



CHAPTER TWO

The Structure of the Constitution

The blueprint we stand on

But first let me ask you another question. Have you ever tried to build something? Maybe you built a treehouse with your dad, a LEGO castle, or even put together a puzzle.

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

This chapter is a tour of the whole document before any single part of it. If the child can say what a Preamble, an Article and an Amendment each do, the rest of the book has somewhere to hang.

A Plan on a Firm Foundation

This chapter explores the blueprint of our American Constitution. We will discuss in simple terms its overall structure and foundation upon which we stand as Americans.

If you want to build in a good way, it is important to have a plan that rests on a firm foundation. Without one, our chances of failure increase greatly. Our Lord Jesus reminds us:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Matthew 7:24–27



The Blueprint of Our Government

The United States Constitution is the blueprint and foundation for our government and its laws. It tells us who has the power to govern, what each part of government is supposed to do, what the government is not allowed to do, and how the Constitution can be changed when necessary.

7,500

words, about

239

years of guidance

The Constitution is only about 7,500 words, yet it has guided our nation for 239 years!



Why a Lasting Plan Matters

Most nations change their form of government due to a variety of reasons. When the system of government constantly changes, it is hard on citizens.

It makes people uncertain about their future. It makes them insecure and unstable. It's difficult to make plans when you cannot be certain if the rules of government will last.



Three Main Parts

Our Constitution has three main parts. Think of the Constitution as a great book with three major sections.

1

The Preamble — tells us *why* the Constitution was written.

2

The Seven Articles — teach how the government works.

3

The Amendments — deal with the *changes*.



Part One: The Preamble

Part one is the Preamble. This helps us understand the purpose of our Constitution. The Preamble is our introduction. It tells us why the Constitution was written. It begins with the famous words, “We the People...”

The Preamble does not give powers to the government. Instead, it explains the goals of the Constitution.

Here is the general outline, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. The purpose of the Preamble is to:

- ◆ Unite the nation
- ◆ Establish justice
- ◆ Keep peace
- ◆ Protect the country
- ◆ Promote the general welfare
- ◆ Preserve liberty for future generations

REMEMBER THIS

Think of the Preamble as the mission statement of America.



Where We Have Failed

Tragically, just like in the case of slavery, our nation is violating the last part of the Preamble. We did not grant liberty to slaves, which cost our nation a terrible civil war to end its evil practice.

And today, we do not grant life or liberty to our own sons and daughters in the womb of their mothers. Abortion is a terrible blight upon our nation as we once again are failing to live out our national creed, while violating our own Constitution.

A CHARGE TO THE YOUNG

Prayerfully, young people, when you get older you will rise to end the scourge of abortion by upholding God's law, "Thou shall not murder" and honor the 5th Amendment to the Constitution that specifically states, "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law."



Part Two: The Seven Articles

The seven articles of the Constitution teach how the government works. The Articles are the main chapters of the Constitution. Each Article explains an important part of our government.

Article I as we learned in the previous chapter defines the Legislative Branch, which is Congress. They make our laws.

Article II defines the Executive Branch, which is the President. His job is to enforce our laws.

Article III is the Judicial Branch, which is the Supreme Court and other federal courts. Their job is to explain what the laws mean and make sure they follow the Constitution.

Article IV concerns the States, which number 50 in America. Together, they comprise the United States of America. This article of the Constitution explains how the states work together as one nation. It reminds each state to respect other states.



Articles Five, Six and Seven

Article V

provides the means to change the Constitution. Sometimes a nation grows and faces new challenges. Article V explains how to change (amend) the Constitution. It is important to note that the Founders wanted changes to be possible — but not easy.

Article VI

defines the Supreme Law of the Land. The Constitution is the highest law in America. Everyone — including the President, Congress, judges, and state governments — must obey the Constitution.

Article VII

puts the Constitution into action. This article explains how the Constitution became the law of the land after enough states approved it.

Those changes that did take place are called the Amendments to the Constitution. Most were good changes, but others not so good.

Some mistakenly have taught the Supremacy clause speaks of the authority of the Supreme Court. Not so — the Supreme Court is not to make law, but make sure it follows the Constitution.



