

THE FEDERAL COURTS AND YOU

In this activity, participants will learn about by the [Judiciary Act of 1789](#) and how the federal court system impacts law-abiding citizens. Three activity options stimulate critical thinking, insight, and discussion about the federal court system and the role of federal judges.

About These Resources

- [PowerPoint: Preamble to the Constitution](#) (ppt) - This presentation explains the Preamble.
- [Preamble Script](#) - Use the 10 phrases in the Constitution's Preamble for an interpretive reading by participants.
- [Preamble Worksheet](#) (pdf) - Use this one-page note-taking tool for analyzing the Preamble to the Constitution.
- [Judiciary Act Worksheet](#) (pdf) - Use this one-page note-taking tool for analyzing the Judiciary Act of 1789.
- [Impartial Judiciary Worksheet](#) (pdf) - Use this one-page note-taking tool for analyzing the characteristics of an impartial judiciary.
- [Activity and Discussion](#) - Take a quiz on how the federal courts impact law-abiding citizens every day.

Videos

- [The Judges' Oath of Office](#) - This video captures how federal judges, whose courts were created by the Judiciary Act, see their responsibilities every time they take the bench.
- [Court Shorts: An Impartial Judiciary](#) - In this video judges answer students' questions about the meaning of judicial independence.
- [Pathways to the Bench: Profiles of Federal Judges](#) - In this video series, individual judges talk about the personal, character-building challenges that prepared them to serve on the bench.

How to Use These Resources

1. Start the activity by discussing the [Anniversary of the Federal Courts](#) and the Judiciary Act of 1789.
2. Complete the [Judiciary Act Worksheet](#) (pdf).
3. Watch the video [Judges' Oath of Office](#) to learn how federal judges, whose courts were created by the Judiciary Act, see their responsibilities.
4. Take a [Quiz](#) on the federal courts' impact and discuss the answers.
5. Choose from the following three activity options.

For the three activity options, there is no preparation by students or teachers. An Internet connection and large screen are required for the videos and Powerpoint.

Option 1 – Video and Discussion: Impartial Judiciary

Total Time: 20 minutes

[Video: An Impartial Judiciary](#)

(5 minutes)

Judicial independence means that judges must be neutral and impartial in carrying out their responsibilities. Judicial independence isn't about unlimited power. It sets parameters that assure that judges can make decisions based on the law without worrying about outside pressures. Judicial independence benefits you, even if you never go to court. Watch the video and discuss how this concept has an impact on your daily life. (5 minutes)

In groups, complete the [Impartial Judiciary Worksheet](#) (pdf) by explaining the characteristics of an impartial judiciary.

Option 2 – Video and Discussion: Who Becomes a Federal Judge?

Total Time: 20 minutes

[Video Series: Pathways to the Bench](#)

(4 minutes)

In the video series Pathways to the Bench, individual judges talk about the personal, character-building challenges in their lives that prepared them to serve on the bench. Each judge has a motivational message for others, especially young people, who face obstacles on the path to reaching their goals.

In groups or as a class discuss the judge's message.

Option 3 – Reading and Discussion: The Preamble

Total Time: 20 minutes

[Preamble Script](#)

Use the [Preamble Script](#) and select 10 participants to read aloud one phrase in the Preamble. Present the [Preamble to the Constitution](#) (ppt) PowerPoint.

In groups or as a class, use the [Preamble Worksheet](#) (pdf) and discuss the requirements of government listed in the Preamble. Why is 'establish justice' listed first?

PREAMBLE SCRIPT

This script lists the 10 phrases in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. For the activity, 10 participants will each read one phrase.

1. We the people of the United States,
2. in order to form a more perfect union,
3. **establish justice,**
4. insure domestic tranquility,
5. provide for the common defense,
6. promote the general welfare,
7. and secure the blessings of liberty
8. to ourselves and our posterity,
9. do ordain and establish
10. this Constitution for the United States of America.

Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. More Perfect Union

3. Insure Domestic Tranquility

5. Secure the Blessings of Liberty

7. For Our Posterity

Preamble Establishes Goals of Government

2. Establish Justice

4. Promote the General Welfare

6. For Ourselves

8. Why is Justice Before Other Goals?

How Did the Federal Courts Come Into Being?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Judiciary Act of 1789

1. Established the federal court system

3. Washington signed law Sept. 24, 1789

5. Specific and limited jurisdiction

2. One of 1st Acts of First Congress

4. Congress can regulate jurisdiction

6. Supreme Court would hear appeals

What is an Impartial Judiciary?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Characteristics of an Impartial Judiciary

Not Influenced By Outside

Can't Impose Own Biases

Doesn't Like Law? Still Must Obey It.

No Catering to Popular Opinions

Can't Make Up Law

Not Unlimited Power

ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

Do Federal Courts have an impact on the daily lives of law-abiding citizens?

Instructions: Review the statements below about daily activities or events, and identify the federal courts' impact. Finish the quiz by discussing other ways the federal courts have an impact on your daily life.

Situation Impact

How do federal courts' impact your life?

Review the statements below about daily activities or events. Identify the federal courts' impact or role on each. The impact can be related to an Amendment, law, regulation, or the [type of cases](#) heard in the federal courts. Check the answers by clicking on the Impact tab.

1. The morning news is broadcast unencumbered by governmental prior restraint.
2. When driving to school or work you pass a federal park and admire the landscape unblemished by arson or vandalism.
3. Your neighbor invites you to attend a naturalization ceremony.
4. At your part-time job, federal work safety rules are enforced.
5. In the grocery store, food products have been inspected by the Food and Drug Administration.
6. In the mail, you find a summons calling you to serve jury duty on a federal court.
7. You sell your original music on the Internet, and a rock group sues you for copyright infringement.
8. Your uncle tells you that he is filing for bankruptcy.
9. At dinner you have a glass of tap water not realizing the water is from another state.
10. Your credit card is hacked after you shop online at a store that has its headquarters in another state.
11. The news reports that leaders of an interstate drug ring operating in your city have been convicted and sent to prison.

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Situation Impact

How do federal courts' impact your life?

The federal courts impact or role in the activity or event is listed in bold text. The impact is related to an Amendment, law, regulation, or the [type of cases](#) heard in the federal courts.

1. The morning news is broadcast unencumbered by governmental prior restraint.
Federal courts hear some First Amendment cases and other Constitutional issues.
2. When driving to school or work you pass a federal park and admire the landscape unblemished by arson or vandalism.
Federal courts hear cases involving crimes on national park land.
3. Your neighbor invites you to attend a naturalization ceremony.
Federal judges have the authority to conduct swearing-in ceremonies.
4. At your part-time job, federal work safety rules are enforced.
Cases involving federal laws and regulations that affect workers go to federal courts.
5. In the grocery store, food products have been inspected by the Food and Drug Administration.
Disputes about federal regulations and food safety are heard in federal court.
6. In the mail, you find a summons calling you to serve jury duty on a federal court.
You are required by law to respond to jury a summons.
7. You sell your original music on the Internet, and a rock group sues you for copyright infringement.
Cases involving intellectual property and copyright law are handled in federal courts.
8. Your uncle tells you that he is filing for bankruptcy.
Federal courts hear bankruptcy cases.
9. At dinner, you have a glass of tap water, not realizing the water is from another state.
Federal courts hear cases on pollution and interstate water rights.
10. Your credit card is hacked after you shop online at a store that has its headquarters in another state.
Federal courts handle interstate commerce disputes.
11. The news reports that leaders of an interstate drug ring operating in your city have been convicted and sent to prison.

Interstate drug trials are heard in federal court.