

# Texas Essentials Knowledge and Skills

## United States Government

### Introduction.

- (1) In Government, the focus is on the principles and beliefs upon which the United States was founded and on the structure, functions, and powers of government at the national, state, and local levels. This course is the culmination of the civic and governmental content and concepts studied from Kindergarten through required secondary courses. Students learn major political ideas and forms of government in history. A significant focus of the course is on the U.S. Constitution, its underlying principles and ideas, and the form of government it created. Students analyze major concepts of republicanism, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights and compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems. Students identify the role of government in the U.S. free enterprise system and examine the strategic importance of places to the United States. Students analyze the impact of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media on the American political system, evaluate the importance of voluntary individual participation in a democratic society, and analyze the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Students examine the relationship between governmental policies and the culture of the United States. Students identify examples of government policies that encourage scientific research and use critical-thinking skills to create a product on a contemporary government issue.
- (2) To support the teaching of the essential knowledge and skills, the use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material such as the complete text of the U.S. constitution; selected Federalist Papers; landmark cases of the U.S. Supreme Court; biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs; speeches and letters; and periodicals that feature analyses of political issues and events is encouraged. Selections may include excerpts from John Locke's Two Treatises of Government, Federalist 51, and *Miranda v. Arizona*.
- (3) The eight strands of the essential knowledge and skills for social studies are intended to be integrated for instructional purposes. Skills listed in the geography and social studies skills strands in subsection (c) of this section should be incorporated into the teaching of all essential knowledge and skills for social studies. A greater depth of understanding of complex content material can be attained when integrated social studies content from the various disciplines and critical-thinking skills are taught together.
- (4) Throughout social studies in Kindergarten-Grade 12, students build a foundation in history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills.

The content, as appropriate for the grade level or course, enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, function in a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation as referenced in the Texas Education Code, §28.002(h).

Knowledge and skills.

- (1) History. The student understands major political ideas and forms of government in history. The student is expected to:
  - (A) explain major political ideas in history such as natural law, natural rights, divine right of kings, and social contract theory; and
  - (B) identify the characteristics of classic forms of government such as absolute monarchy, authoritarianism, classical republic, despotism, feudalism, liberal democracy, and totalitarianism.
  
- (2) History. The student understands how constitutional government, as developed in the United States, has been influenced by people, ideas, and historical documents. The student is expected to:
  - (A) analyze the principles and ideas that underlie the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including those of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Charles de Montesquieu;
  - (B) analyze the contributions of the political philosophies of the Founding Fathers, including John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, on the development of the U.S. government;
  - (C) analyze debates and compromises necessary to reach political decisions using historical documents; and
  - (D) identify significant individuals in the field of government and politics, including Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and selected contemporary leaders.
  
- (3) History. The student understands the roles played by individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in the U.S. political system, past and present. The student is expected to:
  - (A) give examples of the processes used by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media to affect public policy; and
  - (B) analyze the impact of political changes brought about by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media, past and present.
  
- (4) Geography. The student understands why certain places and regions are important to the United States. The student is expected to:
  - (A) analyze the political significance to the United States of the location and geographic characteristics of selected places or regions such as Cuba and Taiwan; and

- (B) analyze the economic significance to the United States of the location and geographic characteristics of selected places and regions such as oil fields in the Middle East.
- (5) Geography. The student understands how government policies can affect the physical and human characteristics of places and regions. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze and evaluate the consequences of a government policy that affects the physical characteristics of a place or region; and
  - (B) analyze and evaluate the consequences of a government policy that affects the human characteristics of a place or region.
- (6) Economics. The student understands the roles played by local, state, and national governments in both the public and private sectors of the U.S. free enterprise system. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze government policies that influence the economy at the local, state, and national levels;
  - (B) identify the sources of revenue and expenditures of the U. S. government and analyze their impact on the U.S. economy; and
  - (C) compare the role of government in the U.S. free enterprise system and other economic systems.
- (7) Economics. The student understands the relationship between U.S. government policies and international trade. The student is expected to:
- (A) explain the effects of international trade on U.S. economic and political policies; and
  - (B) explain the government's role in setting international trade policies.
- (8) Government. The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution. The student is expected to:
- (A) explain the importance of a written constitution;
  - (B) evaluate how the federal government serves the purposes set forth in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution;
  - (C) analyze how the Federalist Papers explain the principles of the American constitutional system of government;
  - (D) evaluate constitutional provisions for limiting the role of government, including republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights;
  - (E) analyze the processes by which the U.S. Constitution can be changed and evaluate their effectiveness; and
  - (F) analyze how the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution contribute to our national identity.
- (9) Government. The student understands the structure and functions of the government created by the U.S. Constitution. The student is expected to:

