



Foundations of Democracy

Exploring Civics and Government



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The adventure begins!

In this program, Daisies and Brownies will learn about the people and places that help run our country and make important rules. They'll discover what government is, how leaders are chosen, and how new laws are made. Get ready to explore how your community and country work!

When this program is completed, they will earn the Foundations of Democracy Patch and their Democracy Badge!



Activity 1: Who Does What?

Understanding Government Roles

➔ **Audience:** K - 3rd grade

➔ **Activity Time:** 15 - 20 minutes

➔ **Materials Needed:**

- Print the government role cards (mayor, governor, president, citizen, etc.) and responsibility cards
- Scissors (to cut out cards in advance)
- Optional: tape or magnets (to hang matching game)

Goal: Help Girl Scouts identify key government roles and understand what those roles do within the setup of the U.S. Government.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS GOVERNMENT?

Let's start by talking about what *government* means.

Begin a group discussion by asking:

- What do you think the word *government* means?"
- "Who are some leaders you've heard about?"
- "What do leaders do to help our town, state, or country?"



Activity 1: Who Does What?

Understanding Government Roles

INTRODUCE THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

“Our country’s government is also made up of different parts, like a team. Each part has a job to help make everything work.”

You can share these simple vocabulary words:

Legislative Branch – Makes the rules (laws).

- Optional: Show a picture of the U.S. Capital as a visual depiction.

Executive Branch – Makes sure people follow the rules.

- Optional: Show a picture of the White House as a visual depiction.

Judicial Branch – Decides if the rules are fair.

- Optional: Show a picture of the Supreme Court as a visual depiction.

“Just like a team, each part has a job—one makes the rules, one follows them, and one checks they are fair!”

Explain:

- “The government is a group of people who help make rules and take care of the places we live—like our town, state, or country. They help make sure schools are open, streets are safe, and that everyone follows the rules. Some government leaders help small places like cities, and some help big places like the state you live in, or even the whole country.”

Optional:

- Show this video singing about what leaders in communities do:

[Together We Can | Who Are the Leaders in the United States? | PBS KIDS](#)



Activity 1: Who Does What?

Understanding Government Roles

GOVERNMENT ROLE-MATCHING GAME

Now we're going to learn about a few important jobs in the government.

Hand out sets of cards (see pp. 49-58 for printable cards) to small groups or individuals:

- One set has job titles (Mayor, Governor, President, etc.).
- One set has simple descriptions (e.g. "Takes care of a town or city," "Makes choices for the whole country," etc.).

Ask Girl Scouts to match the name of the job to what that job does.

Give them a few minutes to match with minimal help (or encourage them to ask a buddy).

- **Optional:** Before you hand out the game, you can have Girl Scouts brainstorm different jobs they are aware of and what they do.
- When completed, go through their answers and discuss as a group.
- Be sure to talk about the "Citizen" card! Citizens are people who live in the United States and are an important part of how our government works. Even though they don't have official jobs like president or mayor, citizens help make decisions by learning about their community, following rules, helping others, and (when they grow up) voting. Being a good citizen means working together to make our country a better place for everyone.



Activity 1: Who Does What?

Understanding Government Roles

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- “Why do you think it’s important to have different leaders for our town, state, and country?”
- “Which job would you want to try and why?”
- “What is one rule or idea you would create to help your community if you were a leader?”
- “Did you learn about a role today that you didn’t know about before?”
- “Were you surprised to see a ‘citizen’ role in this game?”
- “Have you ever thought about the role you and your friends/family play in the government?”



ACTIVITY 1 COMPLETE!



Activity 2: Meet a Community Helper

Connect with a Civic Leader

- ➔ **Audience:** K - 3rd grade
- ➔ **Activity Time:** 30 - 45 minutes, option dependent
- ➔ **Materials Needed:**
 - Markers/crayons
 - Paper or cards for thank you letters
 - **Optional:** printed thank you letter template
 - **Optional:** list of sample questions
 - **Optional:** computer and projector for videos and/or articles

Goal: Learn about what community helpers do and how they serve others — either by meeting a leader or exploring their role through art and storytelling.

INTRODUCTION: WHO ARE OUR COMMUNITY HELPERS?

Start with a discussion about community helpers.

Ask:

- What do you think a *community helper* is?
- “Who helps make your school, neighborhood, or city a better place?”



Activity 2: Meet a Community Helper

Connect with a Civic Leader

Explain:

- “A community helper is someone who has a job that helps take care of people or places in our town or city. They might help make rules, solve problems, or make sure things run smoothly. Some examples are the mayor, school principal, or a city worker.”

Are there any other community leaders you can name? (**Hint:** We might have discussed a few during Activity One.)

MEET A CIVIC LEADER

Option 1: In-Person Guest

Invite a local civic leader (mayor, school board member, city councilor, etc.) to speak with the girls.

