

BRANCHES OF POWER

a game guide for teachers

Welcome to *Branches of Power!* This interactive online video game will give your students the chance to experience the roles of the three branches of government. Rather than simply learning each branch in isolation, students play each of the three branches and learn about how they interact. The goal is to move a public policy issue from an idea to a fully formed and tested law.



Learning Objectives

- Simulate the way separation of powers and checks and balances limit government, while contributing to the creation of laws
- Analyze the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches
- Illustrate the federal lawmaking process

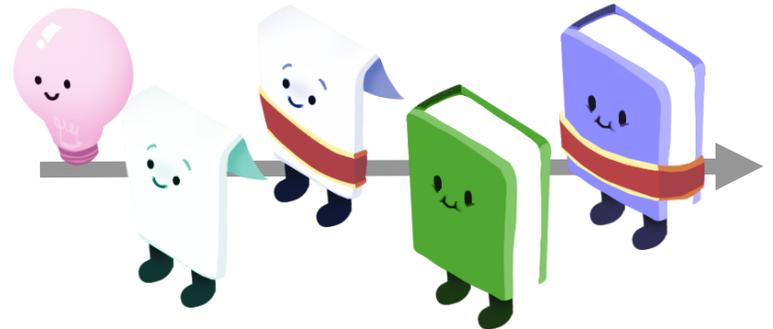
Prerequisites

None—students will learn the material just by learning to play the game successfully. However, it may be helpful for students to have some knowledge of the names and basic functions of the three branches. The last page of this guide has pre- and post-game questions you can discuss with your class. We also suggest teaching the iCivics lesson “Separation of Power: What’s for Lunch?” the day before your class plays the game. You can find that and all of our lesson plans at www.iCivics.org/teachers.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

1. Follow the Flow

Click through the game’s introduction. There is a lot going on across the three branches, and this overview gives you what you need to know to navigate your way around Capitol Hill.



2. Pick Your Leaders

Since you will be playing all three branches, you will need some help. Select the person you want to lead each branch of government.



HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

3. Customize Your Presidency

Select which issue you'd like to have as your main agenda. Selecting bill ideas that support this agenda will result in bonus points in the game.

Then pick two values that you'd most like to see in legislation. You will not be able to sign a bill into law if it goes against your values.



4. Start at the White House

Get things started with a visit to the White House. Take the opportunity to introduce ideas for new legislation and hold a press conference to get some media attention. Each turn in the Executive Branch allows for two actions, so use them wisely.

When you are ready for more ideas for legislation, or when a bill is ready to be signed (or vetoed) just come back here on your next turn.

TIP: Giving each new idea its own color will help you keep track of them when they are out and about in the Bill Garden!



5. Visit the Capitol Building

Now that you have some ideas out there, bring them into the Capitol Building and show them around! Use this turn to take five actions.

You can introduce legislation once it has been presented by the president. Then use the rest of your actions to start moving these bills through the process.

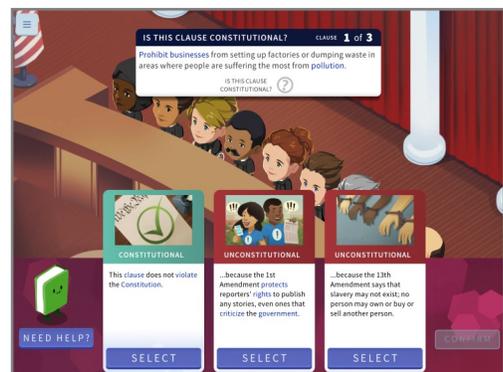
Be sure to use your helper at the bottom center of your screen. It will let you know if you should hold more hearings or go ahead and start deliberating.



6. What About the Supreme Court?

But of course! You will be alerted when a signed law has been challenged in court. Just take that law to the Supreme Court building see what happens next!

As the Chief Justice you will lead the review of each clause of the challenged law. You will state your opinion, then hear from your colleagues as you deliver the Court's final decision on the matter.



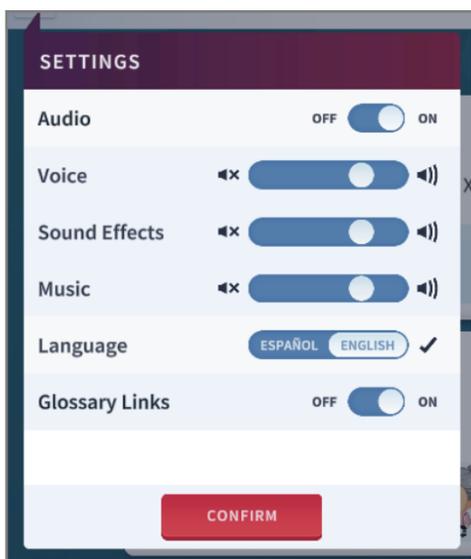
Need Some Help?

Trouble getting bills through the House & Senate?

- Legislators further out from the center in a value row will require more than one clause with their value to win their vote.
- Doing the work of Congress is hard, and you may need to make sacrifices in order to get your bill passed.
- Keep an eye on the president's values. If the president disagrees with the values in a bill, he or she will not sign it into a law. It will get vetoed!
- You will need a Super Majority to get past an Executive Veto. (That is 66% or more!)
- Unsure what to do next? Select "View Your Bills" at the bottom left of the screen and pick one to see its "Next Steps"!
- Remember: you can only have a total of 6 bills, so choose your actions wisely!
- Keep your mind open, there are numerous strategies to success. You can either focus on one bill OR try and juggle multiple bills at once!

