The First Amendment

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
MEANINGS AND LIMITATIONS

- Identify the five freedoms protected in the First Amendment.
- Explain why the First Amendment is often considered the most important amendment.
- Identify who is responsible for clarifying the meaning of the First Amendment.
- Describe the meaning of each of the five freedoms listed in the First Amendment.
- Describe key limitations placed on each of five freedoms in the First Amendment.
Lesson Plan
The First Amendment

Objectives: Students will be able to:
- Identify the five freedoms protected in the First Amendment.
- Explain why the First Amendment is considered the most important amendment.
- Identify who is responsible for clarifying the meaning of the First Amendment.
- Describe the meaning of each of the five freedoms listed in the First Amendment.
- Describe key limitations placed on each of five freedoms in the First Amendment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACCESS PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND CREATE INTEREST:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Read the First Amendment to the students. Also, write the below</td>
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<td>questions on the board and have students answer them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Why can’t we say whatever we want? Do we have the freedom of speech</td>
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<td>in the U.S.?</td>
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<td>Class Discussion: Have several students share their thoughts or</td>
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<td>responses to the questions.</td>
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<td>INTRODUCE OBJECTIVES:</td>
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<td>2. Inform the students of the learning objectives for this lesson.</td>
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<td>INVESTIGATION AND ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE:</td>
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<td>3. Students will read the “The First Amendment, Why is it Important” and</td>
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<td>“Meanings and Limitations” and answer the questions provided.</td>
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<td>LECTURE AND PRESENTATION:</td>
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<td>4. Present information about the Bill of Rights and Amendments to the</td>
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<td>Constitution.</td>
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<td>PowerPoint:</td>
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<td>The First Amendment</td>
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<td>ANALYSIS AND REINFORCEMENT:</td>
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<td>5. Students will identify and list the limitations of the First Amendment.</td>
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<td>Worksheets:</td>
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<td>6. Students will analyze a First Amendment court case heard by the U.S.</td>
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<td>1. Limitations</td>
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<td>Supreme Court.</td>
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<td>2. Analysis,</td>
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<td>Hazelwood School...</td>
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<td>Hazelwood School...</td>
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<td>ASSESSMENT:</td>
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<td>7. Students will take an assessment to measure their progress</td>
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<td>Worksheet:</td>
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<td>toward the learning objectives.</td>
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<td>Assessment</td>
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To protect individual rights, the Framers of the United States Constitution eventually added ten amendments to this document. These amendments are called the Bill of Rights. Though each amendment is important, the First Amendment is often considered the most important. The First amendment protects five of the most basic liberties. These are freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition the government to right wrongs. Each of these freedoms have one thing in common; they are all freedoms of expression.

These freedoms of expression were addressed in the First Amendment because they were considered vital for the survival of democracy and for liberty. Without these freedoms, it would be easy for a king or dictator to take control of a country, end liberties, and mistreat its citizens. Freedom of speech, press, petition, and assembly allow citizens to openly criticize the government and to call the government to account, without fear of being thrown in prison. These freedoms give citizens the ability to point out to the government where it did not follow the law and to seek or demand change. When a government controls peoples’ freedoms of expression, they control the people; the Founders were well aware of this. Thus, they placed these freedoms in the first amendment.

What do each of these five freedoms truly mean? Overtime, the exact meanings of each of these freedoms have been debated and challenged in the courts. It has been the duty of the U.S. Supreme Court to interpret the meaning of these freedoms. Many times, the U.S. Supreme Court has had to step in to clarify exactly what a freedom permits and its limitations.

Answer each question with a complete sentence on a separate piece of paper

1. What are the five freedoms protected in First Amendment?
2. What do the five freedoms in the First Amendment have in common?
3. Why were the freedoms of expression placed in the First Amendment?
4. Without freedoms of expression, what can easily be done?
5. What do the freedoms of expression allow citizens to openly do?
6. What do freedoms of expression allow citizens to demand?
7. Whose duty is it to interpret the meaning of First Amendment?
Religion: The First Amendment protects your right to freely exercise any religious faith you desire without fear of persecution. Under freedom of religion the government is not allowed to establish an official religion or show favoritism to one religion over another. Freedom of religion does have a key limitation that has been decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Your religion can’t do anything that violates the law. For instance, you are not allowed to kill, abuse, torture, rob or commit any other crimes in the name of religion.