Help girls brainstorm simple questions in advance, such as:

- “What’s your favorite part of your job?”
- “What do you do every day?”
- “How do you help people?”
- “How did you get into your job?”
- “Do you have any advice for someone my age to help the community?”

Option 1 Reflection + Thank You Activity

Invite the girls to share their favorite part of the visit:

- “What did you enjoy learning the most?”
- “What surprised you about the leader’s job?”
- “What would you like to do if you had their job?”



Activity 2: Meet a Community Helper

Connect with a Civic Leader

Option 1 Letter-Writing Prompt

Provide the thank-you letter template (next page) with fill-in-the-blank sentences and space to draw.

Encourage the girls to:

- Write a few sentences about what they learned.
- Thank the visitor for coming.
- Draw a picture of the leader (or themselves) doing the job.

Tip for Leaders

Collect and give the letters to your guest as a special thank-you package. You could even snap a photo of the group with their letters and email it to the guest if in-person delivery isn't possible.

Option 2: At-Home or No Guest? No Problem!

Introduce a civic leader through a short story, printed photo, or simple video (like a kid-friendly city government explainer). If you're stuck, [try this video about a Mayor's role in their community](#).

OR read a picture book featuring a community leader (e.g. *Grace for President*, *What Does the President Do?*, or *Madam Mayor*).

After learning about the leaders' role, invite the girls to:

- Draw a picture of the leader (or themselves!) in a helper role.
- Write a thank-you letter to a civic leader they learned about.

Tip for Leaders

Girls can mail the letter with help from an adult or bring it back to share at a troop meeting.



Activity 2: Meet a Community Helper

Connect with a Civic Leader

Dear Community Helper: A Thank You Letter Template

Dear _____,

Thank you for helping our community by _____

_____.

I learned that you _____.

If I had your job, I would _____.

Thank you for everything you do!

Sincerely,

**Draw
Here!**



ACTIVITY 2 COMPLETE!



Activity 3: Let's Make a Rule!

How Laws are Made

- ➔ **Audience:** K - 3rd grade
- ➔ **Activity Time:** 20 - 25 minutes
- ➔ **Materials Needed:**
 - Large paper or poster board
 - Markers, crayons, stickers
 - Tape or glue

Goal: Understand how a rule (law) is made and why voting is important.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A RULE OR LAW?

Every community — from your home to your classroom to our country — needs rules to help people work together and stay safe. In this activity, Girl Scouts will explore why rules matter and create one of their own!



Activity 3: Let's Make a Rule!

How Laws are Made

VOCABULARY WORDS

Let's learn some more new words that will help us understand this activity even better:

Constitution – A constitution is a special set of rules that helps a government know how to run things and treat people fairly.

- The U.S. Constitution is for the whole country. It helps leaders in Washington, D.C. make fair rules for all 50 states.
- Each state, like Colorado, has its own state constitution too. That one helps leaders make rules just for people who live in that state.
- Think of it like a school and a classroom: the school has rules everyone follows, and each classroom might have a few extra rules just for their group!

Rights – Rights are the freedoms and protections that every person has, like the right to speak your mind, practice your beliefs, and be treated fairly. These rights are protected by the Constitution to help make sure everyone is safe and respected.

- You have the right to share your opinion in class, as long as you're being kind and respectful!

Law – A law is a rule that everyone must follow. Laws help keep people safe and make sure things are fair.

- A law says you have to wear a seatbelt in the car to stay safe!



Activity 3: Let's Make a Rule!

How Laws are Made

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- “What are rules?” (Let them share examples from home or school.)
- “Why do we have rules?”
- “Do you know who makes rules in your city or country?” (**Hint:** We may have talked about them in previous activities.)

“Rules set by the government are called laws. As we’ve learned, leaders like mayors, governors, and the president help make laws that keep people safe and happy.”

MAKE A CLASSROOM LAW

“Today, we’ll do a fun version of that process—just like lawmakers do! You’ll come up with your own rule idea, vote on it, and turn it into a pretend law, just like in real life!”

1. Brainstorm Time

- Ask the group: “What is a fun or helpful rule we could make for everyone here?”
- Write down 3–5 ideas on a large sheet (silly and serious are okay!).

2. Discussion

- Go down the list: “What would happen if we had this rule?”
- “Would it help everyone?”

3. Vote!

- Give each girl a sticker or raise of hands to vote on their favorite new “law.”
- Circle or star the winning rule.



Activity 3: Let's Make a Rule!

How Laws are Made

4. Make it Official

- Pass out scrolls and say: "Let's turn this rule into a law by writing and decorating it!"
- Girls copy (or leaders write) the winning rule on their own posterboard/paper and decorate it with drawings, stickers, etc.

5. Optional

- Have each girl take turns saying, "I vote for this law!" and put this law into effect.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- "Was it easy or hard to agree on one rule?"
- "Why do you think voting is important?"
- "What other rule would you want to see in your school or town?"

ACTIVITY 3 COMPLETE!



Closing and Reflection

I Can Be a Helper, Too!

