

The Constitution of the United States

After the Revolutionary War, the former colonies faced many decisions. They no longer recognized British laws or British government. Still, people needed laws and government. Soon, the states began to set up their own governments. Different states had different laws. They had different taxes. They even had different systems of money. People thought of themselves as citizens of one state – not citizens of a country.

America’s founders knew that for the new nation to survive, all thirteen states would have to work together. America needed a national government. On May 25, 1787, delegates from every state except Rhode Island met in Philadelphia. At first, these fifty-five men did not all agree about the best system of government. They talked about different governments. They debated. And they compromised. They worked for nearly four months. The system they finally agreed upon had three branches. The legislative branch would make laws. The executive branch would carry out the laws. The judicial branch would decide what the laws meant.

Working together, the delegates wrote the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution explain how the three branches of government function. It also sets rules for all three branches. On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine delegates signed the final draft of the Constitution.

The Constitution is still the basis of U.S. government today. The original copy of the Constitution is housed in a special display case in Washington, D.C.

Directions: Read the following statements. Label them **true**, **false**, and **not stated**. Write one more true statement and one more false statement of your own.

- _____ 1. The United States government started printing dollars immediately after the Revolutionary War.
- _____ 2. The former colonies faced many decisions.
- _____ 3. The people of Rhode Island did not want a national government.
- _____ 4. The Constitution was written in Philadelphia.
- _____ 5. George Washington was the father of the Constitution.
- _____ 6. The Constitution established three branches of government.
- _____ 7. Only men signed the Constitution.
- _____ 8. The Constitution is no longer in use today.

True: _____

False: _____

