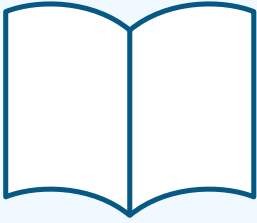


How a Constitution Works

8th Grade

What a constitution does, and the three ideas underneath most of them.



A constitution sets out how a country is governed, what powers exist, and what limits those powers.

- Separation of powers: split authority so no one branch holds it all.
- Checks and balances: each branch can restrain the others.
- Rule of law: the government is bound by the law too.
- Rights are protected against the government, not granted by it.
- Amendment processes are deliberately difficult, so change is considered.

LOOK FOR IT

A supreme court striking down a law is checks and balances in action.

A constitution is only as strong as the willingness of officials to be bound by it.