



The Constitution: Bill of Rights

Grades 9-12

Background/Objective:

The U.S. government, as we know it today, was born on September 17th, 1787 with the official ratification of the Constitution. Our founding fathers had the goal of forming “a more perfect union” but in order to do so, compromise had to be made to ensure a balance between the states and individuals who would retain their powers and rights, and the strong federal government that was necessary to lead the nation. In this lesson, your student will learn more about this compromise by analyzing the civil rights and civil liberties that the Constitution establishes for individuals in our nation.

**Note: Adobe Flash must be enabled for the simulations in Activity #1 and #2 to work*

Activator: [Crash Course Government: Civil Rights & Liberties video](#). (7:55 minutes)

- *What is the difference between civil rights and civil liberties? In this video your student will learn to define civil liberties and civil rights. The student will also learn where these liberties and rights come from and the examples of each.*

Activity #1:

- Part 1: [TED-Ed: A 3-Minute Guide to the Bill of Rights video](#) (3:34 minutes)
To better understand our civil liberties (the protections that individuals have against a powerful government) the student will review the first 10 amendments in the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights.
- Part 2: [Life Without the Bill of Rights?](#) (Play time is up to the player’s discretion)
The student will use this click-and-explore activity to reflect on what life would be like without the Bill of Rights.

Activity #2: [Do I Have a Right?](#) (Play time is up to the player’s discretion)

- *In this simulation, the student will role play a lawyer in a law firm specializing in constitutional law. Acting as a lawyer, the student must meet with clients to determine if their civil liberties or rights have been violated according to the Constitution.*

Closure: *After your student has completed activities 1 and 2, open for discussion to summarize the importance of the Bill of Rights in protecting our freedoms.*

1. How does the Bill of Rights protect your freedom?
2. What do you feel is the most important right for a citizen to have in a free country?
3. Do you think all citizens should have the same rights? Why or why not?
4. Are there any rights that we don’t necessarily have that you believe we should? Why?
5. How do the citizens, NOT the government, use the Bill of Rights to define their freedoms?

**For additional video resources that will facilitate this discussion, visit [The Constitution Center: Bill of Rights](#) section.*