

Activating Our Everyday Rights:

How Do You Use the First Amendment?



BIG IDEAS

- › Freedom of expression is protected in the United States by the Constitution's First Amendment.
- › You use the rights listed in the First Amendment in your everyday life.
- › Respecting everyone's rights is part of using your rights responsibly.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- › List the rights named in the First Amendment to the Constitution.
- › Identify times they have used First Amendment rights.
- › Reflect on the relationship between responsibility and respect, and First Amendment rights.

THEME

Balancing Rights with Responsibilities



GRADE LEVEL

4-8

TIME

30 minutes

MATERIALS

First Amendment Rights handout (included)



VOCABULARY

Assembly › getting together in the same place with other people for a common purpose

Expression › sharing your ideas with others

First Amendment Rights › freedoms of expression in the United States Constitution: speech, religion, press, assembly, petition

Petition › to make a request for an authority figure to make a specific change

Press › the news media, including newspapers, television, radio, and the internet

Respect › understanding everyone's inherent right to liberty; showing consideration to other people

Responsibility › a sense of duty or obligation to do something

Directions

“STEP UP, STEP BACK”

1. Divide the class in half and have them line up in two opposing lines, facing each other. Tell students you are going to say some statements, and if the statement applies to them, they should step forward into the middle of the space between the two lines. (NOTE: Alternately, you could play “Stand Up, Sit Down” with the students staying at their desks.)
2. Start with something that will apply to everyone. For instance, “If you are in sixth grade, step up,” or “If you are wearing clothes today, step up.” This will let you check whether everyone is paying attention and knows what to do.

Activating Our Everyday Rights cont'd.



CHARACTER CONNECTION

Students will think about their own **responsibility** for using their First Amendment rights **respectfully**.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Common Core Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4-8.1 ▶

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

NJ Social Studies

6.1.4.A.2 ▶ Explain how fundamental rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights (i.e., freedom of expression, freedom of religion, the right to vote, and the right to due process) contribute to the continuation and improvement of American democracy.

PA Civics and Government

5.1.5.D ▶ Interpret key ideas about government found in significant documents: Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, Bill of Rights, Pennsylvania Constitution

5.1.7.A ▶ Cite functional examples of how the rule of law protects property rights, individual rights, and the common good.

3. Now that you have done a practice round, continue playing in the same way, using **at least one statement from each of the following categories**.

CATEGORY ONE

If you have ever **sent an email or text message**, step up.

If you have ever **chosen a new hairstyle for yourself**, step up.

If you have ever **participated in a school debate or given a speech or presentation**, step up.

If you have ever **posted what you think or feel on social media**, step up.

If you have ever **created a work of art**, step up.

CATEGORY TWO

If you have ever **celebrated a religious holiday**, step up.

If you have ever **attended a religious service for a religion you do not practice (for example, with a friend)**, step up.

If you have ever **asked yourself what the meaning of life is**, step up.

CATEGORY THREE

If you have ever **written a letter to the editor of a newspaper**, step up.

If you have ever **watched the news on TV**, step up.

If you have ever **read a news article of your choice on the internet**, step up.

CATEGORY FOUR

If you have ever **joined a club**, step up.

If you have ever **attended a political rally, protest, or demonstration**, step up.

If you have ever **been in a parade**, step up.

If you have ever **participated in a walk or run for charity**, step up.

If you have ever **gone to a community celebration or festival**, step up.

CATEGORY FIVE

If you have ever **helped create your classroom rules**, step up.

If you have ever **suggested to your teacher that a rule or practice in your classroom should change**, step up.

If you have ever **asked your parents to let you do something you were not allowed to do before**, step up.



DEBRIEF FROM THE GAME

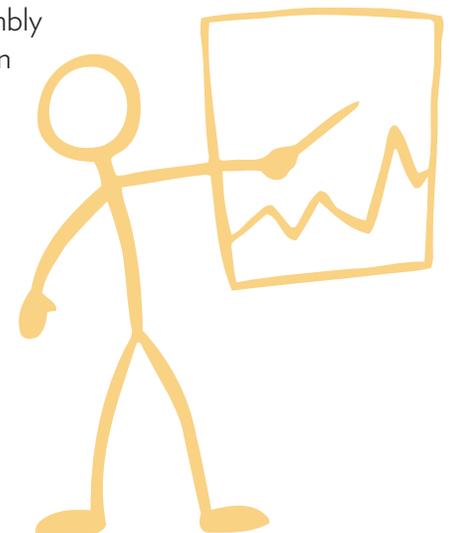
4. Ask students, “**What were some things you noticed as we played this game?**”
5. After allowing students to share responses to the previous question, ask students, “**What did all of the statements I said have in common?**”
6. Allow students to share their responses and then highlight that all of the statements were related to expressing yourself. Freedom of **expression** is protected in the United States by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

