



Branches of Government - Spoons!

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Grade band: 3-5

Subject: Civics

Topic: Branches of Government

Introduction

This activity focuses on the three branches of government, executive, legislative and judicial. Students will create a set of cards that encompasses one of the branches of government, and each card must be a descriptor of said branch.

Purpose

This activity may be used to activate pre-existing knowledge, during instruction on the three branches of government or as a formative assessment.

Materials

- Deck of traditional playing cards (1 per group)
- Branches of government cards (provided below)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Plastic spoons



Instructions

1. Print out the provided cards and cut. Glue each printed card onto one of the cards from the actual deck. There should be 24 cards in total.
2. To get the game started, get students into groups of 4. Place three spoons in the middle of the students as they sit in a circle. (There should always be one less spoon than the

number of players). One player will have the deck of cards next to them, and will distribute 4 cards to each player including themselves.

3. The player with the deck will begin by picking up one card from the deck and determine whether or not they would like to keep that card. If they do not want it, they will pass it on to the next player and that player will do the same. If they do keep the card, they must replace it with a different card in their hand and pass the unwanted one over. This will continue all around the circle. There is no discard pile, the cards will continue circulating throughout the group, and each player may only have 4 cards in their hand at a time. Each player is attempting to get a full hand of the same branch of government. They must select and discard their cards in order to get a set of cards that describe the executive, legislative, or judicial branch only.
4. When a player has their set of 4 from whatever branch they have, they will quietly take one spoon from the middle. As the other players notice this, they (as quietly as possible) take a spoon until there is one player without a spoon. Even if the other players do not have a set of four, as soon as one person takes a spoon anyone can take a spoon.
5. The player without a spoon must say, "Prove it!" to the player that has the match. Next, the player with the match has to prove that his/her cards are matches. If the original player is able to prove it, the player without the spoon has to add an S to his/her scoreboard. If the original player cannot prove that his/her cards match, that player gets an S. Take up all cards, shuffle, and play again. If a player spells the word SPOONS, they lose.

Congress

Makes Laws for all of the
United States

Controls all of the money

Has the power to impeach
Supreme Court Judges or
Presidents

Has the power to override the
president's vetoes with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority

Confirms or rejects the
President's treaties

Grants copyrights and patents

Drafts proposed laws

The President

The Vice President

Enforces laws of the United States

Spends money as allowed by
Congress

Declares state of emergencies

Appoints judges to the
Supreme Court

Grants pardons for crimes

Power to veto a bill

The Supreme Court

Interprets laws

Judges when a law is unconstitutional	Makes arrangements for prisoners
Hears cases whose rulings in lower courts have been challenged	Includes 9 justices who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate
Determines how to apply laws to real situations	Settles legal disputes

Answer Key

Legislative:

- Congress
- Makes Laws for all of the United States
- Controls all of the money
- Has the power to impeach Supreme Court Judges or Presidents

- Has the power to override the president's vetoes with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority
- Confirms or rejects the President's treaties
- Grants copyrights and patents
- Drafts proposed laws

Executive:

- The President
- The Vice President
- Enforces laws of the United States
- Spends money as allowed by Congress
- Declares state of emergencies
- Appoints judges to the Supreme Court
- Grants pardons for crimes
- Power to veto a bill

Judicial:

- The Supreme Court
- Interprets laws
- Judges when a law is unconstitutional
- Makes arrangements for prisoners
- Hears cases whose rulings in lower courts have been challenged
- Includes 9 justices who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate
- Determines how to apply laws to real situations
- Settles legal disputes