

American Government: Stories of a Nation for the AP® Course

Guided Reading

Section 2.3: Branches of Government

Name _____
Date _____ Class _____

 **Before you read**

Before reading this section, take a moment to read the Learning Target and vocabulary terms you will encounter.

Learning Target: Describe checks and balances and explain the impact of checks and balances on the political system.

AP® Key Concepts

separation of powers

checks and balances

federalism

legislative branch

expressed or enumerated powers

necessary and proper or elastic clause

implied powers

executive branch

judicial branch

supremacy clause

amendment

 **While you read**

Use the following table to take notes as you read the section.

Constitutional provisions	Main principles	Implications for American government
Separation of powers		
Checks and balances		

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 **After you read**

Once you've finished reading the section, answer the following questions.

1. A separation of powers within a government is best defined as:
 - A. distributing powers across different institutions so that no one branch can become too powerful on its own.
 - B. distributing powers across different branches so that the president is not overwhelmed with decision making.
 - C. distributing powers from the national government to state governments so that the national government cannot become too powerful.
 - D. distributing powers across different institutions so that they can work together to make laws that are in the best interest of the national government.
2. Which delegate would MOST likely be familiar with the concept of separation of powers?
 - A. one who has studied past forms of government
 - B. one who has studied the written works of Baron de Montesquieu
 - C. one who has studied essays from John Adams
 - D. one who has contemplated on the failures of the Articles of Confederation
3. Which statement BEST defines a system of checks and balances?
 - A. A government in which each branch assists the other branches to passing laws.
 - B. A government in which each branch has completely separate powers from one another.
 - C. A government in which each branch has the ability to prevent the other branches from making policy.
 - D. A government in which each branch functions as a separate, smaller government within itself.
4. A system that shares power between the national government and the state government is a characteristic of:
 - A. the Articles of Confederation
 - B. the Constitution

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- C. a republic
 - D. federalism
5. The legislative branch is responsible for:
- A. hearing cases and judging on the Constitutionality of laws.
 - B. negotiating treaties with foreign countries.
 - C. commanding the army and navy.
 - D. making and passing laws.
6. Gianna has served in her state government for four years and wants to move up to a national government role, but still represent the people of her state and advocate for their interests. Which action is Gianna MOST likely to take?
- A. run for re-election to gain more experience
 - B. run for an open seat in the House of Representatives
 - C. run for local government in her hometown
 - D. run for an open seat in the Senate
7. Congress is granted the powers necessary to carrying out its enumerated abilities through:
- A. the commerce clause.
 - B. the implied powers clause.
 - C. the necessary and proper clause.
 - D. the expressed or enumerated powers clause.
8. Which power is an enumerated power of the executive branch?
- A. declaring war
 - B. ratifying treaties
 - C. writing laws
 - D. nominating judges to federal courts
9. The _____ branch is responsible for hearing and deciding on cases within federal courts.
10. Which statement best describes the supremacy clause?
- A. A clause that establishes decisions made at state-level courts to be considered as the supreme law of the land.
 - B. A clause that states the decisions made by the president regarding cases is the supreme law of the land.
 - C. A clause that declares the Constitution, and any national laws and treaties, as the supreme law of the land.
 - D. A clause that allows for the Supreme Court to take over any state-level case at any time during the life of the case.

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11. Assume a committee in Congress wishes to propose a new amendment, what is required for the committee to do so?
- A. Passing the new amendment by a two-thirds vote in the Senate or passing the new amendment in a national convention called by all fifty states.
 - B. Passing the new amendment by a two-thirds vote in both chambers of Congress or passing the new amendment in a national convention called by two-thirds of the states.
 - C. Passing the new amendment by a majority vote in both chambers of Congress or passing the new amendment in a national convention called by all fifty states.
 - D. Passing the new amendment by a majority vote in both chambers of Congress or passing the new amendment in a national convention called by half of the states.
12. Which statement BEST explains a method for ratifying a proposed amendment to the Constitution?
- A. Ratification by a two-thirds vote in three-fourths of state ratifying conventions.
 - B. Ratification by a two-thirds vote in three-fourths of state legislatures.
 - C. Ratification by a majority vote in two-thirds of state ratifying conventions.
 - D. Ratification by a majority vote in three-fourths of state legislatures.
13. Daniel is in charge of reporting to the delegates how many states plan on ratifying the Constitution and so far can report that six states intend on ratifying. How many more states are needed to ratify the Constitution?
- A. seven
 - B. six
 - C. four
 - D. three