

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.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

Visit <http://www.nga.org/cms/governors/bios> right before your naturalization interview for current information on your state's governor.

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 _____.



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