- ➔ **Audience:** K - 3rd grade
- ➔ **Activity Time:** 5 - 10 minutes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- “What is one thing you learned about how communities and community leaders work?”
- “Which leader or role was most interesting to you?”
- “If you were in charge, what would you do to help people?”



WRAP-UP ACTIVITY

Invite girls to each draw a picture or write one sentence about how they can be a helper in their community—just like the leaders they learned about today. They can share it aloud or hang it on a “Community Helper Wall” if you have one.





Closing and Reflection

I Can Be a Helper, Too!

CELEBRATE THEIR CIVICS LEARNING JOURNEY!

Finish by saying:

You all explored what it means to be a citizen — someone who learns about their community, the leaders within it called civics — and today, you started building your understanding of how government works. Great job learning something so important!

As you grow, you can come back to this program each year to keep building your civic knowledge and leadership skills. By the time you reach middle school, you'll be ready to participate in opportunities like the National Civics Bee® — a real writing competition where students can win awards and even cash prizes by sharing their ideas to improve their communities.

The thinking, questioning, and learning you did today is a big step toward becoming an informed, engaged citizen — and that's worth celebrating!

Congratulations, you have earned your **Foundations of Democracy: Exploring Civics and Government** patch, as well as met the requirements for the following badges:

- 🍀 Democracy for Daises
- 🍀 Democracy for Brownies

To claim your **Foundations of Democracy: Exploring Civics and Government** patch, please [complete the feedback form here](#).





ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES K - 3



Foundations of Democracy

Exploring Civics and Government



ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 4 - 8



Activity 1: Who Leads What?

Understanding Government Roles

- ➔ **Audience:** 4th - 8th grade
- ➔ **Activity Time:** 25 - 30 minutes
- ➔ **Materials Needed:**
 - **Print:** Leader role cards and description cards with responsibilities (see pp. 49-58 for printable cards)
 - Markers, large chart paper, or whiteboard

Goal: Understand the different responsibilities of leaders at the local, state, and federal levels of government, and how they impact citizens' daily lives.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP?

Start with a group discussion:

- “What does it mean to be a leader in government?”
- “Why do we have leaders at different levels—like city, state, and national?”
- “Can you name a few government roles we might already know?”



Activity 1: Who Leads What?

Understanding Government Roles

Briefly explain:

“In the United States, our government has different levels. Local leaders, like a mayor, focus on our cities or towns, governors work at the state level, and national leaders like the president make decisions for the entire country.”

Did you know?

“The U.S. government was created in 1787 with the signing of the Constitution. The Founding Fathers set up three separate branches—Legislative, Executive, and Judicial—to make sure no one person or group would have too much power.”

PART ONE: ROLE-MATCHING GAME

1. Distribute role and responsibility cards to small groups or individuals. (Cards include titles like *Mayor*, *Governor*, etc., and responsibilities like *Signs city rules into law*, *Commands the U.S. military*, etc.)
2. In pairs or small groups, girls will work to match each role with the correct responsibility.
3. Once completed, go over the matches as a whole group. Ask Girl Scouts to read a match and explain why they think it fits.

After matching:

- Go through the answers together as a group.
- Ask: “Why do you think these responsibilities belong at that level of government?”



Activity 1: Who Leads What?

Understanding Government Roles

PART TWO: BUILD A GOVERNMENT ROLES PYRAMID

Either in small groups or as one big group, put together a pyramid using the roles from part one.

- Base = Local (e.g., Mayor)
- Middle = State (e.g., Governor)
- Top = Federal (e.g., President)

Each layer should include the role, one fact about their responsibility, and one way it affects the Girl Scouts' daily lives (e.g., "Mayor helped fix the park," "Governor made a rule about school safety," etc.).

If this is done in small groups, they can illustrate or decorate their pyramid, then share it with the group.

Discussion Prompts

Go through the answers together as a group. Ask:

- "Which leader do you think has the hardest job? Why?"
- "Which role would you want to try for a day — and what would you do?"
- "How do these leaders' decisions affect your life — at school, in your neighborhood, or in Colorado? Can you think of an example?"

ACTIVITY 1 COMPLETE!



Activity 2: Meet a Civic Leader

Connect with a Community Helper

- ➔ **Audience:** 4th - 8th grade
- ➔ **Activity Time:** 30 - 45 minutes, option dependent
- ➔ **Materials Needed:**
 - Paper or journals
 - Pencils or pens
 - **Optional:** Note card or paper to write a thank you note to a civic leader

Goal: Engage directly or reflectively with public service leaders to better understand their roles, motivations, and how they serve the community.

Option 1: In-Person Guest

Invite a local civic leader (mayor, school board member, city councilor, etc.) to speak with the girls.

Before the visit, divide girls into small groups to brainstorm questions. Help guide them with prompts like:

- “What does a day in your job look like?”
- “What inspired you to become a leader?”
- “How do your decisions affect people like us?”
- “What’s the hardest part of your job?”



