

# Unit 3 - The Enduring Constitution

## Six Basic Principles

-A constitution is a legal framework for a government and it sets limits on the powers of the people running the gov't.

### -The Shape of it-

- The American constitution became in 1789 and it is 223 years old.
- It is the "Supreme Law" of the land and over 7,000 words.
- Jacob Shallus was paid \$30 to transcribe the official Constitution.
- **It begins** with the preamble, which is a thesis statement setting forth the purpose and powers of the new gov't.
- **Followed** by seven Articles:
 

Article 1 - Legislative Branch	Article 5 – How to Amend the Constitution
Article 2 – Executive Branch	Article 6 - Public debt, supremacy of national law, oath
Article 3 – Judicial Branch	Article 7 - Ratification
Article 4 - Relations among the states	
- **Finishing up** with the Changes to the Constitution. Known as **Amendments** and there are 27 Amendments (first one 1789, last one 1992).

### -Why it works-

- It works because of six basic principles:
  1. **Popular Sovereignty** – The Government gets its power from the people and the people gave it power through the Constitution.
  2. **Limited Gov't** – The Gov't can only do what the people have given them power to do. The gov't must obey the Constitution {Known as the Constitutionality issue}.
  3. **Separation of powers** – The independent three branches share equal power.

## Separation of Powers

The delegates to the Constitution feared that giving too much power to any one person or group would be too dangerous. They decided that the powers of government should be divided. This idea is called the separation of powers.

**Article I**  
Legislative Branch  
(Congress)



**Powers**

- Makes laws.
- Collects taxes and borrows money.
- Prints and coins money.
- Provides for and maintains the armed forces.

**Article II**  
Executive Branch  
(The president)



**Powers**

- Sees that the laws are carried out.
- Heads the armed forces.
- Makes appointments.
- Makes treaties.
- Signs or vetoes laws.

**Article III**  
Judicial Branch  
(The Supreme Court and other national courts)



**Powers**

- Explains the meaning of laws.
- Decides whether laws passed by Congress are in keeping with those laid down in the Constitution.

4. **Checks and balances** – ties the three branches together, by allowing each branch to restrain each other. This is done to make sure no branch can dominate and create a dictatorship.

President's chooses Supreme Judges.

The President must approve all of Congress' bills before they become laws.

Judicial Branch

Checks and balances

The President can veto bills

Executive Branch

Senate must approve all of the President's choices for judges

The Supreme Court can declare laws and executive orders to be unconstitutional.

Legislative Branch

Congress can impeach the President.

Congress can overturn a Presidential veto.

5. **Judicial Review** – The Supreme Court checks if the gov't is acting in a Constitutional manner.
6. **Federalism** – Division of power among the National and regional {States and local} gov'ts.