

Read: Creation of the Constitution

During the Revolution, America needed a government. The first attempt at a national government was a failure. The Articles of Confederation had many weaknesses. The included no executive branch – no president, and no ability to tax. With no leadership, no army, and no money the government was bound to fail. Shays’s Rebellion in Massachusetts forced Americans to see the wisdom in creating a stronger central, national government.

Delegates from the states met in Philadelphia to fix the Articles of Confederation. They soon realized they needed to throw away this government and create a new Constitution. After 4 long months in the summer of 1787, the Constitutional Convention finished the American Constitution. The signed it on September 17, 1787. The father of the Constitution, James Madison, wrote most of the document.

One of the major compromises was the Great Compromise. This crated the Congress. It became a 2 - house congress: The House of Representatives and the Senate. This helped both large and small population states.

Many people opposed the Constitution. To convince them to support it, Madison and others wrote the Federalist Papers trying to convince Americans the new Constitution would not overpower the states. Still, Antifederalists feared a strong national government and demanded a Bill of Rights be added to the Constitution.

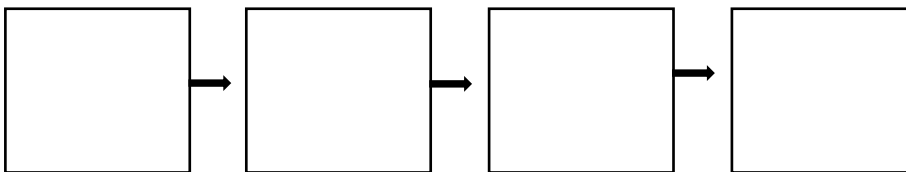
Create a flow chart to show the sequence of events leading to the Constitution. Within each box, write 2 bullet points from each paragraph.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4



Read: The Legislative Branch

Nine of the 13 states had to approve the Constitution in order for it to be the law of the land. This happened on June 21, 1788 when New Hampshire ratified it. The government of the United States was ready to be implemented. The government consisted of three branches: Article I - Legislative, Article II - Executive, and Article III - Judicial.

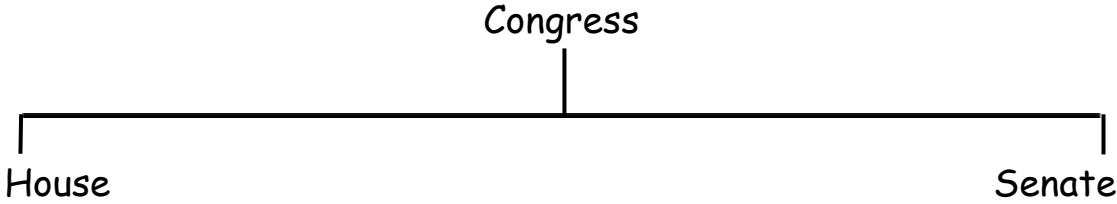
The legislative branch set up the U.S. Congress. Because of the Great Compromise, the Congress had two houses. One house, the House of Representatives, was good for big states. This is because representation was based on a state's population with bigger states getting more representatives in the House. Currently, the House has 435 representatives who serve 2-year terms. The House is led by the Speaker of the House, usually the leader of the majority party in the chamber.

The upper house of Congress is the Senate. The Senate is considered a little more prestigious and strict. It is also better for small population states because each state gets two senators regardless of the size of the state's population. The U.S. Senate has 100 people who serve for six years. There are several leaders in the Senate: The Vice President, President Pro Tem, and the Majority Leader (leader of the party in power).

The job of Congress is to create laws. Both houses of Congress (House and Senate) must approve laws by a majority vote and the president must sign a bill for it to become a law. The president can veto, or reject bills. The bill is dead unless Congress overrides the president by a 2/3rds vote in both houses of Congress.

Congress has other listed powers. They include the power to declare war, coin money, and create post offices. Beyond the listed powers (called enumerated), Congress can use the "necessary and proper" clause in Article I, Section 8 to create laws based on new ideas. This gives the government flexibility, hence the nick name for this important part of the Constitution: the Elastic Clause.