Speech and Press: Freedom of speech and press gives people the right to express information, ideas, or opinions without governmental interference. Freedom of press focuses on peoples’ rights to publish newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials. Freedom of speech has to do with your right to say words or do symbolic acts. For instance, a symbolic action might be person burning an American flag or a person wearing a Nazi symbol on their shirt; even though both of these symbolic acts are distasteful and offensive, under the freedom of speech a person has the right to do such acts.

Nonetheless, freedom of speech and press does NOT mean that a person can say or print whatever they want. There are many limitations that have been placed on these freedoms by the U.S. Supreme Court. You are NOT allowed to:

- slander or libel (lie) a person.
- incite riots or criminal acts.
- publish or make obscene materials such as child pornography.
- to threaten anyone with violence.
- to distribute top secret information.

Answer each question with a complete sentence on a separate piece of paper.

1. What is freedom of religion?
2. What is the government not allowed to establish or favor?
3. What limit is placed on freedom of religion?
4. What does freedom of speech and press give people the right to do?
5. What is the difference between freedom of press and freedom of speech?
6. Who has placed limitations on freedom of speech and press?
7. What are three limitations placed on freedom of speech and press?
8. What is the difference between libel and slander?
Assembly: The right of assembly protects individuals’ freedoms to gather peacefully. Under this right to assemble, you can gather with others or join a group without fear from the government. You are permitted to gather in public places such as parks, in front of government buildings, or in public squares. However, groups are not allowed to gather on people’s private property unless they have permission from the owner. There are several limits placed on freedom of assembly. The First Amendment does not provide the right to conduct an assembly where there is a clear and present danger of a riot or disorder. Also, groups are not allowed to interfere with traffic on streets or block entrances or exits. Lastly, people are not allowed to gather to discuss or plan a crime.

Petition: A petition is a formal request, often written and signed by one or more people and sent to the government. The freedom of petition gives citizens the right to petition government; they have the right to make and send a complaint, request, or seek the assistance of government, without fear of punishment or reprisal. This right allows individuals or special interest groups to lobby the government. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the right to petition the government can be done by any type of communication that attempts to send a message to the government; these can be acts such as picketing, mailing letters, signing petitions, or creating videos. The few limits placed on the freedom of petition are that you can’t threaten harm or violence on the government and the government doesn’t have to respond back to any petition, no matter how many people sign it.

Answer each question with a complete sentence on a separate piece of paper.

9. What does the freedom of assembly mean?
10. Where are you allowed and not allowed to assemble?
11. What limits are placed on the right of assembly?
12. What is a petition?
13. What does the freedom of petition allow people to request and seek?
14. What are some types of communication that can be used with petitioning?
15. What limits are placed on freedom of petition?
### MEANING OF THE FREEDOM

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<tr>
<th>MEANING OF THE FREEDOM</th>
<th>THE LIMITATIONS</th>
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<td>Freedom of Speech and Press =</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom of Assembly =</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom of Religion =</td>
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<td>Freedom of Petition =</td>
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A group of students were responsible for producing a school newspaper. One issue they wanted to publish included student-written articles about teen pregnancy and the impact of divorce on kids. The school’s principal objected to both stories, believing they were inappropriate for the younger students and unfair to the pregnant students. He felt the stories would be disruptive to the learning environment of the school. Three students sued, claiming a violation of their First Amendment.

**Holding:**
By a 5-3 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court held that school officials can censor school-sponsored student publications when they reasonably believe it to be inappropriate for students and disruptive to their educational process.

**Directions:** Answer each question below.

1. What were the students suing over?

2. Why did the school’s principal not allow the students to publish the two stories in the school newspaper?

3. What did the U.S. Supreme Court decide about this case?
   
a. Why did they come to that decision?

4. Do you think the U.S. Supreme Court made the right decision? Why or why not?

5. Why do you think schools are permitted to enforce a dress code and keep students from wearing certain clothes? Aren’t students protected under the Freedom of Speech to say or wear what they want?
## ASSESSMENT
### The First Amendment

Select the best answer.

1. Which amendment to the U.S. Constitution is often considered the most important amendment?
   a. 1st Amendment
   b. 2nd Amendment
   c. 3rd Amendment
   d. 4th Amendment

2. Which freedom is protected under the First Amendment? *(Choose all that apply.)*
   a. Freedom of Speech and Press.
   b. Freedom of Religion.
   c. Freedom of Assembly and Petition.
   d. All of the above.

