

A Minimal US Constiution

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Table 1: Comparison of U.S. Constitution vs. Minimal Constitution

Feature	U.S. Constitution	Minimal Constitution	Difference
Full text	7,600 words (with 27 amendments)	1,874 words	75% shorter (word count)
Provisions/Rules	151 provisions	86 rules	43% fewer rules
Flesch-Kincaid Grade	17.9 (post-college)	10.2 (10th grade)	7.7-grade reduction
Flesch Reading Ease	25.4 (very difficult)	65.1 (plain English)	39.7-point increase
Approximate Age	22+ years	15-16+ years	Simplified for youth
Sentence Length	Avg. 34 words	Avg. 12 words	65% shorter
Passive Voice	20% of sentences	5% of sentences	15% reduction
Vocabulary	Archaic/Latin terms	Modern plain English	Modernized language
Comprehension	Requires legal training	High school accessible	Public-friendly design

Note: Readability metrics calculated using standard Flesch-Kincaid analysis. Data reflects constitutional texts as of 2023.

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“We the People of the United States establish this Constitution to:

- Create a fair and effective government,
- Protect fundamental freedoms for all,
- Ensure peace and justice through collaboration,
- Promote the well-being of every generation,
- Secure liberty and equality as enduring ideals.”

Article I : Branches of Government

A) Legislative Branch.

Congress.

- 1.1.1 The House of Representatives: Members elected every 2 years by voters in their state. To serve, you must be at least 25 years old, a U.S. citizen for 7 years, and live in the state you represent.
- 1.1.2 The Senate: Two Senators per state, elected by voters for 6-year terms. To serve, you must be at least 30 years old, a U.S. citizen for 9 years, and live in your state.

Powers.

- 1.1.3 Tax, fund defense, regulate trade, manage immigration, and establish post offices, roads, and standards for weights and measures.
- 1.1.4 Grant patents, copyrights, and regulate bankruptcy.
- 1.1.5 Define and punish crimes at sea, counterfeiting, or against international law.
- 1.1.6 Declare war, approve treaties, and oversee the President’s appointments (e.g., judges, ambassadors).
- 1.1.7 Pass laws necessary to execute these powers.

Creation of laws.

- 1.1.8 A bill must pass both the House and Senate. If the President rejects it (veto), Congress can override with a 2/3 vote in both parts.
- 1.1.9 No law may Punish actions that were legal when committed (*ex post facto*).
- 1.1.10 No law may Target individuals for punishment without trial (*bill of attainder*).

Impeachment.

- 1.1.11 The House can accuse (impeach) any federal official of serious crimes or abuses of power. The Senate then holds a trial, with the Chief Justice presiding if the President is impeached. A 2/3 Senate vote removes the official.
- 1.1.12 Officials removed by impeachment may not hold federal office again.

B) Executive Branch.

The President.

- 1.2.1 Leads the government, commands the military, and enforces laws.
- 1.2.2 Elected every 4 years by the Electoral College: Each state gets votes equal to its Senators + Representatives. The candidate with the most votes wins.
- 1.2.3 Must be at least 35 years old, a natural-born U.S. citizen, and a resident for 14 years.
- 1.2.4 No one can be President more than twice, or more than 10 years if they took over mid-term.

Presidential Powers.

- 1.2.5 Sign/veto laws, appoint judges and ambassadors (with Senate approval), and negotiate treaties.
- 1.2.6 Pardon federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment.

Succession.

- 1.2.7 If the President dies, quits, or is removed, the Vice President takes over. If both are unavailable, next in line: Speaker of the House, then Senate leaders.

C) Judicial Branch.

Supreme Court

- 1.3.1 The highest court. Judges serve for life unless they resign or are removed for misconduct.
Decides cases involving.
- 1.3.2 Disputes between states or foreign governments.
- 1.3.3 Federal laws, treaties, or constitutional rights.
- 1.3.4 Crimes at sea and lawsuits against ambassadors.
- 1.3.5 Treason against the United States consists only of waging war against the nation or aiding its enemies, and requires testimony from two witnesses.

Lower Courts.

- 1.3.6 Congress may create courts below the Supreme Court.
- #### Judicial Review.
- 1.3.7 Courts can strike down laws or actions that violate this Constitution.

Article II: Rights and Liberties

Takings Clause (5th Amendment) and adds judicial oversight.

D) Fundamental Freedoms

Free Expression.

