

Studying the Constitution: Part I

The Constitution of the United States of America is the supreme law of the land. It is composed of an introduction, called the Preamble, and seven articles. The Constitution applies to every citizen of the United States, and every citizen must obey the laws of the Constitution.

The Preamble begins with the words "We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union . . ." These are exciting words because they let the reader know that the people of the United States are the ones who decide how the government will work and what it can and cannot do. The Preamble lists the tasks of the Constitution:

- "establish Justice" (declare the laws of the nation)
- "insure domestic Tranquility" (keep peace within our country)
- "provide for the common defense" (set up a military)
- "promote the general Welfare" (take care of the citizens)
- "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" (make sure that citizens now and in the future are free)

The seven **articles** form the body of the Constitution and tell how the government will be structured and what the responsibilities of each branch are. Roman numerals, not Arabic numerals, are used for the articles. For example, the second article is Article II, not Article 2. The first four articles are divided into sections.

Article I

Article I has ten sections. Section 1 of Article I defines the legislative branch, which is Congress, and says that all laws will be created by the two (bicameral) parts of Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Section 2 explains who can be representatives and how they will be chosen. Section 3 explains who can be senators and how they will be chosen. Section 4 tells when Congress will meet, and Section 5 says what rules the Congress will follow when it meets.

Section 6 tells how Congress will be paid and what its members can and cannot do while they represent the people. Section 7 explains how laws will be passed, and Section 8 tells what Congress can do, such as tax citizens, coin (or print) money, declare war, and raise armies. Section 9 explains different duties, including overseeing immigration and ensuring preferential treatment and titles of nobility are not given. Finally, Section 10 gives rules that the individual states must follow.

Answer the Following

1. What is the Preamble? _____
2. Name two tasks the Preamble says the Constitution will accomplish. _____

3. Which section in Article I lists the rules Congress must follow when it meets? _____
4. Does Congress have the right to tax citizens? _____

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