3. What do all the freedoms listed in the First Amendment have in common?
   a. They are all fun actions.
   b. All governments have these freedoms.
   c. They are all freedoms of expression and essential for democracy.
   d. All of the above.

4. Who has the duty to interpret and clarify the meaning of the Amendments to the Constitution?
   a. The President
   b. The Supreme Court
   c. Congress
   d. None of the above.

5. One of the limitations placed on the Freedom of Religion is you
   a. can’t practice your faith at night.
   b. can’t break the law when practicing your religion.
   c. can’t practice witchcraft.
   d. All of the above.

6. What limitations are placed on Freedom of Speech and Press? *(Choose all that apply.)*
   a. Can’t slander or libel a person.
   b. Can’t incite riots or criminal acts.
   c. Can’t threaten anyone with violence.
   d. All of the above.

7. The Freedom of Assembly allows for people to gather
   a. anywhere they like.
   b. and block traffic and entrances.
   c. in public locations such as parks or public squares.
   d. All of the above.

8. The Freedom of Petition requires that
   a. each petition must be typed and signed.
   b. the government must respond to every petition.
   c. you don’t threaten violence or harm.
   d. All of the above.
Directions: Select the best term for each definition.

9. ____________ To verbally lie about a person and to harm their reputation.

10. ____________ To gather as a group.

11. ____________ A formal request such as asking the government to do something.

12. ____________ To lie about a person in printed materials such as magazines, newspaper, or the internet.

True or False

13. ____________ Freedoms of expression were addressed in the First Amendment because such freedoms were considered vital for the survival of democracy and for liberty.

14. ____________ The U.S. government is allowed to establish one official religion.

15. ____________ Groups are not allowed to gather on people’s private property unless they have permission from the owner.

16. ____________ Without the freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment, it would be easy for a dictator to take control of the country, end liberties, and mistreat its citizens.

17. ____________ The First Amendment doesn’t allow citizens to burn an American flag or to wear a Nazi symbol on their shirt.

18. ____________ The right to petition the government can be by any type of communication that attempts to send a message to the government such as picketing, mailing letters, signing petitions, or creating videos.

19. ____________ The government must respond back to any petition sent by a citizen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Freedom of Press</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Freedom of Speech</td>
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<td>Freedom of Assembly</td>
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**Directions:** Select the freedom that is described.

20. ________________ This freedom gives you the right to gather with others or join a group without fear from government interference.

21. ________________ This freedom gives people the right to send a complaint, request, or ask for assistance from the government.

22. ________________ This freedom gives people the right to express information, ideas, or opinions verbally or by symbolic means.

23. ________________ This freedom allows people to publish ideas and thoughts in newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials.

24. ________________ This freedom gives you the right to freely exercise any faith you like without fear of persecution.

25. **Which one of the five freedoms listed in the First Amendment do you think is the most important? Explain why you think it is.**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning of the Freedom</th>
<th>The Limitations</th>
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| Freedom of Speech = The right to say words or do symbolic acts. | 1. Can’t slander or libel (lie) a person.  
2. Can’t incite riots or criminal acts.  
3. Can’t publish or make obscene materials such as child pornography.  
4. Can’t threaten anyone with violence.  
5. Can’t distribute top secret information. |
| Freedom of Press = The right to publish newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials. | 1. Can’t conduct an assembly at which there is a clear and present danger of a riot or disorder.  
2. Assembly can’t interfere with traffic on streets or block entrances or exits.  
3. People are not allowed to gather to discuss or plan a crime. |
| Freedom of Assembly = The right to gather with others or join a group. | 1. Your religion can’t do anything that violates the law.  
2. Government can’t favor a religion or establish an official religion |
| Freedom of Religion = The right to freely exercise any religious faith. | 1. Can’t threaten harm or violence to the government.  
2. The government doesn’t have to respond back to any petition, no matter how many people sign it. |
9. Slander  
10. Assembly  
11. Petition  
12. Libel  
13. True  
14. False  
15. True  
16. True  
17. False  
18. True  
19. False  
20. Freedom of Assembly  
21. Freedom of Petition  
22. Freedom of Speech  
23. Freedom of Press  
24. Freedom of Religion |