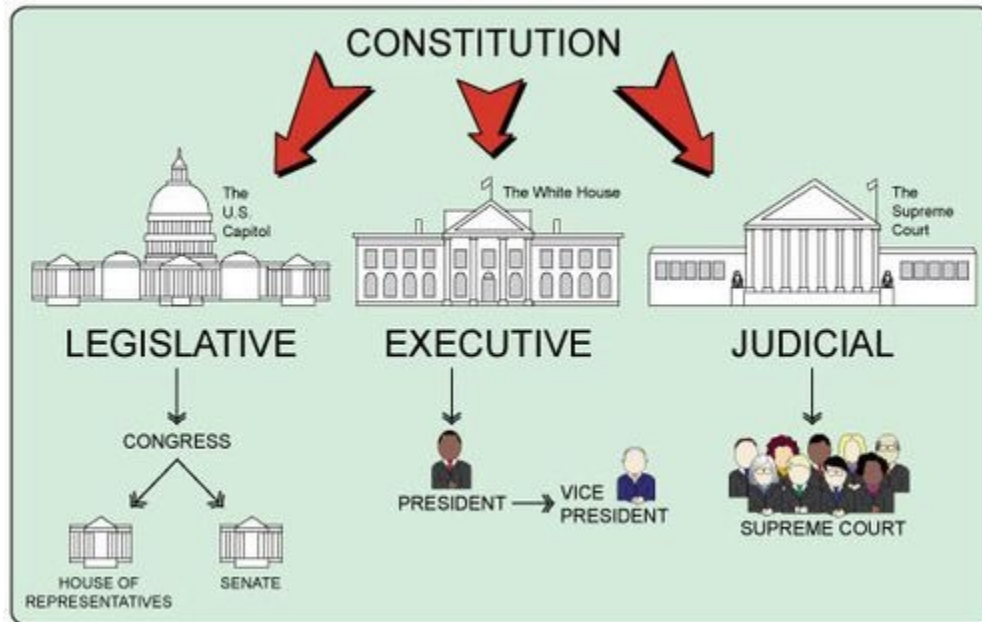


The Three Branches of Government

by ReadWorks



The United States Constitution was written more than two hundred years ago. It explains how the American government should work. The people who wrote the Constitution did not want one person to have too much power in the government. So they split the government into three parts. The three parts are called branches. Each branch has different responsibilities. They all work together. But each branch also checks the other branches to make sure no branch has too much power.

One branch is called the legislative branch. Its responsibility is to make laws. This branch includes the United States Congress. Congress is made up of two parts called the House of Representatives and the Senate. Americans vote to choose the people in Congress. These people go to Washington, D.C., to make laws.

Another branch is called the executive branch. Its responsibility is to carry out the laws. It makes sure people obey the laws. The president and the vice president are part of the executive branch. So is their group of advisers, called the Cabinet. Every four years, Americans vote to choose a president and a vice president.

The third branch is called the judicial branch. It decides on the meanings of the laws. It also decides if the laws break the rules of the Constitution. The Supreme Court is part of the judicial branch. Nine judges work in the Supreme Court. The president picks the judges, and the Senate has to agree with the president's choices. The judges make important decisions about the country's laws.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What are the three branches of the U.S. government?

- A. Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Senate
- B. the president, the House of Representatives, and the Senate
- C. legislative, executive, and judicial

2. This article describes the three branches of government and their responsibilities.

Which branch does it describe first?

- A. the executive branch
- B. the judicial branch
- C. the legislative branch

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"The people who wrote the Constitution did not want one person or group to have too much power. That was why they divided the government into three parts, known as branches."

What can you conclude based on this evidence?

- A. The three branches of the government do not have the same amount of power.
- B. The people who wrote the Constitution wanted every American to help make laws.
- C. The people who wrote the Constitution did not want to have just one branch of government.

4. Which is an example of how one branch of government can be affected by the other branches?

- A. The executive branch includes the president, the vice president, and the Cabinet.
- B. Justices on the Supreme Court are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate.
- C. Voters in each state elect their representation in the House and their senators to go to Congress.

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A. The U.S. Constitution is the law of the land, and it lays out rules for the government and rights for the American people.
- B. The judicial branch decides on the meanings of the laws and whether laws break the rules of the U.S. Constitution.
- C. The U.S. Constitution says that the country must have a Congress, a Supreme Court, and a president.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"The United States Constitution was written over two hundred years ago. It explains how the United States government should work. The people who wrote the Constitution did not want one person or group to have too much power. That was why they divided the government into three parts, known as branches."

Why does the author begin this article by talking about the U.S. Constitution?

- A. to give the reader background information about why there are three branches of government
- B. to explain to the reader why the U.S. Constitution is the most important piece of writing in history
- C. to help the reader learn more about the history of the United States

7. Choose the answer that best completes this sentence.

The legislative branch of government has the power to make laws, _____ the executive branch carries those laws out.

- A. so
- B. because
- C. but