- (A) analyze the structure and functions of the legislative branch of government, including the bicameral structure of Congress, the role of committees, and the procedure for enacting laws;
  - (B) analyze the structure and functions of the executive branch of government, including the constitutional powers of the president, the growth of presidential power, and the role of the Cabinet and executive departments;
  - (C) analyze the structure and functions of the judicial branch of government, including the federal court system and types of jurisdiction;
  - (D) analyze the functions of selected independent executive agencies and regulatory commissions such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Federal Communications Commission;
  - (E) explain how certain provisions of the U.S. Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government;
  - (F) analyze selected issues raised by judicial activism and judicial restraint;
  - (G) explain the major responsibilities of the federal government for domestic and foreign policy;
  - (H) compare the structure and functions of the Texas state government to the federal system; and
  - (I) analyze the structure and functions of local government.
- (10) Government. The student understands the concept of federalism. The student is expected to:
- (A) explain why the Founding Fathers created a distinctly new form of federalism and adopted a federal system of government instead of a unitary system;
  - (B) categorize government powers as national, state, or shared;
  - (C) analyze historical conflicts over the respective roles of national and state governments; and
  - (D) evaluate the limits on the national and state governments in the U.S. federal system of government.
- (11) Government. The student understands the processes for filling public offices in the U.S. system of government. The student is expected to:
- (A) compare different methods of filling public offices, including elected and appointed offices, at the local, state, and national levels; and
  - (B) analyze and evaluate the process of electing the President of the United States.
- (12) Government. The student understands the role of political parties in the U.S. system of government. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify the functions of political parties;
  - (B) analyze the two-party system and evaluate the role of third parties in the United States;
  - (C) analyze the role of political parties in the electoral process at local, state, and national levels; and

- (D) identify opportunities for citizens to participate in political party activities at local, state, and national levels.
- (13) Government. The student understands the similarities and differences that exist among the U.S. system of government and other political systems. The student is expected to:
- (A) compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems;
  - (B) analyze advantages and disadvantages of federal, confederate, and unitary systems of government; and
  - (C) analyze advantages and disadvantages of presidential and parliamentary systems of government.
- (14) Citizenship. The student understands rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. The student is expected to:
- (A) understand the roles of limited government and the rule of law to the protection of individual rights;
  - (B) analyze the rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, including first amendment freedoms;
  - (C) analyze issues addressed in selected cases such as *Engel v. Vitale*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, and *Schenck v. U.S.* that involve Supreme Court interpretations of rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution;
  - (D) analyze the role of each branch of government in protecting the rights of individuals;
  - (E) explain the importance of due process rights to the protection of individual rights and to the limits on the powers of government; and
  - (F) analyze the impact of the incorporation doctrine involving due process and the Bill of Rights on individual rights, federalism, and majority rule.
- (15) Citizenship. The student understands the difference between personal and civic responsibilities. The student is expected to:
- (A) explain the difference between personal and civic responsibilities;
  - (B) evaluate whether and/or when the obligation of citizenship requires that personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good;
  - (C) evaluate whether and/or when the rights of individuals are inviolable even against claims for the public good; and
  - (D) analyze the consequences of political decisions and actions on society.
- (16) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of voluntary individual participation in the U.S. democratic society. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze the effectiveness of various methods of participation in the political process at local, state, and national levels;
  - (B) analyze historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements to bring about political change or to maintain continuity;
  - (C) analyze the factors that influence an individual's political attitudes and actions; and

- (D) compare and evaluate characteristics, style, and effectiveness of state and national leaders, past and present.
- (17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important contemporary issues;
  - (B) analyze the importance of free speech and press in a democratic society; and
  - (C) express and defend a point of view on an issue of contemporary interest in the United States.
- (18) Culture. The student understands the relationship between government policies and the culture of the United States. The student is expected to:
- (A) evaluate a political policy or decision in the United States that was a result of changes in American culture; and
  - (B) analyze changes in American culture brought about by government policies such as voting rights, the GI bill, and racial integration; and
  - (C) describe an example of a government policy that has affected a particular racial, ethnic, or religious group.
- (19) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the role the government plays in developing policies and establishing conditions that influence scientific discoveries and technological innovations. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify examples of government-assisted research that, when shared with the private sector, have resulted in improved consumer products such as computer and communication technologies; and
  - (B) analyze how U.S. government policies fostering competition and entrepreneurship have resulted in scientific discoveries and technological innovations.
- (20) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the impact of advances in science and technology on government and society. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze the potential impact on society of recent scientific discoveries and technological innovations; and
  - (B) analyze the reaction of government to scientific discoveries and technological innovations.
- (21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea,

summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

- (B) create a product on a contemporary government issue or topic using critical methods of inquiry;
- (C) explain a point of view on a government issue;
- (D) analyze and evaluate the validity of information from primary and secondary sources for bias, propaganda, point of view, and frame of reference;
- (E) evaluate government data using charts, tables, graphs, and maps; and
- (F) use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

- (A) use social studies terminology correctly;
- (B) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation;
- (C) transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate; and
- (D) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

(23) Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

- (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; and
- (B) use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.