

COMPARING THE U.S. AND FLORIDA CONSTITUTIONS

SS.7.CG.3.12 Compare the U.S. and Florida constitutions.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.3.13
 - Changed from “Compare the constitutions of the United States and Florida” to “Compare the U.S. and Florida constitutions.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - No changes
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
 - Changed from “Students will identify the purposes of a constitution (provides a framework for government, limits government authority, protects the rights of the people).” to “Students will identify the purposes of a constitution (e.g., provides a framework for government, limits government authority, protects individual rights of the people).”
 - Changed from “Students will recognize the basic outline of the U.S. and Florida constitutions (both have articles, amendments, and preambles).” to “Students will recognize the basic outline of the U.S. and Florida constitutions (e.g., both have preambles, articles and amendments).”
- Vocabulary Changes
 - No changes

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

Teacher Note: For additional content related to the topics in this lesson, please see the Essential Teacher Content Background Information page in “Amending the United States Constitution” (SS.7.CG.3.5 – Explain the amendment process outlined in Article V of the U.S. Constitution).

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Amending the Florida Constitution
2. 21st Century Changes to the Florida Constitutional Amendment Process

1. Amending the Florida Constitution

Amending the Florida Constitution is a process quite different from amending the U.S. Constitution. Unlike the two processes for amending the U.S. Constitution, amendments to the Florida Constitution may be submitted using one of five different methods. At the national level, only elected state and federal legislators may vote on constitutional amendments; in Florida, all registered voters may vote on amendments. One final difference is that the process for amending the U.S. Constitution has never changed; in Florida, many amendment proposal procedures have changed, including several in the 21st century.

Method Name	What it Means
Ballot Initiative Process:	According to Article XI, Section 3 of the Florida Constitution, a committee must register with the Secretary of State. The committee must collect a number of signatures equal to 8% of the votes cast in the most recent presidential election from at least one-half of the congressional districts in the state. Based on presidential voting in 2020, 877,263 signatures will be required for amendments to be placed on the 2024 ballot secured from voters residing in at least 14 congressional districts.
Constitutional Convention:	Florida voters may call a constitutional convention by collecting a number equal to 15% of those voting for president in the last presidential election in Florida. At the next general election, provided that it takes place at least 90 days later, Florida voters must approve, with a majority, “Shall a constitutional convention be held?” in order to proceed with a constitutional convention.
Constitutional Revision Commission:	Composed of 37 members, this commission meets every 20 years to examine the state constitution and propose the amendments deemed necessary. The commission last met in 2017 and will next meet in 2037. Members of the Constitutional Revision Commission include: 1. The Attorney General 2. 15 members chosen by the Governor 3. 9 members chosen by the Speaker of the House 4. 9 members chosen by the Senate President 5. 3 members chosen by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court
Legislative Joint Resolution:	The Florida Legislature can pass a joint resolution supported by three-fifths (60%) of the membership of each house of the legislature. The proposed amendment will appear on the next general election ballot provided that the next general election is at least 90 days later.

Taxation and Budget Reform Commission:	<p>This is a 22-member Commission that last met in 2007 and will meet every 20th year thereafter.</p> <p>Members of the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 11 members chosen by the Governor 2. 7 members chosen by the Speaker of the House 3. 7 members chosen by the Senate President <p>(Note: No voting member of the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission may be a member of the state legislature at the time of appointment)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. 4 non-voting ex officio members who are members of the legislature at the time of appointment two of which are chosen by the Speaker of the House and two of which are chosen by the Senate President. One of the Speaker's and one of the Senate President's selections must be a member of the minority party in their chamber.
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Source: [Florida Division of Elections](#)

2. 21st Century Changes to the Florida Constitutional Amendment Process

Year	Change	Impact
2022	Amendment was placed on the ballot to abolish the Constitutional Revision Commission however it did not receive the 60% support necessary to pass.	Did NOT pass
2007	The Florida legislature granted commercial property owners the right to remove persons from their property collecting signatures for proposing amendments through the "citizen initiative process" even if the property is designated for public use.	Limits the available places where petition circulators may collect signatures.
2005	Amendment placed on the ballot requiring that amendments be ratified with 60% of the vote when it had been 50%+1 (ratified in 2006).	Increased the minimum threshold for ratifying constitutional amendments; made it more difficult to ratify amendments.
2004	Amendment placed on the ballot to move the deadline for citizen generated amendment proposals to about six months earlier than previously required (ratified in 2004).	All signatures must be submitted by February 1 of the year that the amendment will be placed on the November ballot.