Create a Tree Map to explain important parts of the House and the Senate. Use at least 5 bullet points for each.



Under the Tree Map, finish the following sentences:

To create a law,

The elastic clause gives

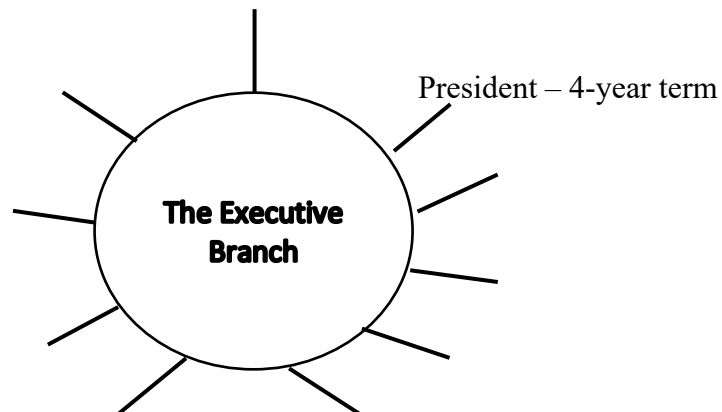
Read: The Executive Branch

Article II set up the Executive Branch. This branch consists of the president, vice president, and the cabinet. The Cabinet has 15 advisors to help the president (approved by the Senate), and is in charge of the executive departments. These departments are responsible for enforcing the laws passed by Congress, which is the main job of the Executive Branch.

The United States has a strange way of electing the president. The popular vote is translated into electoral votes. Electoral votes are allocated to the states based on the number of people they have in Congress: Representatives plus Senators. There are 538 electoral votes spread around the 50 states and Washington D.C. A candidate needs 270 to win the presidency. The president serves a four-year term and is limited to two terms

The president has many powers. He can issue executive orders, which help to enforce laws and have the same impact as laws passed by Congress. He or she is also the commander in chief, or the leader of the military. He or she has the power to appoint judges and justices to the national court system (with Senate approval), and conduct foreign policy. The presidency is an awesome responsibility!

Create a bubble map to write notes for the Executive Branch. Write at least 10 notes.



Read: Judicial Branch

Article III set up the Supreme Court. Later Congress wrote a law (Judiciary Act of 1789) to set up the other levels of the national (federal) court system: District and Appeals Courts. Cases can be sent to the Appeals Courts if there is a legal mistake or constitutional issue.

The Supreme Court has nine justices chosen by the president and approved by the Senate. They have a huge responsibility: to determine if laws or actions by the government are constitutional. This happens if a person or organization challenges a law in court. In such a court case, the Supreme Court decides if the government's actions were in violation of the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. This power is known as judicial review. The Supreme Court will hear about 100 cases a year on major issues facing the country.

The justices serve for life (good behavior). This is important so that they are not influenced by popular opinion or the necessity of campaigning for election.

Create a T-Chart for the Judicial Branch. Write at least 8 bullet points.

Article III	
The Judicial Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Read: Checks and Balances

The United States has a federal system (federalism). This means power is shared between the states and the national government. Delegated powers belong to the national government, while the 10th amendment reserves the rest of the powers to the states. That's why state powers are known as reserved.

In addition to federalism, the three branches of the United States government work to limit the power of the government. This separation of power created a system of checks and balances.

There are several checks on power in the process of creating laws. Both the House and the Senate must vote for bills to become laws. The president can check the power of Congress through the veto power. If the president vetoes a bill, Congress can check the president's power by overriding the veto with a 2/3rds vote by both houses to pass a bill. The Supreme Court can get in on the act by declaring a law unconstitutional. The Court can only do this, however, if someone challenges a law in a court case.

Other checks include the impeachment power Congress has on the president and the Senate's ability to reject the president's nominations of judges, his cabinet, and treaties with foreign countries. The president can check the courts by nominating people to become judges or justices.

These are just a few examples of checks and balances embedded in the United States government through the three different branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Show with a graphic organizer the checks and balances in the process of making a law that includes all 3 branches of the government.

Example on back:

Creating a Law

Finish the chart. Add in the role of the president, courts, and more that congress can do.

