

Name: _____



Changing the Rules

The U.S. Constitution can be changed, or amended. The first 10 Amendments to the Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights was finally ratified, or approved, in 1791. Since then, more than 10,000 Amendments have been proposed, but only 17 have been adopted. Changing the Constitution is not easy. There are two methods by which Amendments can be proposed and ratified. The current 27 Amendments were added through the first method. The Constitution has never been amended using the second method. Read the charts below and answer the questions.

How the Constitution Gets Amended

FIRST METHOD	SECOND METHOD
<p>Step 1. A U.S. Representative or a U.S. Senator proposes a change to the U.S. Constitution.</p> <p>Step 2. Two thirds of the members of both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate must approve the change.</p> <p>Step 3. Three fourths of the 50 state legislatures, or lawmaking bodies, must then approve the change. The states' agreement officially ratifies the Amendment and makes it a part of the U.S. Constitution.</p>	<p>Step 1. State lawmakers want to change the U.S. Constitution. They must convince two thirds of the 50 state legislatures to call for a Constitutional Convention, or an official meeting.</p> <p>Step 2. Lawmakers officially propose a change during the Constitutional Convention.</p> <p>Step 3. Three fourths of the 50 state legislatures must then approve the change. The states' agreement officially ratifies the Amendment and makes it a part of the U.S. Constitution.</p>

1. Based on the information above, what role do state legislatures play in the process to change the U.S. Constitution?

2. Why do you think only 17 Amendments have been approved since 1791?

3. Which method do you think makes it harder for a constitutional Amendment to be approved? Explain.

4. Why do you think only the legislative branches of government have the power to amend the U.S. Constitution?