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	
How are the U.S. and Florida constitutions similar? How are they different?	
BENCHMARK	
SS.7.CG.3.12 Compare the U.S. and Florida constitutions.	
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY	
N/A	
OVERVIEW	
In this lesson, students will learn about the purposes of a constitution, the basic outline of both the U.S. and Florida constitutions, and the amendment process for both constitutions.	
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will identify the purposes of a constitution (e.g., provides a framework for government, limits government authority, protects individual rights of the people).• Students will recognize the basic outline of the U.S. and Florida Constitutions (e.g., both have preambles, articles and amendments).• Students will compare the amendment process of the U.S. and Florida Constitutions.• Students will recognize the U.S. Constitution as the supreme law of the land.	
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS	
N/A	
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• amendment, article, authority, constitution, Florida Declaration of Rights, preamble, ratification, rights, Supremacy Clause	
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	
Document analysis	Collaborative learning
MATERIALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlighters• Copier paper• Coloring supplies• U.S. Constitution image (external link)• Florida Constitution image (external link)• U.S. Constitution text (external link)• Florida Constitution text (external link)	

- Comparative Constitutions reading
- Constitutional Vocabulary slides
- Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution slide
- Comparing Constitutions: Individual Rights activity sheet
- Amending the U.S. and Florida Constitutions reading
- Constitution Amending Task Cards
- Student digital device

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.2.1- Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey a purpose in texts.
- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To begin this lesson, project the interactive image of the “U.S. Constitution” from the National Archives website and the current “Florida Constitution” image from the Florida Memory website. Teacher Note: The intent of this hook activity is to project images of the documents rather than just text so that students have an awareness of what the documents look like, especially the U.S. Constitution. Text of the documents will be used later in the lesson. 2. Ask students if they can identify the documents. Zoom in and around the documents helping students look for context clues. Lead students to the understanding that they are looking at the U.S. Constitution and the Florida Constitution. Teacher Note: Florida has had six constitutions. The most current version was ratified in 1968. You can view the historical ones here on the Florida Memory website. 3. Ask students: How many constitutions do you think there are in the United States? Explain that there is one for the national government and one for each state. 4. Provide students a copy of the “U.S. Constitution” text from the National Archives. 5. Pass out copies of the current (1968) version of the “Florida Constitution” text from Florida Memory. Teacher Note: An alternative to printing both documents is to have students take out their copies of the U.S. Constitution and then project the Florida Constitution, continue to project both documents on the board or provide digital access to both documents. 6. Have students examine both the U.S. Constitution and Florida Constitution. Point out the preamble of both constitutions. Explain to students that both constitutions begin with a preamble and that the basic structures of both documents are fairly similar. 7. Place students into pairs and give them a few minutes to make a list of the additional shared structural features between both documents. 8. Ask pairs to share some of the similarities they noted. Lead students to the conclusion that both documents have a preamble, articles and amendments. Teacher Note: In the Florida Constitution, the amendments are added to/embedded in the appropriate articles and not listed separately at the end like the U.S. Constitution. 9. Pass out the “Comparative Constitutions” reading from iCivics. 10. Explain to students that they will read and complete activities in the reading in order to understand additional similarities and some differences between the two documents. 11. Project the preamble comparison on page 1 of the “Comparative Constitutions” reading. 12. Ask a student to read aloud the first paragraph and the activity directions. 13. Next, ask another student to read aloud the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. 14. Discuss the Preamble and review the following points with students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Preamble is the introduction to the U.S. Constitution. ■ The Preamble outlines the general goals of the framers: to create a just government, to ensure peace, have an adequate national defense, and a healthy, free nation. ■ The first three words of the Preamble – ‘We the People’ – emphasize that the nation should be ruled by the people. Teacher Note: If SS.7.CG.1.8 has already been taught, use this time as a quick review. Otherwise, introduce the foundations of the Preamble. 15. Ask another student to read aloud the preamble to the Florida Constitution. 16. Compare the two preambles by following the directions in the reading and placing a box around the words or phrases that are the same.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Share with students that although not all of the words are the same, the preambles do have a similar intent. They both serve as introductions, outline the general goals of the writers (or framers) and both emphasize the role of the people. 18. Before reading the next section, take a moment to pre-teach some of the additional vocabulary that will appear using the “Constitutional Vocabulary” slides. Teacher Note: Effective vocabulary pre-teaching should include a dialogue with students about their prior knowledge of the word, explanation in student friendly language, provide examples or use the word in a sentence, and point out the image to help them remember. 19. Read aloud the Government Rules! paragraph from the “Comparative Constitutions” reading and the directions included at the bottom of page 1. 20. Model the next activity with the class by reading both passages and underlining the differences in the portions of the constitutions on page 1. 21. Provide students with time to read and complete the rest of the activity which continues on page 2. 22. Regroup as a class to check for understanding.
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DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To start today, project the “Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution” slide and read the excerpt to the class. 2. Pose the following questions to the class: Who can summarize this excerpt? What evidence from the excerpt did you use to create this summary? What is important about this excerpt? (Supremacy Clause; ‘Supreme Law of the Land’) 3. Pass out a copy of the “Comparing Constitutions: Individual Rights” activity sheet to each student. Explain to students that while both the U.S. Constitution and the Florida Constitution guarantee and protect individual rights, sometimes a state constitution can guarantee more rights than the U.S. Constitution does. 4. Read the directions at the top of the “Comparing Constitutions: Individual Rights” activity sheet aloud together. 5. Complete the first row together as a whole class. 6. Provide students time to individually complete the second row and then review as a class. 7. Provide students time to complete the remainder of the activity. 8. Monitor students as they work to check for understanding. 9. Upon completion, pose the following questions for discussion: Based on what you have read today and yesterday, what do you think are the purposes of constitutions? What clues are in the activities that helped you determine the purposes? Lead students to the understanding that the purposes of a constitution (for the whole country or for one state) are the same: to provide a framework for the government, limit government authority, and protect individual rights of the people. 10. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment): Instruct students to write a well-crafted response to the following prompt: <u>Prompt</u> -The purpose of a constitution is to provide a framework for government, to limit government authority, and to protect individual rights of the people. Using evidence from the readings, find specific examples for each purpose and from each constitution. Summarize your findings in two paragraphs, one for each constitution.
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DAY 3

