

High School (9-12)

How to use this: Pick the format you'd most enjoy running and choose any lesson under it. Not sure? The ★ marks the easiest lesson to run in each format — take it and go. Everything here is built for 9-12 and needs nothing beyond standard classroom AV. Each notes the core ideas it teaches — aim to land at least two in your visit.

Story-driven discussion

Dig into a case or a right they feel.

Fourteenth Amendment – Brown v. The Board of Education Lesson (7-12), American

Constitution Society. Linda Brown's real fight to desegregate her neighborhood school, carried by her story rather than case-law argument — the entry point is "what does equal mean to you?" Presenter note: skip the Veriflyt trivia icebreaker and the closing questions on present-day school segregation; stay with the personal thread. Reference the [Elementary School version](#) for basics and additional discussion questions. *Core ideas: Equality and fairness, The rule of law.* [Note: Page opens with ACS's advocacy mission — this is not part of the lesson.]

Talk through a big idea

Students pick a side and make the case.

- ★ **First Amendment — Freedom of Speech Lesson (9-12, American Constitution Society).** Teaches *Tinker v. Des Moines* — a case establishing that student speech is protected unless it causes a "substantial disruption" — then tests that standard against later cases. Run *Tinker* plus the class debate only, using the First Amendment Quiz as an oral warm-up instead of printing it. Focus on: *Morse v. Frederick* ("Bong Hits 4 Jesus") and school dress-code challenge. Presenter note skip: Veriflyt trivia icebreaker and cut the *Hardwick v. Heyward* case summary from what you print or hand out. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*
 - **To Sign or Not to Sign — Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate (9-12, National Constitution Center).** Go to the debate (p. 5), using the real primary sources: John Jay's 1788 address and Elbridge Gerry's dissent letter (Handouts 3-4, p. 9-12). Split the class into two sides and have them argue from the actual founders' words, then debrief on what each side got right. Presenter note skip the read-aloud play entirely. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*
 - **Search and Seizure in Washington, Including in the Schools (9-12, WA Courts).** Fourth Amendment made real: a locker-and-car search case study argued by student "circuit courts," each side ruling and defending its reasoning, grounded in actual Washington case law on student privacy. Presenter note: this is a return-visit pick — save it for once the class has already covered the constitutional basics and the school-search statute on their own, so the case study lands instead of opening cold. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*
 - **Freedom of Expression in Special Places (9-12, WA Courts).** A real Supreme Court case, school newspaper censorship, argued in student teams: pick a side blind, defend it, then find out how the Court actually ruled. Presenter note: for a return-visit pick — pairs naturally after the First Amendment lesson above. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Checks and balances.*
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Run a mock trial

Students take the courtroom roles; you're the judge.

★ **Theft Scripted Mock Trial (6–12, WA Courts)**. Full criminal case, prosecution vs. defense, argued start to finish. The legal teams are split into six small roles apiece, so with 18 speaking parts in play, no one student is stuck carrying a big block of lines. It's written for the whole 50-minute period, though: plan to trim testimony or tighten the closings to fit inside the ~20-minute activity window. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Tort Liability: Mock Trial (10–12, WA Courts). A real trial team experience, not a cold read: students argue third-party liability in a drunk-driving injury case, drafting their own direct and cross-examination questions from witness statements rather than working from a script. Timed to the minute (openings, direct, cross, closings) so it fits the period once the prep is done. Presenter note: meant for a return-visit only — save it for when the teacher has taught negligence and the students prepared their questions and roles before you arrive. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Play a game

Fast and competitive; good energy in the room.

Claim Your Jurisdiction (8–12, WA Courts). A fast, competitive game on which court hears which case — makes the structure of the judiciary click in a single period. Presenter note: skip case scenarios #6, #8, and #9 (touch on a named president and a live geopolitical topic); paraphrase the tribal jurisdiction background in your own words rather than reading it verbatim. *Core ideas: Checks and balances, The rule of law.*

Solve a problem or build something

Hands-on reasoning and invention.

★ **Drunk Driving Legislative Session (9–12, WA Courts)**. Students draft their own DUI law in small groups, then compare it against Washington's actual statute — a hands-on look at how a policy question becomes a law. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*

No Vehicles in the Park (5–12, WA Courts). The classic “what does the rule actually mean?” puzzle — students wrestle with an ambiguous law the way a court does. Assumes students already have a basic grounding in how laws are made and interpreted — confirm with the teacher beforehand. For a first-time, shorter visit, pick 4–5 (out of 8) scenarios rather than rushing through all of them. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*

The Courts: Interpreting the Law on Weapons (5–12, WA Courts). A short judicial-reasoning exercise — students apply a written law to messy real-world facts and see why interpretation is the court's job. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*

Video clips to breakup your lesson

A quick drop-in to help anchor the discussion — not a full activity on its own. Match the clip to your grade.

- [Teach with TVW clip \(6-12\)](#): Anchor to a discussion and connect it to your own job. (5-7 min)
- [WA TVW – Civics 101: What is the Law? \(6-12\)](#)
- [TED-Ed – Why wasn't the Bill of Rights originally in the US Constitution? \(6-12\)](#)
- [C-SPAN – Constitution Clips \(6-12\)](#)
- [iCivics/Center for Civic Education – Constitution EXPLAINED, 35 short videos \(6-12\)](#)
- [PBS – The Constitution's origins: "The Big Bang Theory" \(6-12\)](#). Constitutional scholar makes the case for the founding as the pivotal moment in American history — a good scene-setter before diving into rights or structure. (4 min)
- [PBS – Philadelphia and the Constitutional Convention \(6-12\)](#). Historian walks through the practical, thorny problems the framers had to solve to get 13 states to agree on anything — useful before an activity on compromise, federalism, or how the branches were designed to check each other. (6 min)
- [National Constitution Center – Constitution 101 \(9-12\)](#). In partnership with Khan Academy, this complement to the teacher-led version, offers students short videos that span nine engaging units that delve into constitutional concepts.
- [National Constitution Center – Creating the Constitution \(all ages\)](#). Describes the Constitutional Convention — 55 delegates, 3½ months of compromise, landing on three branches and checks and balances. Notes the document's imperfections and how "We the People" has been tested ever since.

Going deeper — national supplements

Not for a single visit — pull one targeted piece or use these to brush up before you go.

- [National Archives – Teaching Six Big Ideas in the Constitution \(8-12\)](#). Five-step unit; best standalone lesson is Step 5, six balanced two-sided debates on limited government, federalism, checks and balances.
- [Annenberg Classroom – Teaching the Constitution \(9-12\)](#). Use this guide to find videos, lesson plans and games that connect to the articles and amendments in the Constitution.

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