Activity 2: Meet a Civic Leader

Connect with a Community Helper

Activity:

During the visit, each group takes turns asking questions. Encourage active listening and note-taking.

After the Q&A, girls will reflect individually in their journals using this prompt:

Think about the civic leader you met today.

- What did you learn from them?
- What part of their job seems most interesting to you, and why?
- If you could step into their role for a day, what would you want to do or change in your community?

Option 1 Reflection + Thank You Activity

Invite the girls to share their favorite part of the visit:

- “What did you enjoy learning the most?”
- “What surprised you about the leader’s job?”
- “What would you like to do if you had their job?”
- “If you were a civic leader, what role would you choose and why?”
- “What kind of change would you want to make in your community?”



Activity 2: Meet a Civic Leader

Connect with a Community Helper

Option 2: At-Home or No Guest? No Problem!

If visiting with a civic leader isn't possible, Girl Scouts can still learn and reflect independently.

Activity:

Read a short article or watch a video (with caregiver's help) about a local or national civic leader.

You can provide examples (e.g., YouTube: "What does a mayor do?" or brief bios online).

Have Girl Scouts write a simple reflection about what they learned.

Use the following prompts to help guide their writing:

- "What leadership role did you learn about?"
- "Did you learn something interesting about this role? If so, what did you learn?"
- "What kind of decisions does this person make?"
- "How does their work help people in the community?"
- "What would YOU do if you had their job for a day?"

ACTIVITY 2 COMPLETE!



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

➔ **Audience:** 4th - 8th grade

➔ **Activity Time:** 30 - 40 minutes

➔ **Materials Needed:**

- “Steps of a Bill” visual guide (see pp. 46-48)
- Blank poster paper or bill templates
- Markers or pens
- Stickers or colored dots for voting
- Tape or wall space to display bills

Goal: Introduce girls to the legislative process in the U.S. government and why it matters.

PRE-LEARNING:

WHAT IS A BILL? HOW DOES IT BECOME A LAW?

Did you know?

The Founders wrote the Constitution as a “rulebook” for the U.S. government. It begins with the words “We the People” to show that the power of government comes from the people — not kings or rulers.



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

What is a Bill?

A bill is an idea for a new law or a change to an existing law. Anyone (yes, even kids!) can have an idea for a bill. But for it to become an actual law, it has to go through a special process in the government.

Why Does This Process Exist?

Laws help keep people safe, protect our rights, and make sure our communities run fairly. The process to make a law takes time and involves many people, because it's important to:

- Make sure the law helps people.
- Hear different opinions and ideas.
- Avoid unfair or harmful laws.

This process also gives people a voice — citizens can share ideas with leaders or testify for/against bills. This is civic engagement in action!

Do All Governments Work This Way?

Nope! In the United States, we use a democratic system where citizens vote for leaders to represent them. These leaders help make decisions and laws. In some other countries, laws may be made only by one ruler, or by different systems with no public voting.

As we have discussed, the U.S. has three levels of government:

- Local (mayors, city councils)
- State (governors, state legislators)
- Federal (Congress and the President)

Each level can pass different kinds of laws, and the steps are often similar.



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

DRAFT YOUR OWN BILL

Activity Objective:

Now that you've learned how ideas become laws — and who helps make that happen — let's step into the shoes of lawmakers and try it ourselves! You'll work together to create your own "bills" to improve your community and follow the same steps real leaders take to turn ideas into action.

Reminder: A bill is an idea for a new law. Before something becomes a law, it starts as a bill. People in government talk about it, suggest changes, and vote to decide if it should become a real rule everyone follows.

Step 1: Plan & Organize

Break into small groups (3–5 Girl Scouts each). If you are doing this at home, you can work with your adult caregiver on this portion.

Each group will brainstorm a problem they want to solve or a positive change they want to make in their school, neighborhood, or city.

Example ideas:

- "More green spaces in the neighborhood"
- "Healthy snacks in school vending machines"
- "Community clean-up days"



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

Step 2: Create Your Bill

Each group will write on either paper or a poster board:

- Title of their bill
- Purpose – Why is this law needed?
- Steps – How would it be carried out or enforced?
- Include who would be responsible (city council, schools, etc.)

Step 3: Presentation & Voting

Each team presents their bill to the full group.

After all teams share, hold a vote on which one(s) they'd "pass."
Use stickers, raised hands, or colored dots for voting.

For those doing this at home, ask family and/or friends to vote on this bill to see if it passes.

Remind them that even if their bill doesn't "pass," their idea is still important and valid—just like in real government!



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

REFLECTION DISCUSSION

After teams present and vote on their bills, bring everyone together to reflect with these questions:

Legislative Process Reflection:

- “If your bill was passed, what would need to happen next to turn it into a real law?” (Prompt discussion about writing details, getting approval from leaders, making the public aware, and enforcing the law.)
- “If your bill didn’t pass, what could you do to keep trying?” (Explore ideas like revising the bill, building more support, educating others, or presenting it again later—just like in real government!)

