

Changing the Constitution

Trace how a proposed amendment becomes part of the Constitution.

SS.5.CG.3.4 "Describe the process for amending the U.S. Constitution."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two ways an amendment can be proposed. Circle the facts that explain how states ratify it, then number the process steps from 1 to 3.

A Careful Process for Change

- ① The Constitution can be changed by an amendment, a carefully planned change or addition. The Framers made this process difficult enough to require broad agreement, but possible when the country needs change. Since 1789, Americans have added 27 amendments. The First Amendment protects several freedoms, while later amendments changed rules about voting and other rights in America.
- ② First, an amendment must be proposed. Most proposals begin when at least two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate approve the same wording. A second method has never been used: two-thirds of state legislatures can ask Congress to call a convention to propose amendments. Either path only suggests a change. It does not put the change into the Constitution.
- ③ Next, the proposed amendment goes to the states for ratification, or approval. Congress chooses whether state legislatures or state conventions will vote. In either method, three-fourths of the states must ratify it. Today, that means 38 of 50 states. When the required number agrees, the amendment becomes part of the Constitution. This high requirement helps ensure lasting changes have wide support.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What must happen in the House of Representatives and the Senate for the usual method of proposing an amendment?

2 What is the other way an amendment can be proposed?

3 After an amendment is proposed, what choice does Congress make about ratification?

4 How many states must ratify a proposed amendment today, and what happens then?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence news update about a proposed amendment moving through the amendment process. Include both possible ways to propose it, the ratification requirement, and the final result if enough states agree.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the two ways an amendment can be proposed. Circle the facts that explain how states ratify it, then number the process steps from 1 to 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What must happen in the House of Representatives and the Senate for the usual method of proposing an amendment?	At least two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate must approve the same wording.
2	What is the other way an amendment can be proposed?	Two-thirds of state legislatures can ask Congress to call a convention to propose amendments.
3	After an amendment is proposed, what choice does Congress make about ratification?	Congress chooses whether state legislatures or state conventions will vote on ratification.
4	How many states must ratify a proposed amendment today, and what happens then?	Thirty-eight of 50 states must ratify it. Then it becomes part of the Constitution.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A proposed amendment could begin when two-thirds of both houses of Congress approve the same wording. It could also be proposed through a convention called after two-thirds of state legislatures ask Congress for one. Congress chooses whether state legislatures or state conventions will vote to ratify it. If three-fourths of the states, or 38 states today, approve it, the amendment becomes part of the Constitution.

Accept equivalent wording that correctly states the two proposal paths, Congress's choice of ratification method, and ratification by three-fourths of the states. For the open response, require all process details and a logical sequence.