

# The Basic Principles of our Great Country

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Subjects/Courses: Social Studies: South Carolina History, United States History, American Government

Grade Levels: 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grades

Time/Duration: 90 minutes

Overview/Description: America became an independent nation following the Revolutionary War which gave it the freedom from Great Britain. In order to become a successful country they needed to lay down a foundation that would allow for this system to be properly created. This lesson focuses on some of the basic principles of the United States government.

Standards:

8-3.3: Explain the basic principles of government as established in the US Constitution.

USG 3-1: Contrast the distribution of powers and responsibilities within the federal system, including the purpose, organization, and enumerated powers of the three branches; the workings of the Supreme Court; and the operation of the law-making process.

HSHC 1.5: Explain how the fundamental principle of limited government is protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including democracy, republicanism, federalism, the separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and individual rights.

Objectives: The students will be able to:

1. Identify the three branches of government.
2. Explain how checks and balances works in the United States Government.
3. Explain the constitutional powers of each branch of government.
4. Analyze the differences in each branch of government.

Materials: Three Ring Circus/America Rock (School House Rock), Constitution PowerPoint, Branches of Government Handout, Who's Job Is It Handout, and Foldable Template

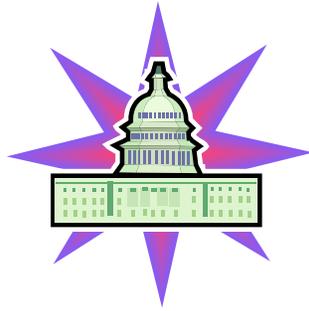
Instruction: Starting a New Nation PowerPoint and Branches of Government Handout (see attached)

Activity: 3 Branches of Government Foldable: must include key facts about each branch and why you (the student) feels it is important to the American Government.

- Who's Job Is It? Game: Students will fold the branch cards and as the questions or statements are read, the students will show the responding branch based on what they think is the correct answer. The teacher should read each of the questions and allow the students to take their score to see how many they answered correctly. This will also be an informal assessment with teachers checking to see how many students are able to answer the questions correctly.

Assessment: Students will write a reflection explaining how the system of checks and balances works to keep all 3 branch of the federal government in order.

# The Three Branches of Government



Branch—**Legislative**

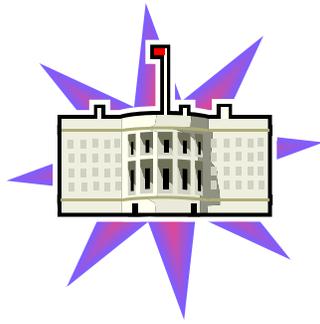
or

**Congress**

House of Representatives

Senate

- **Make our nation's laws**
- **Selected by popular vote**
- **Collect taxes**
- **Print money**



**Branch—Executive**

**or**

**President or Vice-President  
and members of the cabinet**

- **President, vice president,  
and cabinet**
- **Enforces the laws**
- **Recommends new laws**
- **Head of the Armed Forces**



# **Branch—Judicial** **or** **Supreme Court**

- **Interprets the law**
- **Decides if laws are unconstitutional**
- **Settles disputes between states**