General Civic Learning Reflection:

- “What did you learn about how laws are made that you didn’t know before?”
- “Why do you think it’s important for laws to go through so many steps before they are passed?”
- “What surprised you the most about how the government works?”
- “How can young people, like you, keep learning about how government and laws work, even before you’re old enough to vote?” (Prompt ideas like paying attention to current events and staying informed about local decisions, learning more about the branches of government, or educating friends and family about the U.S. Government’s processes.)



Activity 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where Do the Rules Come From?

Did You Know?

There's more than one way to make or change a law! Most laws are made through the legislative process — just like what you have done in this activity.

But sometimes, people want to make a bigger change, like updating the Constitution. That's done through something called an amendment.

At the federal level, changing the U.S. Constitution requires a special amendment process. These changes are rare and take a lot of agreement — both Congress and most of the states have to say yes!

At the state level, states also have their own constitutions and their own amendment processes.

Some states let voters help decide on changes directly by putting them on a ballot—this is called a ballot initiative or referendum. Others go through a vote in the state legislature, similar to how a regular bill becomes law.

These different paths help make sure laws and constitutions can change when needed, but also stay fair and thoughtful.

ACTIVITY 3 COMPLETE!



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

➔ **Audience:** 4th - 8th grade

➔ **Activity Time:** 45 minutes

➔ **Materials Needed:**

- Printed or displayed kid-friendly version of the Preamble (poster, handout, or slide)
- Chart paper, whiteboard, or poster board for creating the Troop or Family Constitution
- Sticky notes or scratch paper (for brainstorming in small groups)
- **Optional:** Computer/projector and speakers to play the video
- **Optional:** Tape or pins (to hang the finished Constitution)
- **Optional:** Markers, colored pencils, stickers, etc. (for decorating)

Goal: Understand the foundational ideas of the U.S. Constitution by exploring the Preamble — its meaning, key themes, and role as a guiding framework for democracy — and reflect on how these values can shape communities today.

A **constitution** is a set of rules and principles that explain how a government works and what rights people have. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law in the country — it sets up our government and protects the rights of the people.



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

Did you know?

The idea of separating government power into local, state, and national levels came from the Constitution too! This helps communities make decisions that work best for their own people while still being united as one country.

Did you know?

The Preamble to the Constitution explains the purpose of government in just 52 words. It talks about important goals like justice, peace, and freedom — things Americans still work toward today.

AN INTRODUCTION CALLED THE PREAMBLE

Begin with a group discussion:

- “What do you know about the U.S. Constitution?”
- “Why do you think countries have documents like this?”
- Explain that the Constitution is the highest law in the land and lays out the structure and purpose of our government. The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution and tells us why it was written.

Watch The Preamble of the Constitution

This video gives a student-friendly overview of the Preamble, its importance, and how it reflects the goals of the U.S. government.



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

Group Discussion:

Print and distribute a simplified version of the Preamble (see below).

Read it line by line together and discuss:

- “What does this part mean in your own words?”
- “Why do you think this was important to include?”
- “How does this idea apply to our country today?”

Key themes to emphasize:

- Justice
- Peace (domestic tranquility)
- Defense and safety
- General welfare (well-being of all people)
- Liberty and freedom
- Unity (“We the people...”)

PREAMBLE TO THE U.S.CONSTITUTION

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

Breaking it down:

- “We the People” means all citizens of the United States. Our founding fathers decided to choose this as they only needed nine out of the thirteen original states to approve the constitution for it to begin and they were not sure which ones would agree. Also, if new states joined later, they would not be able to add their names, so they decided to begin the preamble with “We the People” to show that the new government was made by (and for!) the people of the United States.
- “In order to form a more perfect union,” simply means to create a better country than before.
- “To Establish Justice” means to create the rule of law where there would be no difference based on a person’s status or wealth. The founding fathers wanted to create fairness.
- “To Insure Domestic Tranquility” means to make sure there is peace and order within the country.
- “To Provide for the Common Defence” means the new government would make sure all the states were protected and defended if attacked.
 - Fun Fact: You may think “defence” is spelled incorrectly. This spelling is the original British version, which was used at the time of writing the constitution.



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

Breaking it down (continued):

- “To Promote the General Welfare” is a basic goal of all governments and was the main reason for having a constitution. This part of the Preamble means that one of the jobs of the new government is to make things better for the whole country.
- “To Secure the Blessings of Liberty to Ourselves and Our Posterity” was important because many people had come to America from places with little political or religious freedom. This phrase showed that the new government intended to protect the newly-won freedoms and protect against a cruel and unfair government.
- “To Ordain and Establish this Constitution for the United States of America” means that the people themselves created the Constitution and it is the people who give it power.



Activity 4: Exploring the Constitution

The Framework of a Nation

CREATE A TROOP OR FAMILY CONSTITUTION

Girl Scouts will reflect on what values are most important to them and use those ideas to write their own Troop or Family Constitution.