The Oath

It is a part of the oath one takes when serving our nation. The oath to defend the Constitution of the United States is as follows:

THE OATH OF OFFICE

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter.”

On a personal note, I took this oath when entering military service. In the Army, I served with the 101st Airborne Division as an M60 machine gunner.



Part Three: The Amendments

The Constitution has 27 Amendments. An amendment is a change or an addition to the Constitution. Think of an amendment like adding another chapter to a favorite book.

The first Ten Amendments are called The Bill of Rights. These protect many important freedoms.

- ◆ Freedom of religion
- ◆ Freedom of the press
- ◆ The right to petition the government
- ◆ The right to a fair trial
- ◆ Freedom of speech
- ◆ The right to assemble peacefully
- ◆ Protection from unreasonable searches
- ◆ Protection against cruel and unusual punishment



A Right Being Violated Today

One of the struggles with the advancement of modern technology and the creation of a surveillance state, some of our Constitutional rights are being violated by our government. The main one is protection from unreasonable searches.

Our government spies on its people. They examine our computers, phones, and have cameras stationed in most places to watch our activities. So far, no one in or out of government has corrected this violation.

A CHARGE TO THE YOUNG

**Perhaps, when you grow up and become a leader,
you can.**



The Other Seventeen

The other 17 amendments added new protections and improved the Constitution as the nation grew.

It is the opinion of this author one in particular needs to end and that is the 16th Amendment. It created something our Founding Fathers never wanted. When the Constitution was settled, the Founders wanted a stable money system for our nation.

They put limits on direct taxation. They warned of the risk of centralized banking control, and the potential for economic trouble. These fears reflected the Founders' distrust of concentrated power and their preference for indirect, assigned taxes that preserved economic liberty and state's freedoms.

TO LEARN MORE

To learn more about the problems with the 16th Amendment, order from the Tuttle Twins their little booklet, "Creature from Jekyll Island."



Articles, Sections and Clauses

Next, what are the sections in each article? Each of the seven Articles are divided into sections. A good way to think of this is a book. A book has chapters, headings, and paragraphs. Our Constitution has Articles, Sections, and Clauses.

Sections organize the Articles into smaller topics.

1

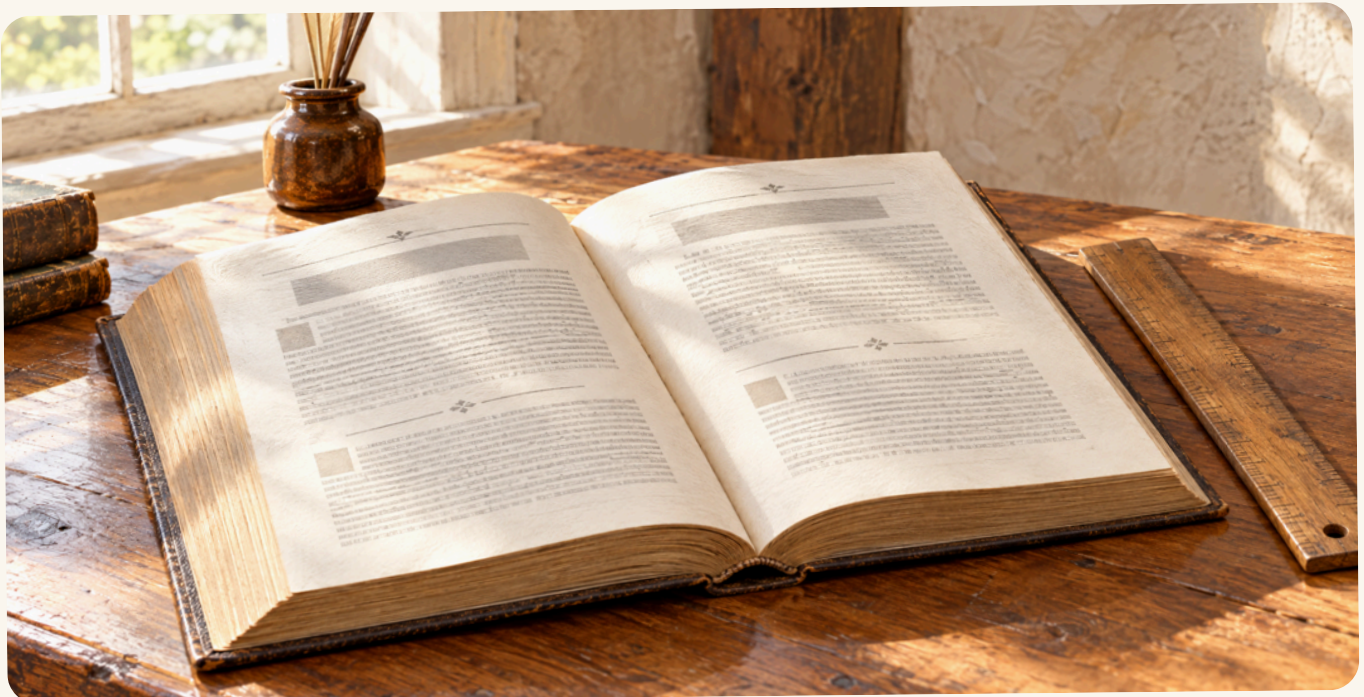
For example, Article I has nine sections because Congress has many responsibilities.

