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# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .......................................................... 4

**The Basics of Government**
- Government in Your Life ............................................. 5
- What Is Government? .................................................. 6
- Authority vs. Power .................................................... 7
- Why Do We Need Government? ...................................... 8
- What Does Government Do? .......................................... 9
- Limited vs. Unlimited Government ................................ 10
- Types of Government .................................................. 11

**Ideals of the U.S. Government**
- Democracy in the U.S. .................................................. 12
- Values of American Democracy .................................... 13
- Americans’ Common Beliefs ........................................ 14
- An American Motto ..................................................... 15
- Patriotism ....................................................................... 16

**National Symbols**
- The U.S. Flag .............................................................. 17
- The Pledge of Allegiance ............................................... 18
- The National Anthem ................................................... 19
- The Great Seal ............................................................ 20
- The Statue of Liberty ................................................... 21
- The Liberty Bell ........................................................... 22

**The History of the U.S. Government**
- The Mayflower Compact .............................................. 23
- Government in the Colonies .......................................... 24
- The American Revolution ............................................. 25
- The Declaration of Independence ................................... 26
- The Articles of Confederation ....................................... 29

**The Constitution**
- The Constitution ........................................................ 30
- The Constitutional Convention .................................... 31
- The Preamble to the Constitution ................................... 32
- Government Framework .............................................. 33
- Checks and Balances .................................................. 34
- Organization of the Constitution ................................... 35
- Ratification of the Constitution ..................................... 36
- Amending the Constitution .......................................... 37
- The Bill of Rights ......................................................... 38
- The Civil Rights Amendments ...................................... 40
- Women’s Rights .......................................................... 41

**The Three Branches of Government**
- The Executive Branch ............................................... 42
- The President ............................................................. 43
- The White House ......................................................... 46
- Impeachment ................................................................ 47
- The Vice President ...................................................... 48
- The Cabinet ................................................................. 49

**The Legislative Branch**
- The Great Compromise .................................................. 51
- The Senate ................................................................. 52
- The House of Representatives ...................................... 53
- The Capitol Building ................................................... 54
- How Laws Are Made ................................................... 55
- What Makes a Good Law? ............................................ 56

**The Judicial Branch**
- Trials and Appeals .......................................................... 58
- The U.S. Supreme Court ............................................... 59

**State and Local Government**
- A Federal Government ................................................ 60
- State Government .......................................................... 61
- Local Government .......................................................... 64

**Paying for Government**
- Taxes ........................................................................... 65
- What Do Taxes Pay For? ............................................... 66
- Budgeting ....................................................................... 67

**Voting**
- Voting in the U.S. .......................................................... 68
- The Electoral College .................................................... 69
- The Political Parties ...................................................... 70
- The Campaign Trail ...................................................... 72
- Choosing Responsible Leaders ..................................... 73

**Citizenship**
- Naturalization ............................................................... 74
- Citizens’ Rights ............................................................. 76
- Citizens’ Responsibilities ................................................ 77
- What Can You Do? ........................................................ 78

**U.S. Presidents** ............................................................... 79

**Answer Key** .................................................................. 125
Every day you see government at work. No, you’re not on Capitol Hill watching laws being made, but as you walk or drive around your city or town, you can see the effects of laws, regulations, and services that the government provides.

Look at the scene below. Circle each area in the picture where you see the effects of government. Then, choose one area you circled and explain what effect government has in that area.
Government is all of the agencies, departments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a nation who make, carry out, enforce, and manage conflicts about rules and laws. Government is like a nation’s family. Families take care of children and make sure they are safe, healthy, educated, and free to enjoy life. Families encourage children to be independent, hardworking, and responsible. Families make and enforce rules and give appropriate punishments when rules are broken. Government does these things for its citizens, too.

Answer the questions below to show how government is like a family. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

1. How does your family keep you safe? ____________________________________________________________

2. How does the government keep its citizens safe? ____________________________________________________

3. How does your family keep you healthy? __________________________________________________________

4. How does the government keep its citizens healthy? __________________________________________________

5. How does your family help you learn and become educated? __________________________________________

6. How does the government help its citizens learn and become educated? ________________________________

7. What kinds of rules does your family have for you? _________________________________________________

8. What kinds of rules does the government have for its citizens? ______________________________________

9. How does your family punish you if you break the rules? ____________________________________________

10. How does the government punish its citizens who break the law? _________________________________
If someone has power, he or she can direct or control a person or thing. If someone has authority, he or she has been given the right to have and use power. Authority is given to someone through customs, laws, or consent. Laws (the Constitution) and the consent (elections) of the American people give the United States government the authority to make and enforce laws.

For each situation below, explain whether the person in power has authority.

1. Your family takes away your video games until your grades improve.

2. A crossing guard stops traffic so that children can walk across the street.

3. A masked robber holds up a bank and steals money.

4. A bully takes lunch money from other children on her bus.

5. Your friend takes your pencil after you tell him that he can borrow it.

6. A teacher tells his students to work quietly.

7. A boy hits another boy on the playground.

8. A jury decides that a woman is guilty of a crime and must spend time in jail.

9. A woman puts up a stop sign in front of her house so that people will slow down on her street.

10. A police officer arrests a person who was seen speeding away from the scene of a crime.
Imagine a world without any rules. It might seem fun at first, but rules and laws are necessary for a community, large or small, to run smoothly. Government can prevent people from taking advantage of others. It also works to keep order and discourage violence. Having rules and laws can make people feel more safe and secure. Government also protects people’s rights and helps people who are in need.

Review the rules and laws below. Under each, write what you think would happen if the rule or law did not exist.

1. Traffic laws

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

2. Right to private property

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

3. Trial by jury

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

4. Elections of government officials

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________