



Alabama Classroom Improvement Curriculum—Social Studies

What Citizens Need to Know About Government
addresses Alabama Classroom Improvement Curriculum for the American
government component of the social studies curriculum grade 12.



American Government

The study of American Government provides students with a detailed understanding of the organization and function of government at all levels in the nation. While a great deal of factual information is necessary in this course, facts alone do not meet the requirements for the study of American Government. It is imperative that students acquire an appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a citizen.

Students acquire skills needed for collecting and analyzing information important to the study of government. Social participation provides an opportunity to practice democratic ideals and citizenship.

Representative Democracy

Students will:

1. Explain the origins and functions of government.

- *Chapter 1 details the fundamental concepts of democracy and traces the European origin of the U.S. government. Important historic documents like the Code of Hammurabi, the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights are discussed and links are included to the complete texts of these and other documents. Important political philosophers, such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, are also identified and links are provided to the complete texts of their most influential works.*
- *Chapter 3 explains how the U.S. Constitution defines the functions of the U.S. government. Key concepts and terms like checks and balances and amendments are defined. A Web link is included to the complete text of the U.S. Constitution for further study.*

2. Evaluate the arguments for the necessity of politics and government.

- *Chapter 1 explains how government has an impact upon almost every aspect of our lives. The necessity of government is explored and the development of different types of government—command, custom and consent—is described. The arguments of political philosophers about the necessity of government are presented and links are included to the complete texts of their most influential works.*

- Chapter 16 explores the necessity of politics and traces the evolution and rationale of political party origins in the United States. Web links are included to the major political parties in the United States and influential third parties, including the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, the Reform Party and the Green Party.

3. Compare and contrast the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments.

- Chapter 1 discusses the essential characteristics of custom, command and consent forms of government. Limited governments like democracies and unlimited governments like dictatorships are identified and examples are given. Related articles and Web sites include more information and more examples.

4. Assess the impact of the rule of law on groups and the individual.
- Divine law
 - Natural law
 - Common law
 - Constitutional law
 - Statute law
 - International law

- Chapter 1 contrasts the “rule of law” and the “rule of man” and provides a link to the writings of Voltaire who championed the “rule of law.” This chapter also distinguishes between common law, constitutional law and statute law. Political ideas such as natural rights and the divine right of kings with links to Rousseau’s “Social Contract” can also be found in this chapter.

- Chapter 28 discusses international law and describes the role of the United States in international politics. Web links are included to various international political organizations like the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

5. Trace the development of representative democracy in America.

- Chapter 1 discusses the development of representative democracy in America. European philosophers that influenced American democratic principles are identified and links are included to their biographies and the complete texts of their most influential works. Influential historical documents like the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights are also highlighted and links are available to the complete texts of these and other primary sources.

- *Chapter 2 describes the major debates about representative government at the Constitutional Convention. Related articles and Web sites provide primary sources from the Constitutional Convention and opposing views of Federalists and anti-Federalists, including the complete texts of all the Federalist Papers and the anti-Federalist response, on different forms of representative democracy.*
- *Chapter 3 explains how the U.S. Constitution outlines the principles of American representative democracy and a link to the complete text of the Constitution is included. Alexis de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America" is also featured in this chapter and related articles and Web sites are included for more information.*

6. Analyze basic American documents associated with the founding of the federal system.
- The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut
 - The Declaration of Independence
 - The Articles of Confederation
 - The Constitution
 - The Federalist and the anti-Federalist Papers
 - The Bill of Rights

- *Chapter 1 discusses historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation and links are included to the full text of these and other documents.*
- *Chapter 2 details the Federalist Papers and provides links to these primary source documents. The response of the anti-Federalists is also presented and a link is included to primary sources related to the anti-Federalist position.*
- *Chapter 3 discusses the U.S. Constitution and explains how it provides a framework for the functions of the U.S. government. Key concepts and terms like loose constructionist and strict constructionist are defined. A link is included to the complete text of the U.S. Constitution and related articles and Web sites identify current issues related to various interpretations of the Constitution.*
- *Chapter 9 explores the impact of the Bill of Rights and the importance of the Bill of Rights in protecting minorities. A link to the complete text of the Bill of Rights is included, as is a link to The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. The changing interpretation of the Bill of Rights is presented and the civil rights movement is cited as an example. Related articles and Web sites present opposing views on the current interpretation of the Bill of Rights and issues related to minorities in the United States.*

