

# PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

## What is Citizenship?

A **citizen** is a person who lives in a community. **Citizenship** refers to the **rights and responsibilities** of the citizens of any community.

## What are the principles of citizenship?

Our principles are the rules set down in the **Constitution of the United States**.

*We the People*  
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United States  
met in Phil



in state

- **Preamble** - sets out the purpose of the Constitution, in order to form a more perfect Union, in order to establish Justice, in order to insure domestic Tranquility, in order to provide for the common defense, in order to promote the general Welfare, in order to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.
- **Articles** - set out the plan of government with division of powers between three branches, executive, legislative, judicial. The division of power keeps the government in balance. The legislative branch has two houses. The House of Representatives is based on population. The Senate has two senators from each state.
- **Bill of Rights** - the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution added in 1789. It lists the freedoms of all citizens. It gives the states powers that the federal government allows.
- **Amendments** - more changes that have been added to the Constitution.

## What are the principles of government?

The first three words, "We the People" are the most important because they clearly show that the people are the true rulers in American government.

## Separation of Powers and a system of checks and balances

The president may veto a law passed by Congress but Congress may override the veto.

The **Supreme Court** may declare a law unconstitutional. The Supreme Court is appointed by the president with the approval of Congress.

**Federalism** - sharing of power between the states and the federal government

## Individuals



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1. **Freedom of Speech** - whenever they write or speak, they are called libel, the government cannot punish people for what they say (allows people to publish their opinions in newspapers or any other written communication) and **Assembly** (allows people to gather together in a peaceful manner and sign a petition telling the government what they are unhappy about.)
2. **Right to bear arms or own guns** - people may own legal guns
3. **Restricts quartering of soldiers** - Before the Revolutionary War, Britain forced people to have British troops live in their homes.
4. **Right to be secure in your own home** - government officials cannot enter a home and search for something. They must have a court order.
5. **Due process of law** - A person is considered innocent until proven guilty. No one can be tried twice for the same crime. No one must testify against himself.

6. Trial by jury in criminal cases - Everyone has the right to a speedy and public trial. Everyone has the right to have a lawyer.
7. If someone is sued for more than \$20, he or she has the right to a trial by jury. This is a civil suit.
8. No cruel and inhuman punishment, no one has to pay a very large bail to get out of jail while waiting for a trial.
9. Rights not listed in the Constitution are kept by the people
10. Powers not granted to the US government are kept by the states.

Many amendments have been added by Congress. Our rights and freedoms are interpreted and enforced by courts and lawmakers.

### Here are some ways people show good citizenship.

1. **Respect** - We respect the rights of others. We welcome diversity in our community from people of different backgrounds and beliefs.
2. **Caring** - We care about how to improve our community.
3. **Responsibility** - Do what is right. Think before you act. Pay taxes for government services. Vote in elections. To vote wisely, citizens need to be educated about the candidates and what they stand for. Some citizens decide to become candidates for local, state, or national government.
4. **Fairness** - Take turns, follow rules, listen to others. Obey the laws.
5. **Courage** - Do what is right even when the task is hard. Be willing to serve jury duty if called.
6. **Honesty** - Tell the truth. Citizens must be honest about how much money they have when they pay income taxes. Do what you say you will do.

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Citizens of the US have special recognizable **symbols** to remind us of our country.

- The **Liberty Bell** was rung in Philadelphia to announce the birth of a new country.



- **The Star Spangled Banner**, our National Anthem, was written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key.
- Citizens have respect for US Flag (Old Glory)

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### Try this!

Who is your state's governor?

What is your state's capital city?

Who are the Senators and Representatives from your state in the Federal government?