Steps:

1. As a group, brainstorm values that are important to everyone (e.g. fairness, kindness, teamwork, honesty).
2. Choose 4–6 values to include in your Troop or Family Constitution.
3. Write them on a poster, whiteboard, or paper.
4. Let Girl Scouts decorate it with drawings or symbols that represent their values.

Reflection Discussion

Wrap up with a few key questions:

- "Why do you think the Constitution was written in the first place?"
- "What do you think life would be like without the Constitution?"
- "Why do you think the Constitution starts with 'We the People'?"
- "What does it mean that the Constitution is a 'guiding framework'?"
- "Why do you think the Constitution is still important today, even though it was written over 200 years ago?"
- "What does the Preamble tell us about what the people who wrote the Constitution wanted for our country?"
- "How can understanding these ideas help you be a better citizen?"

ACTIVITY 4 COMPLETE!



Activity 5: National Civics Bee® Essay Draft

Earn prizes, trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

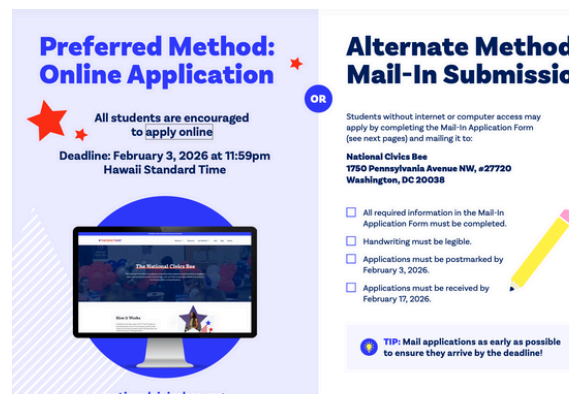
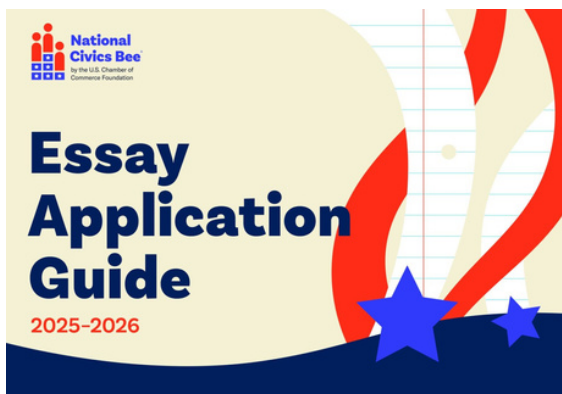
➔ **Audience:** 4th - 8th grade

➔ **Activity Time:**

- **Introduction and brainstorm:** 15–20 minutes
- **Writing time:** 30–45 minutes (can be extended/continued as homework)
- **Optional:** Peer feedback or group share-out (15 minutes)

➔ **Materials Needed:**

- Copies of the essay prompt and questions (printed or projected)
- Download the National Civics Bee® Essay Guide | Step-by-Step Instructions
- Paper, pencils, or writing devices
- Sample essays or excerpts for inspiration (available on the National Civics Bee® website)
- **Optional:** Essay planning graphic organizer or worksheet



Activity 5: National Civics Bee® Essay Draft

Earn Prizes, Trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

Objective:

Apply civics knowledge to real-world writing by drafting essays for the National Civics Bee®. Use insights from this program and your Girl Scout experiences — including this program, service projects, and Highest Awards — to explore how you can make a difference in your community through the lens of Founding Principles and Civic Virtues.

The National Civics Bee® is an annual nonpartisan civics competition for middle schoolers (grades 6–8), organized by The Civic Trust® of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation in partnership with local and state chambers of commerce across the country. It aims to increase civics knowledge, skills, and disposition among young Americans, their families, and communities.

Through writing, students in grades 6-8 identify real-world issues, explore possible solutions, and demonstrate how their actions are grounded in civic responsibility and core democratic values. Students who participate strengthen their civics, writing, and public speaking skills, and form friendships with other young leaders along the way.

Finalists can move on from local and state rounds to the National Championship, where they compete for recognition, trophies, cash prizes, and a \$100,000 529 education savings plan. Students submit their entries online via the [National Civics Bee® website](#).



Activity 5: National Civics Bee® Essay Draft

Earn Prizes, Trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

Objective (continued):

This activity gives Girl Scouts a chance to brainstorm and begin writing their essays — whether as a full submission draft or a reflective writing project that connects their civic learning to their world. While 4th and 5th graders aren't eligible to submit entries yet, they can begin practicing their storytelling and critical thinking skills now to prepare for future opportunities like the Civics Bee.

You might say:

“The National Civics Bee® is about your voice, your ideas, and your power to make a difference. Today, you'll start crafting an essay that tackles a real-world problem you care about—and imagine how you would lead change by using civic knowledge, community partnerships, and the values that guide our democracy.”