Federalism

Students will:

7. Describe the purposes, organization, and functions of American Government as outlined in the Constitution.
 - Legislative Branch
 - Executive Branch
 - Judicial Branch

- *Chapter 2 describes the structure of the federal government. Key concepts, such as separation of powers and checks and balances, are defined. The relationships among the various branches of government and between the federal and state governments are discussed. Related articles and Web sites identify conflicts between the different branches of government and conflicts between the various state governments and the national government.*
- *Chapter 3 reviews the purposes and structure of the U.S. Constitution. A link is included to the complete text of the Constitution and related articles and Web sites identify various interpretations of current constitutional issues.*
- *Chapter 4 describes the executive branch of government. The roles of the president and vice-president are described. Links are included to biographies of all U.S. presidents and a link is also available to the Web site of the White House for current information on the functions of the executive branch. Related articles and Web sites also outlines the current agenda for the president and the complete text of important speeches given by the president and vice-president are included.*
- *Chapter 5 discusses the role of the president's cabinet in advising the president and overseeing the various departments of the executive branch that operate the federal government. Web links are included to all cabinet departments, including the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense.*
- *Chapter 6 highlights the role Congress plays in making public policy. Links to the House and Senate Web pages are included, as are links to all the congressional committees.*
- *Chapter 7 explores the functions of the judicial branch. Links are included to the U.S. Supreme Court and many lesser courts of the judiciary. Key concepts and terms like judicial review and original jurisdiction are defined. Links are also provided to the complete text of important Supreme Court decisions, such as Miranda v. Arizona, Roe v. Wade and Bush v. Gore.*

8. Analyze the relationships among national, state, and local governments.
9. Describe the organization and operation of Alabama governments.
 - State
 - County
 - Municipal

- *Chapter 2 explains how the U.S. federal system of government defines the relationship between the national, state and local governments. Key concepts, such as reserved powers and elastic clause, are defined. Web links are included to the U.S. Constitution and the 10th Amendment to the Constitution for more information on the relationship between the national and state governments.*
- *Chapter 3 fully discusses the U.S. Constitution and lays the foundation for understanding how national, state and local governments share powers and responsibilities. A Web link is available to the complete text of the U.S. Constitution for more information.*
- *Chapter 10 explores the role and organization of state governments. Links are included to all state government Web sites, including Alabama, for more information on the organization of the state government and to identify issues being addressed by the various state governments.*
- *Chapter 11 presents information about local governments and describes the relationship between the state and local governments. A link is available that provides access to all local government Web pages for more information on issues being addressed by local governments around the country, including Alabama.*

Political and Civic Life

Students will:

10. Trace the development of political parties in the United States.

- *Chapter 16 identifies the functions of political parties in the U.S. and presents a historical perspective of their necessity in a free society. The two-party system and the role of third parties are also presented. Links to the Web sites for the Democratic, Republican, Reform, and Green parties are provided.*

11. Assess the impact of special interest groups on the American political system.

- *Chapter 13 discusses the impact of special interest groups on the American political system. The role of lobbies and political action committees (PACs) is described. Attempts to reform the fundraising aspects of the political system are explored. Related articles and Web sites present opposing views of ways to reform the relationships among politicians, lobbyists, PACs and wealthy donors.*

12. Analyze political participation by Americans.

- Voting patterns
- Campaign funding
- Apportionment

- *Chapter 6 explains how the apportionment process works in assuring equal representation in Congress. The way the Census is used to determine the reapportionment of Congress is discussed. The concept of gerrymandering is described and links are included to important Supreme Court decisions related to reapportionment, such as Baker v. Carr. Related articles and Web sites present opposing views on ways to interpret census data and reapportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.*
- *Chapter 15 explains how citizens participate in the political process through voting. Key concepts and terms like referendum and recall are defined. The future of electronic voting and the impact of the disputed 2000 election on the future of voting are explored. Related articles and Web sites identify issues and candidates being voted on in the current election cycle.*
- *Chapter 16 discusses political parties and campaigns. The inner workings of political conventions and the road to the presidency are explored. The way individuals participate in the political process through volunteering in political party functions are identified. Web links are included to all the major political parties in the U.S., including the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Reform Party and the Green Party.*

13. Analyze the relationship between rights and responsibilities of citizens.
 Examples: due process, rights of the accused, property rights, voting, patriotism, military service