1. Ask students to consider how a constitution can be changed and pose the following questions for discussion: What are changes to constitutions called? (amendments) Do you think the process is the same for the U.S. and Florida constitutions? (no)
Teacher Note: If SS.7.CG.3.5 has already been taught, use this time as a quick review. Otherwise, introduce the amendment process.
2. Hand out the “Amending the U.S. and Florida Constitutions” reading and read through the amendment process for both the U.S. and Florida as a whole class.
3. Provide each student one of the “Constitution Amending Task Cards” from the list below:
 - U.S. Constitution: Proposal (Congress)
 - U.S. Constitution: Proposal (National Convention)
 - U.S. Constitution: Ratification (State Legislatures)
 - U.S. Constitution: Ratification (State Conventions)
 - Florida Constitution: Proposal (Ballot Initiative Process)
 - Florida Constitution: Proposal (Constitutional Convention)
 - Florida Constitution: Proposal (Constitution Revision Commission)
 - Florida Constitution: Proposal (Legislative Joint Resolution)
 - Florida Constitution: Proposal (Taxation and Budget Reform Commission)
 - Florida Constitution: Approval/Adoption**Teacher Note:** You will have to make/hand out duplicates as you most likely will have more students than cards. To ensure the lesson moves quickly, have the cards pre-cut ahead of time and use a class set.
4. Ask students to quickly review their appropriate section of “Amending the U.S. and Florida Constitutions” reading based on their assigned task card.
5. Next, they should create a small visual poster that explains their section to the class. Ask students NOT to label their image.
6. When completed, call on different students to come to the front of the class and share/project their image. Have the rest of the class try to identify:
 - Does the image pertain to the U.S. or Florida Constitution?
 - Is the image portraying how an amendment is proposed or how it is ratified/approved?
 - Explain the step/process shown in the image.
7. After using multiple student images, recap as a whole class the similarities and differences between the two constitutions (The U.S. Constitution has less ways to propose amendments, amendments are voted on by elected officials and not citizens, amendments are listed at the bottom of the document, has been amended less times)
8. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
Ask students to either work independently or with a partner to compare the U.S. and Florida Constitutions by creating a short digital slideshow. Presentations should include:
 - The purpose of a constitution
 - The basic outline of the U.S. and Florida Constitutions
 - A comparison of the amendment process
 - Article VI Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
abatement*	a deduction or lessening of something
abridge*	to lessen or diminish
amendment	a change to a constitution (e.g., U.S. Constitution, Florida Constitution)
article	a numbered chapter or section of a contract, treaty, or constitution
authority	the power to direct the actions of people or to make decisions
cession*	the act of giving something up
constitution	the basic principles and laws of a nation or state that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it; usually a written document
Florida Declaration of Rights	the part of the Florida Constitution that lists the basic rights guaranteed to all citizens who live in the state
infringe*	advance beyond the usual limit, encroach
jurisdiction*	the territory within which power can be exercised
militia*	the entire body of physically fit civilians eligible by law for military service
preamble	the introduction to a constitution; it states that the people establish the government, and it lists the purposes of the government
ratification	the process of formally approving something
revenue*	money derived from income
rights	A power or privilege held by the general public as the result of a constitution, statute, regulation, judicial precedent, or other type of law
Supremacy Clause	Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution; establishes that the national (federal) constitution, and national law generally, take precedence over state laws and constitutions
vested*	absolute, fixed, unconditional

** The terms with an asterisk denote words that are not considered civics content vocabulary but are important for students to know in order to complete the lesson activities.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- Current Florida Constitution
- *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* by Linda R. Monk

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Comparative Constitutions reading

Sample Answers: Comparing Constitutions: Individual Rights activity sheet

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

Sample Presentation Rubric

SOURCES

Image of the U.S. Constitution: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1667751>

Images of the Florida Constitution: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/30401>;

https://www.floridamemory.com/discover/historical_records/constitution/

U.S. Constitution: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>

Florida Constitution:

<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?Mode=Constitution&Submenu=3&Tab=statutes>

Comparative Constitutions reading and Comparing Constitution: Individual Rights activities:

<http://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/comparative-constitutions>

Civics Content Vocabulary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>; <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex>

Amending the U.S. and Florida Constitutions reading:

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/United-States-Constitution/277514#315115-toc>;

<https://classroomlaw.org/resources/amending-the-constitution/>;

<https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/laws-rules/constitutional-amendments/initiatives/>

Notes on the Preamble: <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/preamble>