Teacher Guide: GOVERNMENT BASICS

In order of appearance in Preparing for the Oath, the Civics Test items covered in this theme are:

2. What does the Constitution do?
   • sets up the government
   • defines the government
   • protects basic rights of Americans

1. What is the supreme law of the land?
   • the Constitution

3. The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
   • We the People

12. What is the “rule of law”?
   • Everyone must follow the law.
   • Leaders must obey the law.
   • Government must obey the law.
   • No one is above the law.

13. Name one branch or part of the government.
   • Congress
   • legislative
   • President
   • executive
   • the courts
   • judicial

14. What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?
   • checks and balances
   • separation of powers

41. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?
   • to print money
   • to declare war
   • to create an army
   • to make treaties

42. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?
   • provide schooling and education
   • provide protection (police)
   • provide safety (fire departments)
   • give a driver’s license
   • approve zoning and land use

43. Who is the Governor of your state now?
   • Answers will vary. [District of Columbia residents should answer that D.C. does not have a Governor.]

11. What is the economic system in the United States?
   • capitalist economy
   • market economy
Overview
This Teacher Guide will take you through the Civics Test questions covered in the theme, Government Basics. The instructional steps provided here target ESL students at the high beginning level. Watch the video on the Help screen and take some time to familiarize yourself with the elements and navigation of Preparing for the Oath so that you are comfortable presenting it to your class.

Special Notes: Remind your students that, immediately prior to their naturalization interview, they should visit an official state website to verify the name of their current governor. District of Columbia residents should answer that D.C. does not have a Governor.

Introduction
To start the lesson, open the theme and present the Introduction Screen. Read the introductory paragraph aloud and discuss it with the students.

The United States government is created by the Constitution. The federal government manages things that are important to all Americans. Each state also has a government that manages things that are important to that state. Together, the federal and state governments run the United States.

Explore the Questions
These steps will help you guide your class through the theme, using an LCD projector:

1. Distribute the handout Key Vocabulary—Government Basics and review the definitions with the students.
2. Click on the Start button to begin the first video, Constitution: Purpose.
3. Play the video for the class with the captions on or off.
4. Pause the video where appropriate to discuss the vocabulary and images with the class.
5. Play the video again without pausing.
6. If there is a Practice activity available for this question, click on the “Practice” tab.
7. View and discuss the Practice activity.
8. Click on the “Try” tab.
9. Listen to the Civics Test item and have the students select the answer. Click on the “hear question” button to listen to the item repeatedly. After choosing the correct option, students can hear the answer aloud while they read along at the bottom of the screen.
10. Go through the rest of the videos in this theme, using the steps above.
11. Once the class has gone through all of the videos in this theme, wrap up this lesson with the handout, Finish This Sentence—Government Basics, or assign it to the students for homework.
Key Vocabulary—Government Basics

break laws: to not follow the law

capitalism: an economic system where most things are privately owned

capitalist: a person, group, or nation that believes in or practices capitalism

case: a question or an argument that is decided in the court system

citizen: a person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country

constitutional: when something is allowed because it is in the U.S. Constitution.

create: to make something new

debate: to discuss an issue in order to make a decision

declare war: to formally announce that there will be a war

enforce: to make people follow laws

equal: to be the same

federal: part of the central U.S. government, not state or local governments

powerful: having a lot of power or control

protect: to keep something or someone safe

represent: to make decisions for another person or group of people

representatives: elected members of a government group in the United States, such as in Congress

right: something you are morally or legally allowed to do

self-government: a government where the people make the laws

separate: to keep something or someone apart

treaties: formal written agreements between two or more countries

unconstitutional: not allowed by the U.S. Constitution

zoning: laws that say that land can only be used for a certain purpose, like building houses
Finish This Sentence—Government Basics

Finish each sentence with information you learned in this video. Discuss your answers with your class.

Example: The Constitution sets up the government and protects basic rights of Americans.

1. The three branches of government are ________________________________.

2. In the United States, the economic system is ________________________________.

3. Some state powers are to ________________________________.

4. The first three words of the Constitution are ________________________________.

5. The “rule of law” means ________________________________.

6. The name of the governor of my state is ________________________________.

7. The supreme law of the land is ________________________________.

8. Some federal government powers are to ________________________________.

9. One branch of government cannot become too powerful because of ________________________________.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:
Visit http://www.nga.org/cms/governors/bios right before your naturalization interview for current information on your state’s governor.

Visit http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=1 to go directly to the Government Basics theme.