- 2.1.1 Everyone has the right to speak, write, practice their beliefs (or none), gather peacefully, and petition the government.
- 2.1.2 The government cannot favor or punish any religion.

Self-Defense.

- 2.1.3 People may own weapons for self-defense, sport, or militia service, subject to laws ensuring public safety and preventing harm to others. *Rationale:* Balances individual rights with societal safety, addressing modern debates over gun control.

Privacy: Homes and Bodies.

- 2.1.4 No soldier or officer may stay in your home during peacetime without consent. During war, this requires a law passed by Congress.
- 2.1.5 Government searches of your body, home, or belongings require a warrant based on clear evidence.

Digital Privacy.

- 2.1.6 Access to private emails, phone records, or location data requires a warrant. *Rationale:* Modernizes 3rd/4th Amendments for digital age and clarifies wartime exceptions.

E) Fair Treatment Under the Law

Due Process.

- 2.2.1 No one may be jailed, fined, or executed without:
 - A grand jury's approval for serious crimes.
 - A speedy, public trial by jury.
 - In civil lawsuits over \$20, either party may demand a jury.
- 2.2.2 You cannot be tried twice for the same crime (*dou-ble jeopardy*) or forced to testify against yourself.

Cruelty Ban.

- 2.2.3 Punishments must fit the crime. Torture, extreme penalties, degrading treatment, or prolonged solitary confinement are forbidden. *Rationale:* Expands "cruel and unusual" to address modern prison conditions.

Equality.

- 2.2.4 Slavery and forced labor are illegal except as punishment for a crime duly convicted by a court.
- 2.2.5 All people must be treated equally under the law, regardless of race, sex, religion, wealth, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or background.

Property Rights.

- 2.2.6 Private property may not be taken for public use without fair compensation and a chance to challenge the taking in court. *Rationale:* Codifies the

F) Voting and Representation

Right to Vote.

- 2.3.1 Every citizen 18 or older can vote.
- 2.3.2 No one can be denied voting rights because of race, sex, age (18+), disability, language, or inability to pay taxes.

Fair Elections.

- 2.3.3 Congressional districts must:
 - Be roughly equal in population.
 - Respect geographic and communal integrity, not partisan advantage.
 - Ensure racial, ethnic, and political minorities can elect representatives. *Rationale:* Bans partisan/racial gerrymandering (Rucho v. Common Cause, Voting Rights Act).

G) Additional Guarantees and Clarifications

Unlisted Rights.

- 2.4.1 The rights listed here do not deny or dismiss other rights the people already have. For example:
 - Privacy in personal choices (e.g., marriage, family, medical decisions, abortion, contraception).
 - Rights to education, travel, bodily autonomy, and fair treatment in private contracts.

Limits on Government Power.

- 2.4.2 The government cannot:
 - Use the Constitution to justify ignoring basic rights (9th Amendment).
 - Suspend constitutional rights except during invasion or rebellion, and only as narrowly required.

Equal Citizenship.

- 2.4.3 Anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. is a full citizen. States cannot deny citizenship rights or equal protection under the law.
- 2.4.4 Non-citizens legally residing in the U.S. have equal protection in criminal and civil proceedings.

Protections Against Exploitation.

- 2.4.5 Workers have the right to fair pay, safe conditions, collective bargaining, and strikes, regulated by Congress.

Direct Democracy.

- 2.4.6 Citizens can propose and vote on laws or constitutional changes through petitions and ballot initiatives, provided they do not violate federal rights, treaties, or this Constitution.

Article III: Federal-State System

H) Federal Authority

Supreme Law:

- 3.1.1 This Constitution, federal laws, and treaties are the highest law of the land. State governments, courts, and officials must obey them.

Federal Powers:

- 3.1.2 Congress holds exclusive authority to:
Declare war, regulate trade between states and nations, manage immigration, and create currency.
Govern U.S. territories (e.g., Puerto Rico, Guam) and admit new states.
Assume and repay all lawful debts of the United States.
- 3.1.3 The federal government shall:
Protect states from invasion.
Defend states against domestic violence (e.g., insurrections, systemic denial of rights).

I) State Responsibilities

Full Faith and Credit:

- 3.2.1 Every state must honor the laws, court rulings, licenses, and contracts of other states.

Equal Treatment:

- 3.2.2 States cannot discriminate against visitors from other states in taxes, rights, or access to courts.