2

Article II has four sections. They explain the President's duties.

3

Article III has three sections about the courts.



Why → How → Changes

The following is a simple illustration of the Constitution. The Preamble tells us why the Constitution was written. The seven articles shows us how our government is to work.

- ◆ Article I — Congress
- ◆ Article II — the Presidency
- ◆ Article III — the Courts
- ◆ Article IV — the States
- ◆ Article V — the Amendments
- ◆ Article VI — the Supreme Law
- ◆ Article VII — Ratification

Then we add Twenty-Seven Amendments meant to protect our freedoms and improve the Constitution, which some may not have helped in that regard, like the 16th Amendment.

AN EASY WAY TO REMEMBER ALL THIS

The Preamble explains the *why* of the Constitution. The Articles explain the *how*. The Amendments deal with the *changes*. So, the Constitution deals with Why → How → Changes.



Constitution Fun Facts

Here are some fun Constitution Facts:

1

Written in 1787.

2

Signed by 39 delegates.

3

Ratified by 9 of the 13 states before it took effect.

4

Only 27 amendments have been added.

5

It is the oldest written national constitution still in use today.



Wise Laws, People of Good Character

The Constitution was designed with the understanding that people are imperfect and that power should be exercised with wisdom and accountability. The Bible teaches similar principles about wise planning and justice. Proverbs 8:15, 16 speaking of God's wisdom working in civil government states:

“By me (God’s wisdom) kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes’ rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth.”

Proverbs 8:15, 16



Just as a strong house needs a solid foundation, a nation needs wise laws and people of good character. John Adams, our second President, agreed. He stated:

JOHN ADAMS

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

This quote shows Adams' belief that the U.S. Constitution was made to work best in a nation that is based in virtue, moral discipline, and religious principles. He saw these as vital supports for liberty and the rule of law, warning that without them, even the strongest legal framework, such as our Constitution, could be harmed by unchecked human evils.

Words to know

As we conclude this chapter here are some words to know. Your assignment is to take each word, correctly spell it, and then write it in a sentence.

Constitution

The highest law of the United States.

Preamble

The introduction that explains the Constitution's purpose.

Article

A major chapter explaining how government is organized.

Section

A smaller part of an article that explains specific responsibilities or rules.

Amendment

A change or addition to the Constitution.

Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments that protect many individual freedoms.

Ratify

To officially approve something.



Spell each word correctly, then use it in a sentence of your own.