- *Chapter 1 explains how property rights are a major component of American democracy. Political philosophers like John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau who wrote about these concepts of property rights and individual freedoms are identified and links are included to their biographies and the complete texts of their most influential works. Related articles and Web sites also explore how patriotism impacts the relationship between the citizenry and the government.*
- *Chapter 7 describes the rights of the accused and due process. The difference between criminal and civil litigation is explained. Important Supreme Court cases related to due process, such as Miranda v. Arizona and Gideon v. Wainright, are identified and links are provided to the complete text of these and other major Supreme Court decisions. Web links are also included to the U.S. Supreme Court and other major federal courts.*
- *Chapter 14 explores the rights and responsibilities of citizens, such as military service and paying taxes. The way immigrants become citizens through the naturalization process is explained and a link is included to the Web site of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services for more information on obtaining U.S. citizenship. Related articles and Web sites also examine how citizens express patriotism through volunteering in community activities.*
- *Chapter 15 explains how voting is not only a right of citizens but also a responsibility. Related articles and Web sites identify current voting trends and present views on how to increase citizen participation in the voting process.*

- *Chapter 27 discusses how citizens participate in the military. The concept of the draft is explained. Links to related articles and Web sites identify current U.S. military deployments around the globe. Links are also provided to the Web sites of all the major branches of the U.S. military, including the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Marines, and the U.S. Navy.*

14. Assess the impact of court decisions, governmental agencies, acts of the U.S. Congress and the Alabama Legislature on individual rights.

- *Chapter 3 explains how court decisions and act of the U.S. Congress impact individual rights. The concept of civil liberties is explored and the changing interpretation of civil liberties over time is discussed. The impact of the War on Terrorism on civil liberties is cited as an example. Related articles and Web sites present opposing views on current civil liberty issues being addressed in the court system and in society.*

- *Chapter 6 examines the role of the legislature in the U.S. political system. The different branches of Congress are identified and Web links are provided to the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, as well as the various congressional committees in both chambers of Congress. Related articles and Web sites identify current legislation being addressed in Congress and explore the impact of that legislation on individuals.*

- *Chapter 8 describes how governmental agencies impact individuals. The use of governmental agencies to protect individuals from harmful products is discussed. Related articles and Web sites identify current policy decisions aimed at protecting individuals.*

- *Chapter 9 explains how court decisions and governmental legislation impact individual rights. The civil rights movement is described and major civil rights figures like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. are identified. Links are included to the biographies of these and other influential individuals. Important Supreme Court cases related to civil rights, such as Brown v. Board of Education and Roe v. Wade, are discussed and links are provided to the complete texts of these and other Supreme Court decisions.*

- *Chapter 10 describes the influence of state governments on individuals. A link is available to a Web site that provides access to all state government Web pages, including Alabama, for more information on the issues specific to the various state governments.*

15. Examine the various roles of the citizens in a participatory democracy.
Examples: voter, juror, activist

- *Chapter 9 identifies activists that have been influential in changing American political thought, in the context of civil rights. Important activists like Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks are highlighted and links are included to their biographies.*

- *Chapter 14 explores the various roles of citizens in a participatory democracy. The rights and responsibilities of citizens, such as voting and sitting on juries, are identified. Related articles and Web sites discuss ways citizens participate in the community through volunteer organizations like AmeriCorps and USA Freedom Corps.*
- *Chapter 15 explains how citizens participate in democracy through voting. Trends in voting are identified and related articles and Web sites discuss current voting trends and explore ways to increase citizen involvement in the voting process.*

International Relations

Students will:

16. Describe U.S. foreign policy and national security interests.
17. Explain the importance of U.S. foreign policy to individual citizens.
18. Evaluate America's role in the world community.
 - Economic
 - Scientific
 - Humanitarian
 - Cultural
 - Technological
 - Political

- *Chapter 27 explores U.S. national security interests. The role of the military in protecting the United States and its national security interests is explained. The impact of terrorism on U.S. security is described. Links to related articles and Web sites identify current U.S. national security interests and current U.S. military deployments. Web links are also provided to all the major branches of the U.S. military.*
- *Chapter 28 describes the structure and mechanism of U.S. foreign policy. The importance of U.S. foreign policy to individual citizens is explored and the role of the U.S. in the world community is discussed. Students can read the War Powers Act and link directly to the State Department and international organizations that the U.S. participates in, such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the World Trade Organization.*