

What Is Your Best Freedom?

Suggested Grade Levels: K–6

Overview

In this activity, students make a poster illustrating their “best freedom.” They discuss individual freedoms they have at school and as Americans and then focus on the freedom they enjoy most.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define what “right” and “freedom” mean.
- Identify rights violations in hypothetical situations.
- Evaluate which freedom in the Bill of Rights is most important to them.
- Illustrate a freedom that is important to them.

Materials & Preparation

- Handout 1: The Bill of Rights—1 per student
- Poster making supplies (paper, markers, crayons, etc.)

This activity should be preceded by an in-depth discussion about individual freedoms and rights.

Procedure

1. Define—As a class, define “Freedom” and “Rights.” When students have an understanding of these concepts, brainstorm together what kinds of freedoms they enjoy. Possible freedoms for students might be: talking to my friends during recess, getting to choose my own library book, having my own desk with my supplies, etc.
2. Read and discuss—Distribute Handout 1 and read the amendments in the Bill of Rights with the class.
3. Discuss—To help children gain an understanding of the concepts of “freedom” and “rights,” it is helpful to use “what if ” situations. Discuss some of the “what if” questions below, allow students to respond and think about what they might feel like in that situation, and they may identify which amendment might cover the situation.

What if...

School Related Situations

- There was a rule in the cafeteria that you could not talk about anything that happens in school to anyone during the whole lunch period. (1st Amendment)
- You were not allowed to read any story that was about a person from a foreign country. (1st Amendment)
- Only teachers were ever allowed to talk to the principal. (1st Amendment)

- Every time anyone in the school couldn't find his or her pencil, everyone had to empty their desks, pockets, purses, and notebooks so the teacher could see if the pencil was there. (4th Amendment)
- If you were late to school, you had to hang upside-down from the swing set and eat 100 sour cherries. (8th Amendment)

Outside of School

- Everyone had to go to the same kind of church and it was against the law to miss a service. (1st Amendment)
 - Only people with green eyes could read the real newspaper, everyone else had to read a different newspaper with only good news printed, no crime. (1st Amendment)
 - The government needed to make your yard into a parking lot for employees and paid your family \$5 for your house and property. (5th Amendment)
 - If a person got only one speeding ticket, they were thrown in jail for 10 years without a trial. (5th, 6th, 8th Amendments)
 - Only people who made a lot of money were allowed to have lawyers. (6th Amendment)
4. List—Make a class list of the specific rights and freedoms that students feel are important.
 5. Decide—Tell students they will need to decide what their “best freedom” is. To help students focus on one right, they could think about which freedom or right they might miss the most if it were taken away.
 6. Assign —Once students have decided which right is most important to them, assign the “My Best Freedom” poster. Students should illustrate a situation where the freedom or right is being used.
 7. Share—Have students share and explain their posters to the class. Students should tell how they chose that freedom and why it is important to them.
 8. Display—Posters could be displayed in classroom, or combined with other classes' and displayed in hallways to create a “Freedom Hall” or school-wide activity.

The Bill of Rights

The **First Amendment** protects everyone's right to:

- freedom of speech.
- freedom of the press.
- assemble peaceably.
- petition and complain to the government.
- practice any religion.

It also keeps the government from telling people what religion to practice.

The **Second Amendment** says a citizen army is important and gives people the right to have guns.

The **Third Amendment** keeps the government from making people feed and house soldiers in their homes.

The **Fourth Amendment** stops police from searching people and their houses for no reason.

The **Fifth Amendment** protects everyone's right to:

- due process of law.
- not be tried twice for the same crime.
- not be forced to be a witness against yourself in a criminal trial.
- be paid if the government takes your property for public use.



The **Sixth Amendment** protects the rights of those accused of crimes. It gives them the right to:

- a speedy and public trial.
- a jury trial.
- be told what they are accused of doing.
- be face their accusers.
- get witnesses.
- have a lawyer.

The **Seventh Amendment** gives everyone the right to a jury trial in a lawsuit.

The **Eighth Amendment** protects criminals from cruel punishments.

Ninth Amendment says that we have more rights than what the Bill of Rights lists.

The **Tenth Amendment** says that the U.S. government only has the power to do what the Constitution says. All other powers are held by the people and the states.