



*Federal Government: SS.7.CG.3.5*  
**The Amendment Process**  
**VIDEO SCRIPT**

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1. The Constitution was written a very long time ago, way back in 1787. And the Framers of the Constitution knew that over the years things would change but they wanted to ensure our government system was one that would stand the test of time. So they made sure there was a process for the Constitution to change with the times.

2. How do we know they wanted this? Because if we look at Article V (5) in the Constitution, we see language which begins: “**The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution**”. So they provide a way to change the Constitution!

3. After watching this video, you’ll be able to:

- recognize the methods used to propose and ratify amendments to the US Constitution
- identify the correct sequence of each amendment process
- identify the importance of a formal amendment process, and
- recognize the significance of the difficulty of formally amending the US Constitution

4. Now, we’re going to be talking about things like amendments, proposed amendments, and ratifying amendments quite a bit throughout this video, so let’s make sure we understand what we are talking about here. And we’ll start with ‘amendment’.

5. Remember that an amendment is a change to a constitution. It can be the US Constitution or the Florida Constitution. When an amendment is proposed, that means that somebody is making a suggestion for how to change the Constitution. But keep in mind, just because an amendment is proposed, it doesn’t mean it’s going to change the Constitution, because it has to be ratified first. Now keep in mind, as we said, we don’t actually get a change to the Constitution unless we ratify it. To ratify means to confirm by expressing consent or approval or for something. And so we have to ratify an amendment, and we’ll talk about the process of this later in this video.

6. Now, the Framers knew that there has to be a process to change the Constitution. But they also knew that even a small change could have a large effect on all Americans so the process couldn’t be easy! As you can see on the screen, thousands of amendments have been proposed, but only 27 have been added to the Constitution.

7. So we have two ways that we can propose amendments to the Constitution. Let’s take a few minutes and go over each one.

8. The first method, and it’s been used 27 times, is to have two-thirds (2/3) of both houses of Congress, that is, the Senate and the House of Representatives, approve the proposal. That would require a vote from 357 of 535 members of Congress.

9. The second method, and it's never been used (yet anyway), is that two-thirds (2/3) of the state legislatures across the country submit an application to Congress. Congress then calls a convention, where states can propose any amendments that they want. This would require 33 of 50 state legislatures to submit the application.

10. Now once an amendment is proposed, that doesn't mean it's going to become part of the Constitution. And there are two ways that it can. These are called ratification methods. First is that 3/4ths, or 38/50, of the state legislatures vote to ratify the proposed amendment.

11. The second form of ratification is to hold a convention in every state. And if 3/4ths, or 38/50, of these state conventions vote to ratify the proposed amendment, then it becomes part of our Constitution.

12. So let's summarize what we've learned about the amendment process. In order to propose an amendment, we need 2/3rds of the House and Senate to approve it, OR a constitutional convention called by 2/3rds of the states.

13. To ratify, or approve, the amendment, we need 3/4<sup>th</sup> of state legislatures to vote to ratify, or we need 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the states to vote to ratify it through a state ratifying convention. Once that's done, the amendment becomes part of the Constitution.

14. Let's check in. Try to answer the following questions in your own words. Why did the Framers of the Constitution want to make it difficult to change it?

15. ANSWER TO QUESTION

16. Based on what you've learned, what amendment proposal method has been the most successful?

17. ANSWER TO QUESTION

18. Let's recap what we've learned. Remember that Article V of the Constitution describes the amendment process. And there are two ways to propose an amendment. Through a 2/3rds vote of Congress, which would be 357/535 members. Or, a constitutional convention called by 2/3rds of the states, or 33/50.

19. Ratifying an amendment requires 3/4<sup>th</sup>, or 38/50, of state legislatures to vote to ratify it, or 3/4<sup>th</sup> (38/50) of states to vote ratify it at a state ratifying convention.

20. Thousands of amendments have been proposed, but only 27 have been ratified. And it's difficult to change the Constitution because it can have large effects, significant effects, on all Americans across the country!

21. George Washington once said that "I do not conceive that we are more inspired, have more wisdom, or possess more virtue, than those who will come after us. The power under the Constitution will always be with the people." And the Framers wanted to make sure that the American people as a whole would support any change to the Constitution. This is why we have a formal amendment process, and why it's so hard to pass an amendment. Because they really do need support for something that could affect so many people.

22. Amendments to the Constitution have made huge changes to our rights, our liberties, and our very system. Sometimes they expand rights, like the Bill of Rights (our first ten amendments), or the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, or the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which ensured due process and equal protection for all citizens under the law, the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment, which repealed Prohibition and allowed people to buy alcohol again, or the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which outlawed the poll tax in U.S. elections.

23. Sometimes, amendments to our US Constitution restrict liberties, like when the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment banned the manufacture, sale or transportation of alcohol.

24. And sometimes, amendments to the Constitution change our system completely. For example, the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment changed how we vote for president and vice-president, the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment created an income tax, and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment made it so a president could only serve two elected terms.

25. So why do we have a formal amendment process? Well, as you can see from the words of Washington, the power under the Constitution will always be with the people. And the Framers wanted to make sure that if the people wanted to change the Constitution, it could change when they needed it to.

26. You can learn more about how amendments and the amendment process have impacted our rights, liberties, and political system in these topic areas on Civics360! Be sure to check them out.