

Some Amendments to the Constitution that give you rights in the USA:

These are the amendments we will discuss or consider in our unit. There are others. You can find the whole Bill of Rights and Constitution on the National Archives website: <http://www.archives.gov>

1st Amendment – Five Freedoms

People have the right to:

- freedom of religion – There will be NO federally required religion. Laws cannot be made solely for the purpose of a religious belief or to promote a religion. (Separation of Church and State) You can have any religious belief that you want or maybe you will not have any belief in God at all. Your actions, based on your religion, still cannot break other laws that are designed to protect people from harm.

4 Ways That Citizens Have Freedom of Expression:

- freedom of speech – You can share your opinions without fear of the government punishing you.
- freedom of the press – The media can print or report a story in the news without gov't censorship (Has to be true)
- freedom of assembly - to gather peacefully – (May need a permit)
- freedom of petition, also known as redress – You can ask the government to change things (laws and actions) that you think are wrong

2nd Amendment - Right to bear arms - Freedom to own and use guns lawfully.

3rd Amendment - No quartering of soldiers can be forced on you by the government.

4th Amendment – Need a warrant to search or seize property.

There needs to be a good reason for the government (police) to search people and their property.

5th Amendment –

- If you are arrested, you have the right to not say things against yourself before or in court.
- Once found innocent of a crime, you cannot be tried for the same crime again.
- The government cannot take away your life or liberty or property without following a set of fair steps (due process). If the government needs something that you have, they can take it away from you by paying you a fair amount of money. (eminent domain)

6th Amendment – Rights of the Accused

- If you are arrested you have the right to know why.
- You have the right to a speedy trial, which means to have one as soon as possible.
- Before and during the trial, you have the right to know what evidence will be presented against you.
- You can call witnesses to help you explain your side of the story.
- You have the right to a lawyer. If you can't afford one, the government will hire one for you.

7th Amendment - The right to a trial by jury, if you choose.

8th Amendment – Fair consequences

- If you qualify for bail, the price cannot be unfairly high.
- If you are found guilty and asked to pay a fine, it has to be a fair price.
- If you are found guilty, the court cannot give you a “cruel or unusual punishment.”

9th Amendment – Freedom of Choice

The People have many other rights besides those listed in the Constitution, because the document could not possibly list them all.

10th Amendment - States’ Rights (Gives strength to the idea of *federalism*) and Rights of the People

This amendment reinforces the freedom of choice given to individuals in the 9th amendment. It also adds the idea that states have rights to make laws and solve problems in their own ways, differently than other states if needed, and without the federal government getting involved.

13th Amendment - Frees the slaves

No slavery or forced labor is allowed in the whole United States.

14th Amendment – Laws have to be fair and equal to all citizens

- You, as a citizen, no matter who you are, have the right to “equal protection of the laws.”
- Local and state governments cannot discriminate against any one group of people for any reason.

The VOTING amendments:

15th Amendment – Black men can vote.

In all states, men have the right to vote, no matter your race, color, or former condition of servitude (which means it doesn’t matter if you used to be slave).

19th Amendment – Women can vote.

In all states, women have the right to vote.

26th Amendment – Eighteen year olds can vote.

In all states, 18 year olds have the right to vote. (After all, 18 year olds are drafted and seen to be old enough to fight and die for their country; they should be able to vote, too.)