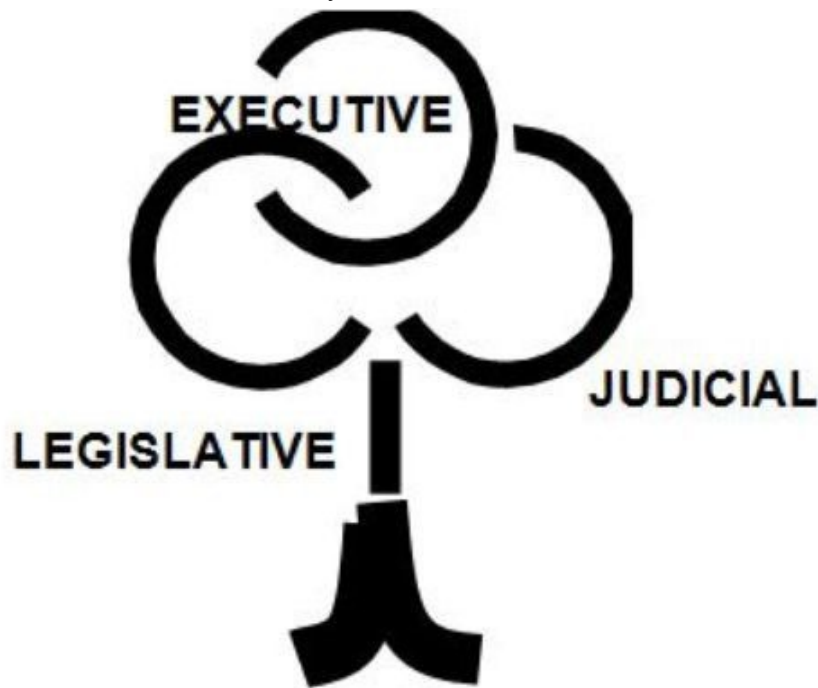


American Government - The Branches of Government

by ReadWorks



Think of the United States government as a tree. What is the thickest part of a tree? The trunk. In our government, the people are the trunk. What are the branches?

The Constitution establishes three branches of government. These branches are the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. Each branch has only the power given to it in the Constitution. This separation is to make sure that no one part of government ever becomes too strong. Think of the tree again. What would happen if one branch of a tree were huge and the others were just little twigs? The whole tree could topple!

To make sure that our government does not fall apart, power is carefully balanced between the branches of government. Each branch of government has a way to curb, or "check," the power of the other two branches. For example, imagine the President does not agree with a law passed by Congress. He can veto it so it never goes into effect. If the law passes, and takes away someone's rights, the Supreme Court can rule it is illegal. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches all check up on each other in different ways.

These two important principles are called "separation of power" and "checks and balances." Together, they help make sure the government works properly and that no one government group, or government official, becomes too powerful.

America.

5. Ghana was the first West African country to **establish** itself as a republic in 1957.
6. It's not too much to ask immigrants to **establish** roots in this country before expecting to lead it.
7. In 1940, Adams helped **establish** the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.
8. Feudalism helped **establish** order by creating a system in which different classes of people supported each other in different ways.
9. "It's a well-known and **established** fact that New Haven is the home of the hamburger," said New Haven Mayor John DeStefano Jr. "In fact, New Haven's claim to the hamburger is even supported and documented in the Library of Congress."
10. We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, **establish** Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, 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.

principle

prin · ci · ple

Definition

noun

1. a basic law or belief on which action or behavior is based.

Our country's laws are based on the principles of liberty and justice for all.

Advanced Definition

noun

1. a law, doctrine, or assumption on which action or behavior is based.

Are these laws based on the principles of liberty and justice for all citizens?

2. (pl.) a personal code of behavior or morality.

They are ruthless and have no principles.

3. an inherent sense of morality that directs or restrains actions.

A person of principle can't always comply with an unjust law.

4. a law or rule that is presupposed or scientifically proven.

The engine's designers well understood the principles of internal combustion.

Spanish cognate

principio: The Spanish word *principio* means principle.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. The balloon rises. Rodriguez has a plan in mind. The flame heats the air inside the nylon balloon. This works on a simple **principle**: hot air is lighter than cold air.
2. Sexual selection is an example of natural selection. That's the **principle** that animals with advantageous traits are more likely to survive and pass those traits to the next generation. Natural selection drives evolution.
3. The Mayflower Compact was written by the Pilgrims and meant to be for them as well. This **principle** of government being "by, of, and for the people" is one of the main ideas of democracy.
4. Physics, after all, is the study of matter and its motion through space and time. And since

sports like soccer, swimming and cycling involve bodies moving through space, they can help us understand how the **principles** of physics work.

5. An evident **principle** runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the **principle** of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak.
6. Suddenly, English tea was cheaper than smuggled Dutch tea, which should have made the colonists happy. But the Townshend tax was still in effect, and colonists didn't want a shilling of their money going toward something they considered illegal. It was a question of **principle**, and a few colonists in Boston were very **principled** indeed.

separation sep · a · ra · tion

Advanced Definition

noun

1. the condition of being set or kept apart.
2. a place or point of division.
3. a hole or space that separates; gap.
4. a legal arrangement in which married couples live separately either prior to or without obtaining a divorce.

Spanish cognate

separación: The Spanish word *separación* means separation.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. The first **separation** of Pangaea occurred when North America **separated** from Africa.
2. You've got to get the muscle to grow a bit to create **separation** between the muscle and the tendons around it, Comana says.
3. I definitely agree that there should be a **separation** of church and state, but we have the words 'In God We Trust' on our coins.
4. This **separation** was intended to ensure that no one part of government would ever become too strong. These three branches divide the work of creating, interpreting, and enforcing the laws of the United States.
5. These two important principles are called "**separation** of power" and "checks and balances." Together, they help make sure the government works properly and that no one government group, or government official, becomes too powerful.
6. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in the front of the bus to a white person on Dec. 1, 1955, shock waves spread across the South, where many states practiced segregation, the **separation** of blacks and whites in public places.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What established the three branches of U.S. government?

- A. the president
- B. the Constitution
- C. the king of England
- D. the Supreme Court

2. This passage uses an analogy of a tree to

- A. show that government is a part of nature, too.
- B. help the reader understand the parts of government.
- C. show the reader how cases reach the Supreme Court.
- D. explain how government has roots and grows.

3. Based on this passage, what can prevent the legislative branch from passing a law that nobody else likes?

- A. The Supreme Court has to give approval to all laws first.
- B. The legislative branch cannot pass laws, only the President can.
- C. The President could veto that law so it wouldn't take effect.
- D. The judicial branch would elect a brand new legislative branch.

4. Read the following sentence: "If the law passes, and takes away someone's rights, the Supreme Court can **rule** it is illegal."

In this sentence the word **rule** means

- A. to measure
- B. to hate
- C. to decide
- D. to suggest

5. The passage "The Branches of Government" is mostly about
- A. trees that are important to the United States
 - B. famous moments in the history of U.S. government
 - C. the role and history of the Supreme Court
 - D. different parts of government and how they work together
6. What are the three branches of the United States government?
7. Describe a specific situation where the principle of checks and balances could be used for the good of the people.
8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

There are checks and balances in the United States government, and _____ no one person can become too powerful.

- A. previously
- B. as a result
- C. after
- D. on the other hand