ELL & Settings Menu

Branches of Power lets you customize your game experience with the settings menu at the top left of the screen.



Audio— Turn all sounds off or on for the game.

Voice— Adjust the volume for the character voices.

Sound Effects— Adjust the volume for all of the cool sound effects.

Music— Adjust the volume of the background tunes.

Language— You can switch between Spanish and English at any time in the game.

Glossary Links— These show which words are defined in the game. If you don't want them, you can turn them off here.



HOW IT ALL WORKS



The Executive Branch (2 actions per turn)

As the President of the United States:

Propose Bill: Propose an idea for a bill. If it matches your agenda issue, you get more points.

Hold Press Conference: Generate public support for a proposed idea or bill.

Review Bill: Sign a bill into law or veto and send it back to Congress.



The Legislative Branch (5 actions per turn)

As the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

Introduce Bill: Turn an idea into a new bill for the House of Representatives to work on.

Hold Hearing: Invite someone to share their thoughts on a bill and unlock additional clauses to use. Look at the seat map to strategically select speakers based on the value-based clauses they unlock.

Deliberate: Decide which clauses to include in the bill to get the most support in Congress. Keep any eye on the seat map and your % of support.

Call for Vote: Put a bill up for a vote to see if it passes both chambers.



The Judicial Branch (1 action per turn)

As the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court:

Hear Case: Review each clause of a new law and rule on whether or not they are constitutional.



A new idea is introduced by the president.



A bill is introduced by a legislator.

Hearings are held to help Congress learn more about the issue.

Both houses of Congress deliberate on the contents of the bill.



The bill must pass both chambers of Congress to go to the president.



The law heads over to the White House for presidential review. If it is signed, it becomes a law.



If the law is challenged, the Supreme Court will hear the case and make a decision.

CÓMO FUNCIONA



El Poder Ejecutivo

(2 acciones por turno)

Como Presidente/a de los E.E. U.U.

Propón un proyecto de ley: Propón una idea para un proyecto de ley. Si coincide con un tema de tu agenda presidencial, obtienes más puntos.

Celebra una conferencia de prensa: Genera apoyo público para una idea o un proyecto de ley que hayas propuesto.

Revisa un proyecto de ley: Firma un proyecto en ley o vévalo y devuélvelo al Congreso.



El Poder Legislativo

(5 acciones por turno)

Como Presidente/a de la Cámara de Representantes:

Presenta un proyecto de ley: Convierte una idea en un nuevo proyecto de ley para que lo trabaje la Cámara de Representantes.

Celebra una audiencia: Invita a alguien a dar opiniones sobre un proyecto de ley y desbloquea cláusulas adicionales. Presta atención a los puestos de los congresistas para seleccionar estratégicamente a los oradores según qué cláusulas (basadas en valores) desbloquean.

Delibera: Decide qué cláusulas incluir en el proyecto para obtener más apoyo en el Congreso. No pierdas de vista los puestos de los congresistas y el porcentaje de apoyo.

Somete el proyecto a votación: Somete un proyecto de ley a votación para ver si es aprobado por ambas cámaras.



El Poder Judicial

(1 acción por turno)

Como Presidente/a de la Corte Suprema:

Juzga un caso: Revisa las cláusulas de una nueva ley y juzga si son constitucionales o no.



El/La Presidente/a presenta una idea nueva.



Un(a) legislador(a) presenta un proyecto de ley.

Se realizan audiencias para que el Congreso obtenga más información sobre un asunto.



Ambas cámaras del Congreso deliberan sobre el contenido del proyecto de ley.

Ambas cámaras del Congreso deben aprobar el proyecto de ley para que vaya a la Casa Blanca.



La ley vuelve a la Casa Blanca para la aprobación presidencial. Si se firma, se convierte en ley.



Si la ley es objetada, la Corte Suprema juzgará el caso y tomará una decisión.

CLASSROOM CONVERSATION STARTERS

Pre-Game Questions

You can use these questions to lead into playing *Branches of Power* in the classroom.

- What are the three branches of government? *Executive, Legislative, Judicial*
- What is the role of each branch of government?
The legislative makes the laws, executive carries them out, and the judicial interprets laws.
- What is the purpose of having three separate branches?
It keeps any one person or branch from having too much power.
- What does “constitutional” mean? *Legal according to the Constitution.*
- How do the branches work together to create constitutional laws? *Answers will vary.*

Post-Game Questions

Use these questions as a way to debrief the individual experiences of playing *Branches of Power*.

- Which parts of the game were the easiest? The hardest? *Answers will vary.*
- If you were going to be a member of a branch of government, which one would you want to be part of? Why?
- What would be the advantage of having one branch that does everything? What would be the disadvantage?
- How is the lawmaking process affected if the president and Congress have different values?

Activity Ideas

Looking to extend the learning experience? Here are a few ideas to get you and your students started.

- Have the students make their own infographic showing the process of how a bill becomes a law.
- Help the class hold their own Congressional hearings on a topic from the game or one of your choosing. Ask each student to research and prepare a short testimony for the rest of the class. You can add a challenge by assigning them a value to include.

The **Branches of Power Extension Pack** is now available with additional ELL supports! Make your students' game play more meaningful with activities designed specifically for Branches of Power. This easy-to-use resource set means deeper learning for students and best practices around game-centered learning for you! Extension Packs require internet access and are designed for use with projectors or interactive whiteboards. Find this great resource linked in the game page or in the Teach Hub.