Chapter Review

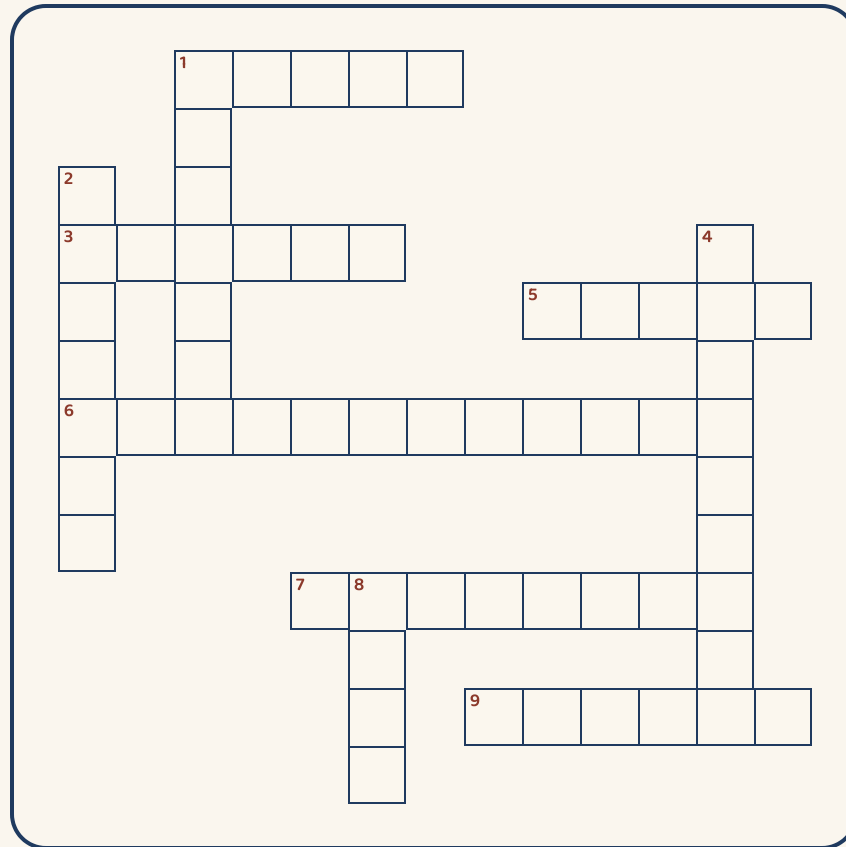
- 1 The highest law of the United States is the _____.
- 2 The introduction that explains the Constitution's purpose is the _____.
- 3 A major chapter explaining how government is organized is an _____.
- 4 A smaller part of an article is a _____.
- 5 A change or addition to the Constitution is an _____.
- 6 To officially approve something is to _____.
- 7 The first ten amendments are called the Bill of _____.
- 8 The Constitution has _____ articles.
- 9 John _____ said our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people.
- 10 Jesus said the wise man built his house on the _____.

THE CONSTITUTION • THREE PARTS

You finished Chapter Two! You now know the *why*, the *how*, and the *changes*.

Structure of the Constitution Crossword

Every answer comes from this chapter. Write one letter in each white square.



ACROSS

- 1 The Constitution has this many Articles.
- 3 To officially approve something.
- 5 John _____ said our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people.
- 6 The highest law of the United States.
- 7 The introduction that explains the Constitution's purpose.
- 9 The first ten amendments are called the Bill of _____.

DOWN

- 1 A smaller part of an article that explains specific rules.
- 2 A major chapter explaining how government is organized.
- 4 A change or addition to the Constitution.
- 8 Jesus said the wise man built his house on the _____.

Family Questions

Talk these through together before you write. There is no hurry.

1 • Why do you think the Constitution begins with a Preamble instead of jumping straight to the rules?

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2 • Which Article do you think is the most important, and why?

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3 • Why should changing the Constitution be possible but difficult?

.....

.....

4 • What freedoms in the Bill of Rights are you most thankful for?

.....

.....

5 • If you were writing a “constitution” for your family, what three values would you include?

.....

.....

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

Question five is the one that turns the chapter into something they own. Let them argue for their three values before you offer yours.

Make Your Own Family Constitution

A family activity. Another fun assignment is to make your own “Family Constitution.”

1

As a family, write a short preamble that begins, “We, the _____ Family...”

2

Write three simple family rules

3

and then one amendment you could add later if your family grows or your needs change.



WHY IT MATTERS

This activity can help young people understand that, like the Constitution, good rules should have a purpose, provide order, and protect the well-being of everyone they serve.