

# Fast Facts About the U.S. Constitution

## Better Understand the Constitution's Overall Structure

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The U.S. Constitution was written at the Philadelphia Convention, also known as the [Constitutional Convention](#), and signed on September 17, 1787. It was ratified in 1789. The document established our nation's fundamental laws and government structures and ensured basic rights for American citizens.

### Preamble

The preamble to the Constitution alone is [one of the most important pieces of writing](#) in American history. It sets up the basic principles of our democracy, and introduces the concept of [federalism](#). It reads:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

### Quick Facts

The nickname for the U.S. Constitution is "Bundle of Compromises."

The Chief Draftsmen of the U.S. Constitution is [James Madison](#) and Gouverneur Morris.

The ratification of the U.S. Constitution happened in 1789 with the agreement of 9 out of [13 states](#). Eventually, all 13 would [ratify the US Constitution](#).

### Overall Structure of the U.S. Constitution

There are seven articles followed by [27 amendments](#).

The first 10 amendments are known as the Bill of Rights.

The U.S. Constitution is currently considered the shortest governing document of any nation.

The U.S. Constitution was organized secretly, behind locked doors that were guarded by sentries.

## Key Principles

Separation of Powers: An act of vesting the legislative, executive, and judicial powers of government in separate bodies.

Checks and Balances: Counterbalancing influences by which an organization or system is regulated, typically those ensuring that political power is not concentrated in the hands of individuals or groups.

Federalism: Federalism is the sharing of power between national and state governments. In America, the states existed first and they had the challenge of creating a national government.

## Ways to Amend the U.S. Constitution

Proposal by convention of states, ratification by state conventions (never used)

Proposal by convention of states, ratification by state legislatures (never used)

Proposal by Congress, ratification by state conventions (used once)

Proposal by Congress, ratification by state legislatures (used all other times)

## Proposing and Ratifying Amendments

To propose an amendment, two-thirds of both houses of Congress vote to propose and amendment. Another way is to have two-thirds of the state legislatures ask Congress to call a national convention.

To ratify an amendment, three-fourths of the state legislatures approve it. The second way is for three-fourths of ratifying conventions in states approve it.

## Interesting Constitutional Facts

Only 12 of the 13 original states actually took part in writing the US Constitution.

Rhode Island did not attend the Constitutional Convention, though they eventually were the last state to ratify the document in year 1790.

Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania was the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention at the age of 81-years-old. Jonathon Dayton of New Jersey was the youngest in attendance at just 26-years-old.

Over 11,000 amendments have been introduced in Congress. Only 27 have been ratified.

The Constitution contains several misspellings, including the misspelling of Pennsylvania as "Pensylvania."