

Power Has Limits

Trace how separated institutions restrain government power.

12.G1c "Limited government is achieved through the separation of powers between three different branches. The system of checks and balances is part of this limited government structure at all levels of government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline government actions. Circle examples of one authority checking another.

Power in Practice

- ① Congress debates and votes on proposed federal laws. Suppose both houses pass a drinking-water bill. The president may sign or veto it; Congress may override a veto with two-thirds support in each house. Executive agencies administer enacted laws. Separation of powers assigns different responsibilities, while checks and balances let institutions restrain one another. A veto and an override are checks, not simply examples of branches doing unrelated jobs.
- ② In a properly presented federal lawsuit, a court may examine whether a law or agency action violates the Constitution. Judicial review can prevent unconstitutional action. Courts do not have unrestricted authority to settle every policy disagreement: jurisdiction and other legal requirements matter. States also distribute legislative, executive, and judicial responsibilities under their constitutions. A governor's veto or judicial review can constrain state action, though state procedures vary.
- ③ Local structures vary even more and derive authority from state law. A city council might adopt food-truck permit rules, while a mayor or city manager directs administration. A person challenging a permit denial may seek review through applicable procedures. A court can examine legal claims; council oversight and budget decisions may also constrain administrators. Local government need not reproduce the federal three-branch model exactly. These arrangements create ways to contest power, not a guarantee that every decision will be wise or that disagreements will disappear.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the federal bill process prevent Congress from having complete control over a proposed law after both houses pass it?

2 What can judicial review prevent, and what limits federal courts' use of that power?

3 According to the passage, how are powers divided at the state level, and what is the purpose of that division?

4 In the food-truck permit example, identify the local authority that administers the ordinance and explain how the permit decision can be checked.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences about a proposed state or local policy. Name a legislative, executive, and judicial role in the policy, and explain one check that could limit another authority.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline government actions. Circle examples of one authority checking another. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the federal bill process prevent Congress from having complete control over a proposed law after both houses pass it?	The president can sign or veto the bill. Congress can override a veto only with a two-thirds vote in each house.
2	What can judicial review prevent, and what limits federal courts' use of that power?	It can prevent unconstitutional action. A properly presented case must meet jurisdictional and other legal requirements; courts cannot decide every policy disagreement.
3	According to the passage, how are powers divided at the state level, and what is the purpose of that division?	A state legislature, governor, and state courts divide comparable powers under the state constitution. The purpose is to prevent one official or institution from holding every major governmental power.
4	In the food-truck permit example, identify the local authority that administers the ordinance and explain how the permit decision can be checked.	A mayor or city manager administers the ordinance through local departments. A court may review the dispute if a resident claims the decision violated the ordinance, state law, or constitutional rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A state legislature passes a law requiring public reporting of lead tests in school buildings. The governor may sign or veto the bill, and the education department would enforce a signed law. If a lawsuit claims the law violates the state constitution, state courts can review the claim, limiting the other branches.

Accept equivalent descriptions of legislative lawmaking, executive enforcement or veto power, and judicial review in an actual legal dispute. For the open response, require all three branches or roles and a plausible check or legal limit.