

Fifth Grade – Social Studies  
Activity: Identifying & Studying a Constitution

The \_\_\_\_\_ is the highest law in the United States. All other laws come from the Constitution. It says how the government works. It creates the Presidency. It creates the Congress. It creates the Supreme Court. Each state also has a constitution. The constitutions of the states are their highest law for that state — but the United States Constitution is higher.

The Constitution can be \_\_\_\_\_. The Constitution is changed by an "amendment." Among the amendments is a list of the rights of the people. By listing these rights, they are made special. It is illegal for the government to violate those rights. As of 2006, there are \_\_\_\_\_ amendments. Not all of them involve rights, but many do. The first ten amendments are special. They are called the Bill of Rights.

## History

The Constitution was written in \_\_\_\_\_. Yes, it is over 200 years old. We actually have old copies of what was created. The master copies are stored at the National Archives in Washington D.C.

From May to September 1787 a group of men known as the \_\_\_\_\_ met. The Framers talked about what should be in the Constitution. The United States was a brand new country. The United States had a government that did not work very well. The Framers met to find a new way of running the country. This meeting is called The \_\_\_\_\_. Some of the Framers are famous to us today. They include James Madison, Ben Franklin, and George Washington.

At that time there were only 13 states. The men came from all the states except Rhode Island. Each state had ideas for the new government. The Framers had many debates. They talked a lot. They make a lot of speeches. By talking about it, they came up with a plan that everyone could agree with. They had to have a lot of compromises. Only by agreeing could all the arguments be worked out. Ben Franklin said the he was not sure if the plan was perfect. He said that it was probably as perfect as it could be.

After the Convention, the Constitution had to be approved. Actually, only nine states had to agree to, or ratify, the Constitution. But everyone wanted all 13 states to agree. Two states took a long time to decide to agree. These states were Rhode Island and North Carolina. In the end, they did agree. Once the first nine states agreed, we say the Constitution was "\_\_\_\_\_." New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify.



Students will read the sections of the Major League Baseball Constitution and answer some questions and find the definition to some vocabulary words.

## **Amendments**

When the Constitution was written, the Framers knew their creation was not perfect. They knew that other people would have good ideas for the Constitution. They wanted to be sure that it wasn't too hard to make changes. They also wanted to be sure that it wasn't too easy.

The Framers added an \_\_\_\_\_ process. An amendment to the Constitution is a change that can add to the Constitution or change an older part of it.

Originally, some people did not want to ratify the Constitution. One big reason was that it did not have a bill of rights. A bill of rights is a list of rights that belong to the people. The government is not allowed to \_\_\_\_\_ these rights. Some of these rights might sound familiar: the right of free speech; the right to practice your own religion; the right to be silent if you are arrested. The original Constitution had no bill of rights. Many of the Framers did not think it was needed. But many people wanted one. So, promises were made to add one, using the amendment process.

Soon, the new government started meeting. Congress proposed the Bill of Rights. A list of twelve changes was sent to the states. In 1791, ten of those changes were agreed to by the states. The ten changes were added to the Constitution. These ten changes are called the "\_\_\_\_\_."

Other changes to the Constitution are discussed below. The last change to the Constitution was made in 1992. The 27th Amendment is actually one of the two leftover amendments from 1791. It is very unusual for an amendment to take that long to be accepted, but it is possible. Some, like the 26th Amendment, are accepted very quickly, in just 100 days. Most, though, take a little over a year to be ratified.

## Major League Baseball Constitution

The current constitution consists of the following sections:

- **Article I** - Formation and Duration of Constitution
- **Article II** - The Commissioner (9 sections)
- **Article III** - The Executive Council (4 sections)
- **Article IV** - Rules, Resolutions and Regulations
- **Article V** - Major League Meetings (3 sections)
- **Article VI** - Arbitration (3 sections)
- **Article VII** - Superseding Effect
- **Article VIII** - Clubs and Territories
  1. 30 clubs, 2 leagues, 3 divisions (lists the clubs in each league and division)
  2. Expansion, Contraction, Realignment, Divisions
  3. Voluntary Termination
  4. Involuntary Termination (12 subsections a-l)
  5. Termination Procedure
  6. Effect of Termination
  7. Effect of Termination on Active Player Contracts and Reservation Rights
  8. Operating Territories
    - a) National League (lists cities)
    - b) American League (lists cities)
  9. Home Television Territories
- **Article IX** - Conduct of Championship Season and Post-Season
  1. Schedule
  2. Playing Rules
  3. Parks not to be changed during season
  4. Championship Season and Post-Season
  5. All-Star Game
- **Article X** - Major League Central Fund
  1. Maintenance of Major League Central Fund
  2. All-Star Game Revenues and Expenses
  3. Major League Club Broadcasts (4 subsections a-d)
  4. National and International Broadcast, Copyright and Royalties
  5. Payments from Central Fund, Books of Account (4 subsections a-d)
  6. Termination of Central Fund
- **Article XI** - Miscellaneous
  1. Fiscal Responsibility
  2. Indemnification of officials
  3. Major League Regulations

## Questions

How many articles are present in the MLB Constitution?

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What are three of the most important aspects of the MLB Constitution, according to you?

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How many clubs, leagues, and divisions are present in the MLB? How do you know?

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## Vocabulary

*Define the words below.*

Amend (verb)

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Terminate (verb)

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Supercede (verb)

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Miscellaneous (adjective)

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