

Read the passage and complete the review questions on a separate sheet of paper. Please answer the questions in complete sentences. This assignment is due on the first day of school.

What ideas did the Framers use to limit the power of government?

TERMS to understand

Balancing powers
Branches
Checking power
Executive power
Judicial power
Legislative power
Separation of powers
United States Supreme Court

When the Framers (Founding Fathers) organized our national government, they knew they needed to limit its power. The Framers did this by dividing the government into three parts. They called these parts the three **branches** of government. They gave certain powers to each branch.

- Legislative branch. The Framers gave this branch the power to make laws. They called our national legislature Congress. Congress has two parts or houses. They are the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- Executive Branch. The Framers gave this branch the power to carry out and enforce the laws made by Congress. The president is the head of this branch.
- Judicial Branch. The Framers gave this branch the power to settle

disagreements about what the laws mean. The **United States Supreme Court** is the highest court in this branch.

What else did the Framers do to limit the power of government?

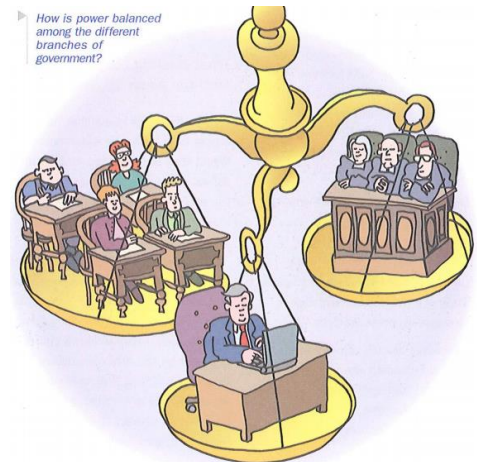
The Framers knew that government often gain too much power. When they do, they can violate the rights of the people. They work for the selfish interests of ta few people instead of for the common good. They do not treat people fairly.

The Framers wanted to make sure this could not happen. They separated and balanced the powers among the different branches. Then they gave each branch a way to check the use of power by the other branches. The Framers believed that the way they organized the government was the best way to protect the rights and welfare of the people.

The Framers knew from history that constitutional governments are often divided into different branches. **Separation of powers** means to divide the power of government among its branches. The Framers used the idea of separation of powers as one way to limit the power of government.

The Framers also knew that it was not enough just to separate the powers of government. If you gave too much power to one branch, it might control the others. The Framers believed that the powers of government needed to be balanced among the different branches. **Balancing powers** means that no one government branch is given so much power that it can completely control the other branches.

The Framers used one more way to limit the power of government. They gave each branch ways to check the other branches. **Checking powers** means that each branch can stop the other branches from making final decisions or from taking certain actions. For example, Congress has the power to make laws. The president can stop or control this power by refusing to approve a bill passed by Congress. But, the bill might still become law. Two-thirds of the members of Congress would have to vote to make it a law. Suppose the bill does become law. The judicial branch has the power to check Congress and the president. If a case is brought before them, the courts have the power to say that a certain law is not allowed by the Constitution.



REVIEW THE LESSON:

1. What are the three branches of our government? What power does each branch have?
2. Why did the Framers separate the powers of our government? How are they separated?
3. Why did the Framers balance the powers of our government?
4. Why did the Framers provide ways for each branch of our government to check the powers of the other branches? Give an example of how one branch can check the power of another.
5. Draw a diagram showing your understanding of the separation of powers and checks and balances (balancing and checking power).