If possible, share a quick success story or highlight a past finalist from your state. [Here](#) you can find all of the video highlights from the 2024 Civics Bee. You can also show a flyer, video, or screenshot from the [National Civics Bee® website](#) to inspire ideas and encourage submissions.

Did you know?

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote a series of essays called *The Federalist Papers* to explain how the Constitution would work. Today, young people can use their own writing to influence their communities — just like the Founding Fathers did!



Activity 5: National Civics Bee® Essay Draft

Earn Prizes, Trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

Essay Prompt Overview

To prepare their drafts, Girl Scouts should address these three key questions (each answered in 200–250 words):

Identify a problem, challenge, or opportunity in your community.

- What is it, and what can you do to contribute to its improvement?
Use the brainstorming prompts below to help spark ideas—but remember, your essay should focus on an issue that matters to you.

Who would you work with to make this change happen?

- Think about individuals, community groups, elected officials, businesses, or nonprofits.

How does your idea reflect one or more Founding Principles or Civic Virtues?

- Founding Principles examples: rule of law, equality, consent of the governed, natural rights.
- Civic Virtues examples: respect, responsibility, integrity, humility, moderation.



Activity 5: National Civics Bee[®] Essay Draft

Earn Prizes, Trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

Brainstorming Prompts for Your Essay

There are so many important issues to explore — this list is just a place to get started. Your essay doesn't need to match one of these topics exactly. What matters most is that you choose something you care about and want to help change in your community.

1. Community Safety and Well-being

- Are there areas in your neighborhood where pedestrian safety could be improved?
- How can your community address issues related to homelessness or access to mental health resources?

2. Environmental Concerns

- What local environmental issues, such as pollution or wildlife conservation, are affecting your area?
- How can your community promote recycling or reduce waste?

3. Education and Youth Engagement

- Are there opportunities to enhance civic education in your school?
- How can students be encouraged to participate more actively in community service?

4. Public Health and Accessibility

- What challenges exist in your community regarding access to healthcare or nutritious food?
- How can public spaces be made more accessible to individuals with disabilities?

5. Technology and Digital Access

- Is there a digital divide in your community affecting students' ability to complete schoolwork?
- How can technology be leveraged to improve community engagement?



Activity 5: National Civics Bee® Essay Draft

Earn Prizes, Trophies, or a 529 Savings Plan!

Writing Support Tips

Encourage Girl Scouts to:

- Reflect on what they've learned in earlier activities about democracy, rights, responsibilities, and civic action.
- Think about their own experiences as Girl Scouts — what service projects have they done? What problems have they helped address?
- Use Highest Awards as inspiration. Has anyone worked on or brainstormed a Bronze or Silver Award project? What local issues inspired them?
- Include real examples from their lives and communities to make their writing personal and powerful.
- Consider how their solution upholds or strengthens our democracy. What values or principles are at play?

Submitting Your Essay:

Once your essay is complete, you can submit it to the National Civics Bee® through [their official website](#). Submissions for the 2025-2026 competition are due on February 3, 2026, so be sure to check the website for the most up-to-date information, deadlines, and eligibility.

If you're in 6th–8th grade, you're encouraged to finalize and submit your essay for a chance to be recognized as a local, state, or even national finalist. Students in 4th–5th grade can save their work and build on it for future years when they become eligible.

Remember: Your voice matters. The ideas you share today can spark real change, and this contest is your chance to make it happen!

ACTIVITY 5 COMPLETE!





Foundations of Democracy

Exploring Civics and Government

CELEBRATE YOUR CIVIC LEADERSHIP!

Finish by saying:

Today, you took real steps toward becoming a civic leader. You explored how to identify challenges in your community, brainstorm solutions, and connect your ideas to the values that shape our democracy. That's what civics is all about — using your voice, your knowledge, and your passion to make a difference.

Whether you submit your essay or keep refining it, you've started the important work of civic storytelling — and that's something to be proud of.

If you're in middle school, consider entering your essay into the National Civics Bee® for the chance to earn recognition, make new connections with other young leaders, and compete for exciting prizes, including a \$100,000 529 education savings plan. If you're not quite eligible yet, don't worry — you're building the skills now to shine when your time comes. You can complete this program every year to deepen your understanding and prepare for future opportunities like the National Civics Bee®.

Congratulations, you have earned your **Foundations of Democracy: Exploring Civics and Government** patch, as well as met the requirements for the following badges:

- 🍀 Democracy for Juniors
- 🍀 Inside Government (Juniors)
- 🍀 Democracy for Cadettes

To claim your **Foundations of Democracy: Exploring Civics and Government** patch, please [complete the feedback form here](#).





ALL ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES K-8



Foundations of Democracy

Exploring Civics and Government



GAMES & OTHER RESOURCES



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What are these additional documents?

Addendum: Steps of a Bill

These pages help Girl Scouts understand not just the stages of creating laws, but the people and processes involved as well.

