

Why Rules Matter

Read how government, law, and the U.S. system organize public life.

SS.6.CG.1 "Demonstrate an understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that explain why people need government or laws, circle examples of limits on power, and number the three branches of the federal government.

Power With Rules

- ① Long before the United States existed, people formed governments because living together created shared problems. Communities needed ways to protect people, settle conflicts, and provide services such as roads and safety. A government is a system people use to make and carry out decisions for a community. Its power can help the common good, but power also needs limits so leaders cannot act unfairly. Written rules gave communities a clearer way to judge actions and settle disagreements.
- ② Law is a set of rules that a government recognizes and enforces. Laws can protect rights, such as the right to speak, worship, and receive fair treatment. They also set limits on behavior, such as rules against stealing. The rule of law means that laws apply to everyone, including government officials. When laws are clear and applied fairly, people can better predict what will happen and solve disputes peacefully. Courts help interpret laws and decide cases when people disagree about them.
- ③ The American political system was shaped by the idea that government gets its rightful power from the people. The Constitution, written in 1787, created a national government with limited powers. It divides federal power among three branches: Congress makes laws, the president carries out laws, and courts explain laws and decide cases. This separation of powers helps prevent one person or group from controlling everything. Elections let citizens choose representatives and leaders, while the Constitution protects rights and sets rules for government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why did communities form governments?

2 According to the passage, how can laws both protect people and limit behavior?

3 What does the rule of law mean, and why does it matter?

4 Name two features of the American political system that limit government power.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences proposing a fair rule for a community club. State the rule, explain how it serves the common good, describe how members could choose someone to help make or enforce it, and give one limit on that person's power.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that explain why people need government or laws, circle examples of limits on power, and number the three branches of the federal government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did communities form governments?	Communities formed governments to address shared problems, protect people, settle conflicts, and provide services.
2	According to the passage, how can laws both protect people and limit behavior?	Laws protect rights, including rights to speak, worship, and receive fair treatment. They also limit behavior through rules such as laws against stealing.
3	What does the rule of law mean, and why does it matter?	The rule of law means laws apply to everyone, including government officials. It matters because clear, fairly applied laws help people predict outcomes and solve disputes peacefully.
4	Name two features of the American political system that limit government power.	The Constitution gives the national government limited powers, and separation of powers divides federal power among three branches. The Constitution also protects rights and sets rules for government.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our neighborhood club should require members to return borrowed sports equipment by Friday. This rule protects shared equipment so everyone can use it. Members could elect two representatives to review suggestions about the rule. The representatives may not take equipment away without hearing the member's explanation.

Accept wording that accurately identifies purposes of government and law, the rule of law, and constitutional limits on power. For the open response, accept reasonable community rules when the student includes all four requested parts and a meaningful limit on authority.