Interstate Compacts:

- 3.2.3 States may not form binding agreements with other states or foreign nations without congressional approval.

Extradition:

- 3.2.4 States must return fugitives accused of crimes to the state where the crime occurred.

J) State Powers

Reserved Rights:

- 3.3.1 Powers not granted to the federal government by this Constitution belong to the states or the people.

Republican Governance:

- 3.3.2 States must uphold a republican form of government, including:
Free, fair, and regular elections open to all citizens.
No laws that undermine federal rights, treaties, or constitutional principles.

Essential Services:

- 3.3.3 States may not deny access to healthcare, education, emergency aid, or voting rights based on race, religion, gender, disability, residency, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

K) Equal Citizenship

Birthright Citizenship:

- 3.4.1 Anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. is a citizen. States cannot revoke citizenship or pass laws that:

Discriminate based on race, sex, religion, wealth, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Non-Citizen Protections:

- 3.4.2 Non-citizens legally residing in the U.S. have equal protection in criminal and civil proceedings.

Due Process:

- 3.4.3 States must ensure fair trials, equal legal access, and protection from arbitrary detention.

L) Territories and New States

Territorial Governance:

- 3.5.1 Congress governs territories, but residents retain all constitutional rights except voting in federal elections unless admitted as a state.

- 3.5.2 Territories may elect non-voting delegates to Congress.

Statehood Process:

- 3.5.3 New states may be admitted by Congress on equal footing with existing states.
- 3.5.4 No state may be split, merged, or dissolved without its consent.

M) Debt and Alliances

Federal Debt:

- 3.6.1 The United States assumes responsibility for all lawful debts incurred under this Constitution.

State Restrictions:

- 3.6.2 States may not Coin money, grant titles of nobility, or enter treaties/alliances.
- 3.6.3 States may not Tax interstate commerce or federal property.

Article IV: Amendments

N) Proposal and Ratification

Proposing Amendments:

- 4.1.1 Amendments may be proposed by:
 - A two-thirds vote in the House and Senate.
 - A national convention called by Congress if requested by two-thirds of state legislatures.
 - Citizens may petition for amendments if supported by 10% of voters in 25 states.
- 4.1.2 Congress must publish proposed amendments publicly for 90 days before voting.

Ratification Process:

- 4.1.3 To become law, amendments must be ratified by three-fourths of:
 - State legislatures.
 - State conventions elected specifically for ratification.
- 4.1.4 Congress chooses the ratification method but cannot alter it once states begin voting.

Deadline.

- 4.1.5 Congress may set a ratification deadline, not exceeding seven years.
- 4.1.6 One six-month extension is allowed if approved by a majority of states.

Integration:

- 4.1.7 Ratified amendments must be merged into the relevant existing article(s).
- 4.1.8 If an amendment affects multiple articles, Congress must update all impacted sections within one year.

O) Limits on Amendments

Unchangeable Principles:

- 4.2.1 No amendment may deny or undermine:
 - Equal rights based on race, sex, religion, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
 - Freedom of speech, press, assembly, petition, or voting rights for citizens aged 18+.
 - The guarantee of a republican form of government (free elections, separation of powers, accountability).

Judicial Review:

- 4.2.2 Courts may strike down amendments that violate unchangeable principles.

Repealing Amendments:

- 4.2.3 A newer amendment may override an older one only if it explicitly repeals the prior text and follows the same proposal/ratification process.

Territorial Participation:

- 4.2.4 Residents of U.S. territories may propose amendments through their non-voting congressional delegates.
- 4.2.5 Territories have advisory ratification votes but do not count toward the three-fourths threshold.

P) Emergency Amendments

Temporary Provisions:

- 4.3.1 In times of verified national emergency (declared by 3/4 of Congress and approved by the Supreme Court), Congress may propose temporary amendments with a three-fourths vote.
- 4.3.2 Temporary amendments expire after two years unless ratified permanently under Section 1.

Suspension of Rights:

- 4.3.3 No amendment may suspend constitutional rights except during invasions or rebellions, and only as narrowly required.

Q) Public Accountability

Transparency:

- 4.4.1 All proposed amendments, debates, and state ratification votes must be published in real-time on a publicly accessible platform.
- 4.4.2 Congress must hold open hearings for citizen-proposed amendments.

Fraud Prevention:

- 4.4.3 States must use verifiable, auditable methods for ratification votes.