

# Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## The Amendment Process

The Constitution has only been amended 27 times in all these years. Does that tell you anything about how easy it is to change? Believe it or not, there are only two steps to the amendment process: approval in the U.S. Congress and approval by the states. But these steps are hugely difficult (especially the second one). Getting members of Congress to agree on something is hard enough... but getting states to agree?? That's an awful lot of agreement! With so much approval required, changing the Constitution can take years.

Here are the ways it can be done:

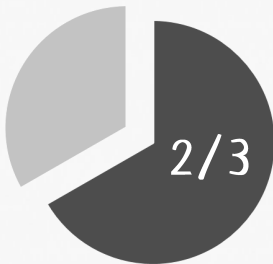
### STEP 1: PROPOSE

Choose one of these methods:

#### ☐ Congressional Vote

(All existing amendments proposed this way)

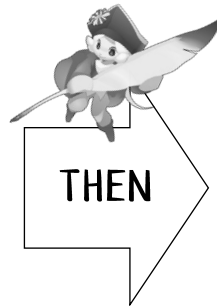
Two-thirds ( $2/3$ ) of both houses of Congress vote YES to the amendment.



#### ☐ Congressional Convention

(Never actually been used)

Two-thirds ( $2/3$ ) of state legislatures ask Congress to hold a convention. The amendment is proposed at this meeting.



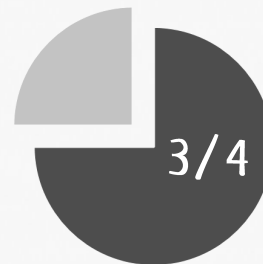
### STEP 2: RATIFY

Choose one of these methods:

#### ☐ State Legislature Vote

(Most common method)

Three-fourths ( $3/4$ ) of state legislatures vote YES to ratify (approve) the amendment.



#### ☐ Special State Conventions

(Only been used once)

Each state holds a special convention to consider the proposed amendment. Three-fourths ( $3/4$ ) of state conventions vote YES to ratify the amendment.

## So Few Amendments, So Much Time

Hundreds of amendment proposals are introduced in Congress each year. Only 33 have ever received enough votes to actually be proposed. Of those, 27 were ratified and are now part of our Constitution. The first twelve amendments were proposed only a year after the Constitution took effect! Only ten of these were ratified by the states. They became the first ten amendments to the Constitution, and we call them the **Bill of Rights** because they define many of the rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens. The 27th Amendment was actually one of those original twelve... but it wasn't ratified until 1992! The 21st Amendment, which repealed the prohibition against alcohol in 1933, was the only amendment where states held special conventions to ratify the proposal.



*This postage stamp commemorated the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote in 1920.*

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