Printable Cards for Government Role-Matching Game

These cards can be used with Activity 1 for girls in grades K-3 (see p. 6) **and** with Activity 1 for girls in grades 4-8 (see p. 20).

®



Addendum: Steps of a Bill

From Idea to Law

Understanding the Two Chambers of Congress

Before we dive into how a bill becomes a law, let's talk about the two groups of people in Congress who work together to make that happen: **the House of Representatives** and **the Senate**.

Even though both review and vote on bills, they each have different roles and rules:

House of Representatives

- 435 members total (based on each state's population).
- Handles many bills quickly, with strict time limits.
- All bills about taxes or government spending must start here.
- Members serve 2-year terms and represent smaller areas (districts).

Senate

- 100 members total (2 per state).
- Debates can last longer — sometimes even days!
- Confirms Presidential appointments (e.g. judges and ambassadors).
- Members serve 6-year terms and represent their whole state.

Just like a team, both chambers must agree on a bill before it becomes a law. That means the same idea is often reviewed, changed, and voted on twice — once in the House, and once in the Senate!



Addendum: Steps of a Bill

From Idea to Law

Now that you understand who's involved, let's follow a bill's journey—from a new idea to a law that helps people in real life.

FROM A BILL TO A LAW

1 **Idea Sparked**

Someone notices a problem or thinks of a way to improve the community. They share this idea with a lawmaker who wants to turn it into a law.

2 **Bill Is Written**

A lawmaker (like a state legislator or a member of Congress) writes the idea into a formal proposal called a bill.

3 **Bill Is Introduced**

The bill is officially introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, depending on where the lawmaker serves.

4 **Committee Review**

A small group of lawmakers in that chamber (called a committee) studies the bill. They might:

- Ask questions about it
- Suggest changes
- Vote on whether it should move forward



Addendum: Steps of a Bill

From Idea to Law

5 **Debate and Vote**

The full group (either the House of Representatives or the Senate, depending where the proposing lawmaker serves) of lawmakers discusses the bill. Then they vote:

- If enough people say YES → it moves to the next step.
- If NO → it may be sent back for changes or stopped.

6 **The Bill Goes to the Other Chamber**

The second chamber (House or Senate) now reviews the bill.

Just like before:

- It goes to a committee
- It's debated
- A vote is held
- If this chamber also says YES< the bill moves forward.

7 **President or Governor Decides**

If it's a national bill, it goes to the President. If it's a state bill, it goes to the Governor. They can:

- Sign it → It becomes a law!
- Veto it → It may go back to Congress or the state legislature for more changes—or it may be stopped.

8 **The New Law Goes Into Action**

- The public is informed
- Government agencies begin making sure the law is followed
- People, schools, and businesses may need to make changes to follow the new law



School Board Member

Sets policies and approves budgets for local public schools.

County Commissioner

Manages county budgets, ordinances, and local services like roads and law enforcement.

Mayor

Oversees city departments and helps carry out the laws passed by the city council.

City Council Member

Creates and votes on city laws, budgets, and local policies.

Governor

Leads the state's executive branch and signs or vetoes state legislation.

State Senator

Works with the state legislature to create and pass state laws.

State Representative

Proposes and votes on laws that affect the state.

Township Trustee

Handles township governance including road maintenance, cemeteries, and fire protection services.

U.S. Senator

Works in the U.S. Senate to pass national laws and confirm presidential appointments.

U.S. Representative (Congressperson)

Creates and votes on national laws in the House of Representatives.

State Attorney General

Serves as the state's top legal officer, enforcing state laws and protecting citizens' rights.

Lieutenant Governor

Supports the governor and may lead the state senate or step in if the governor is unavailable.

Secretary of the Treasury

Oversees the country's finances and helps develop economic policy.

Secretary of State

Manages international relations and advises the president on foreign policy.

Vice President

Supports the president and serves as president of the Senate, casting tie-breaking votes.

President

Leads the country's executive branch and enforces federal laws.

Chief Justice of the United States

Presides over the Supreme Court and ensures the Constitution is followed in court rulings (not a lawmaker, but a key federal leader interpreting laws).

Speaker of the House

Leads the House of Representatives and helps decide what laws get voted on.

Secretary of Health and Human Services

Directs national health and welfare programs like Medicare and the CDC.

Secretary of Education

Advises the president and leads federal education policies and programs.

Citizen

A member of a country with rights and responsibilities. They vote, speak up about issues that matter to them, and help make their community a better place.

Sheriff

An elected official who helps enforce the law in a county. They often run the county jail, work with deputies, and respond to public safety concerns.

Supreme Court Justice

A Supreme Court Justice is one of nine judges on the highest court in the country. They help decide important cases about laws and rights, making sure the government follows the Constitution.

Fire Marshal

Enforces fire safety laws and investigates fires to keep the community safe. They are usually appointed by local government officials

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Foundations of Democracy

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