7. Distribute the *First Amendment Rights* handout included with this lesson plan. Use the top part of the handout to call students’ attention to what they likely already know about the United States Constitution, and to contextualize the First Amendment.
8. The statements you used in the *Step Up, Step Back* game correspond to the five freedoms of expression protected by the First Amendment. Read out each of the statements again, but this time, **give students time after each one to figure out which of the five freedoms of expression it corresponds to.**
9. Have students share out after each one, and then be sure they have the correct answer. (i.e., “So if you have participated in a parade, then you have practiced which right? Freedom of Assembly, that’s correct.”) This will let students see examples of times when they have used the rights protected by the First Amendment.

KEY:

Category One = Freedom of Speech
 Category Two = Freedom of Religion
 Category Three = Freedom of the Press
 Category Four = Freedom of Assembly
 Category Five = Freedom of Petition

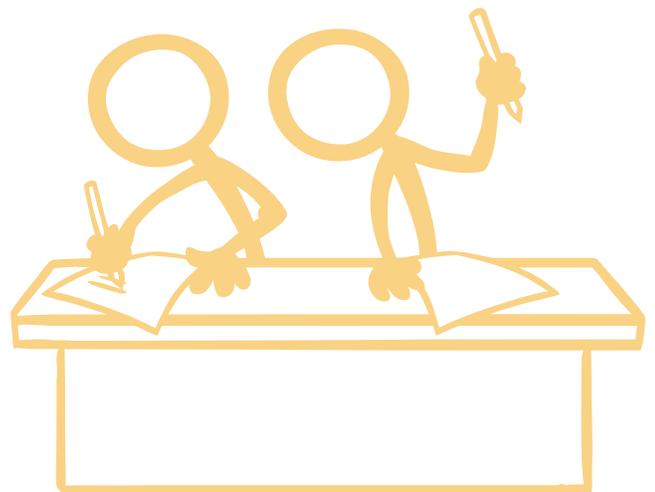


RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT

- 10.** Tell students: We use these rights every single day. People thought these rights were so important they added them to the Constitution to make sure they were protected. These rights must be very powerful. **And “with great power” comes... what?**
- › Students may know the line from *Spiderman* (Marvel Comics / Columbia Pictures 2002): “With great power comes great responsibility.” If not, introduce this idea.
 - › Uncle Ben in *Spiderman* was not the only person who has ever said this. In fact, Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility.”
- 11.** Tell students: When you have a right, one of your **responsibilities** is to recognize that others also have that right. This is part of being **respectful** of everyone’s right to liberty.
- 12.** Ask students, “**What are some ways we can be responsible and respectful when using First Amendment Rights?**” Have students share responses in pairs, and then ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class.

WRAP-UP

- 13.** As an exit ticket, have students respond to the following prompt: Describe one way you have used one of your First Amendment Rights. Be sure to include which right you were using.



First Amendment Rights

Handout

NAME _____

U.S. Constitution



Changes to the Constitution are called **Amendments**.



The first 10 amendments are called the **Bill of Rights**.

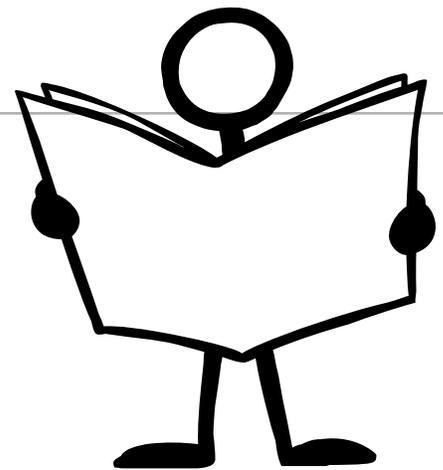


The **First Amendment** says:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The First Amendment protects:

- › Freedom of **Speech**
- › Freedom of **Religion**
- › Freedom of the **Press**
- › Freedom of **Assembly**
- › Freedom of **Petition**



Did You Know?

Freedom of Petition = “the freedom to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” In other words, if the people in the country don’t like the way the government is working, they have a **right** to ask the government to change. The government should then either make the change or explain why it will not.

Right = Something you are entitled to do or have, often protected by law

First Amendment Rights = Freedoms of expression protected by the First Amendment

