

Constitution Glossary

Big Words Made Easy

MEMORY VERSE

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Psalms 119:30

Why do we need a glossary?

The Constitution contains many words that may sound unfamiliar. Don't worry! Every new word is an opportunity to learn something new. It will increase your vocabulary, learn how to spell better, and help develop your communication skills. These abilities will help you be better prepared for your future stations in life.

This glossary will help you understand the important words you have read throughout this workbook.



A

Amendment	A change or addition to the Constitution. Example: The Bill of Rights contains the first Ten Amendments.
Articles	The main parts of the Constitution that explain how our national government is organized.
Authority	The legal right and responsibility to make decisions or enforce laws.

B

Ballot	The paper or electronic form used to vote in an election.
Bill	A proposed law. It must be approved by Congress and signed by the President (or passed over a presidential veto) before it becomes law.
Bill of Rights	The first Ten Amendments to the Constitution that protect many of our most important freedoms.

C

Checks and Balances	A system that prevents any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.
Citizen	A person who belongs to a country and enjoys its rights and responsibilities.

Citizen-Statesman A person who temporarily leaves home, work, or business to serve the public and then returns to private life.

Civil Case A disagreement between people or organizations, usually involving money, property, contracts, or injuries.

Common Law A legal system developed through the centuries based upon the Bible, court decisions, customs, and long-standing traditions, influenced over time by principles of justice and fairness.

Constitution The highest law of the United States. It explains how our government works and protects the rights of the people.

Constitutional Republic A form of government in which the people elect representatives, and everyone—including government leaders—must obey the Constitution.



D

Delegate

A person chosen to represent others at a meeting or convention.

Democracy

A form of government in which the people have a voice in choosing their leaders. The United States is specifically a Constitutional Republic, using democratic elections to choose representatives.

Due Process

The guarantee that the government must follow just legal procedures before taking away a person's life, liberty, or property.

E

Election

The process by which citizens choose their leaders by voting.

Electoral College

The constitutional system used to officially elect the President and Vice President of the United States.

When Americans vote for President, they are helping choose a group of people called electors. These electors make up the Electoral College. This is the constitutional system used to officially elect the President and Vice President. The Founders created this system so that every state would have a voice in choosing the President.

Enumerated Powers

Specific powers that the Constitution gives to the federal government.

Executive Branch

The branch of government that carries out and enforces the laws. The President leads this branch.

F

**Federal
Government**

The national government of the United States.

Federalism

The constitutional system that divides powers between the federal government and the state governments.

Founder

One of the men or women who helped establish the United States during the Revolutionary War period.

Freedom

The ability to live responsibly and enjoy rights protected by law.

G

Grand Jury

A group of citizens that decides whether enough evidence exists to bring certain serious federal criminal charges.

I

Impeachment

The constitutional process by which the House of Representatives may formally charge certain public officials with misconduct. The Senate then conducts a trial to determine whether the official should be removed from office.

Independence The condition of being free from the control of another nation.

J

Judicial Branch The branch of government that interprets the laws and the Constitution. The Supreme Court is the highest court in this branch.

Judicial Review The power of courts to determine whether laws or government actions are consistent with the Constitution.

Jury A group of citizens who listen to evidence and decide the facts in a legal case.

Jury Nullification A rare situation in which a jury returns a not-guilty verdict even though jurors believe the law was violated because they believe applying the law in that case would be unjust.

Justice Treating people justly according to the law and what is right.

L

Legislature A lawmaking body. At the national level, Congress is the legislature.

Liberty Freedom is protected by law and exercised responsibly.

Limited Government The principle that government has only the powers given to it by the Constitution.

M

Majority

More than half of a group.

N

Natural Rights

Rights that belong to every person because they come from our Creator, not from government. The Declaration of Independence calls these unalienable rights.

O

Oath of Office

A solemn promise made by public officials to faithfully perform their duties and support the Constitution.

P

Preamble

The introduction to the Constitution that explains its purposes.

R

Ratify

To officially approve something, such as the Constitution or an amendment.

**Redress of
Grievances**

The First Amendment right to ask the government to correct a problem or address a complaint.

Republic

A government in which the people elect representatives to make laws on their behalf.

Reserved Powers

Powers kept by the states or the people because the Constitution did not give them to the federal government.

Rule of Law

The principle that everyone—including government leaders—must obey the law.

S

Search Warrant

A written order from a judge allowing law enforcement to search a specific place based on probable cause.

Self-Government

The ability of people to govern themselves responsibly through elected representatives and personal character.



Separation of Powers

The division of government into three branches—Legislative, Executive, and Judicial—to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful or tyrannical.

States' Rights

The principle that states retain powers not delegated to the federal government by the Constitution.

Supreme Court

The highest court in the United States.

T

Trial

A formal court proceeding where evidence is presented and a case is decided.

U

Unalienable Rights

Rights that cannot rightly be taken away because they are given by God. The Declaration of Independence identifies life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as examples. Pursuit of happiness includes protection of private property.

V

Veto

The President's constitutional power to reject a bill passed by Congress. Congress can override a veto with enough votes.

Virtue

Moral excellence or good character, such as honesty, courage, kindness, humility, and self-control.

Vote

To make a choice in an election of a candidate for public office or on an important issue.

W

We the People

The opening words of the Constitution remind us that the government's authority comes from the people.

OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE

One of the most famous descriptions of American government was spoken by President Abraham Lincoln during the Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863, in the middle of the Civil War.

Lincoln ended his short speech with these unforgettable words, "That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Some historians have suggested that Lincoln's famous words, "government of the people, by the people, for the people," may have been inspired by an older saying connected with the Wycliffe Bible, "This Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

MEMORY VERSE

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

Psalms 119:11

Family Discussion

1 • Which new word did you learn today?

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2 • Why is it important to understand the words in the Constitution?

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3 • Which glossary word do you think is the most important? Why?

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4 • How does knowing these words help us become better citizens?

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5 • Which word reminds you most of a Biblical principle?

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Constitution Vocabulary Challenge

Choose five glossary words.

Have one family member read the definition while everyone else guesses the word. Then switch roles. See who can correctly identify the most words.

A Grandparent's Thought

Words matter. Ideas have consequences and a belief system will lead people somewhere. Will it lead to light or darkness, truth or a lie, freedom or tyranny, righteousness or wickedness, heaven or hell?

The Founders carefully chose each word of the Constitution because they knew that clear words bring clarity that could help protect American liberty. When we understand what these words mean, we are better prepared to understand our rights, fulfill our responsibilities, and participate wisely in our Constitutional Republic.

The Bible reminds us that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. As you continue learning these important words, ask God to give you knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Moreover, build a strong godly character to properly apply them in your life.

An informed citizen is better prepared to preserve freedom, establish justice, and serve and love both God and neighbor more faithfully.