CIVICS STARTER KIT

This sample packet introduces key lessons and activities that help students understand how government works, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and how civic engagement shapes our communities.

Sample Lesson: The Three Branches of Government

1. The Constitution established the three branches of our government. Which is the true statement?

A. The legislative branch includes the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Congress is part of the legislative branch.
It includes the House of Representatives and the Senate.
Their primary responsibilities are to write laws and set the federal budget each year.

B. The Supreme Court and the Vice President are part of the judicial branch.

The Supreme Court is part of the judicial branch.
The Vice President is part of the executive branch.

C. The judicial branch is part of the executive branch of the government.

The three branches of the government work together.
But they are not part of each other.

D. The President is the head of all three branches of the government.

The President is part of the executive branch only.

2. A busy time for the Senate is after the inauguration of a President. The Senate gives 'advice and consent' to many high-level appointments. The Senate Judiciary committee considers Supreme Court nominees. Senators with special knowledge are called upon to consider the President's appointees for cabinet posts.

Which body of Congress is responsible for advice and consent?

A. The Senate

The Senate gives 'advice and consent' to many high-level appointments including Supreme Court and cabinet nominees.

B. The Congress

The Congress includes 435 members of the House of Representatives and 100 senators in the Senate.

C. The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is 435 congressmen and congresswomen. It does not approve or deny presidential appointments.

D. The cabinet

The President's Cabinet is the heads of 15 executive departments. The Secretaries of Education, Defense, and Energy are a few.

3. Presidents have needed to spend tax dollars to help Americans through tough times. Following the 'Great Depression', President Roosevelt wanted to help the nation out of a period of hard times. His 'New Deal' started public works, education, health and welfare, housing, and lending projects. They provided jobs and income.

What did the President need in order to expand the budget to help the nation?

A. Congressional approval
The Congress controls the budget.
President Roosevelt was able to carry out his plan with the approval of Congress.

B. Foreign loans
Foreign loans may have played some role, but there is a better answer.
In our system of checks and balances, which branch of the government must approve the President's budget?

C. The Federal Reserve
The Federal Reserve may have played some role, but there is a better answer.
In our system of checks and balances, which branch of the government must approve the President's budget?

D. The Treasury Department
The Treasury Department may have played some role, but there is a better answer.
In our system of checks and balances, which branch of the government must approve the President's budget?

Classroom Activity:
Rights versus Responsibilities Scenarios

Citizens enjoy many rights, such as freedom of speech, but they also have responsibilities that help maintain a strong democracy.
Read each scenario below and decide whether it represents a civic right or a civic responsibility.

1. A student attends a peaceful protest to support environmental protection.
→ Right or Responsibility?

2. A citizen serves on a jury when called by the court.
→ Right or Responsibility?

3. A voter participates in a national election.
→ Right or Responsibility?

4. A driver follows traffic laws and pays fines on time.
→ Right or Responsibility?

5. A community group organizes a park clean-up.
→ Right or Responsibility?

After identifying each, discuss how both rights and responsibilities contribute to a fair and cooperative society.

Civic Engagement in the News

Find a recent news article (from the last year) that shows an example of civic participation — for instance, people voting, volunteering, or advocating for community change. Summarize the article in your own words and explain how it represents either a civic right or a civic responsibility.

Community Observation

Think about your own community. Identify one example where people are fulfilling their civic duties or responsibilities (for example, recycling, attending a town meeting, or organizing local events). Describe what they are doing and why it's important.

Reflection Questions:
1. Why is it important to balance rights and responsibilities in a democracy?
2. Which civic responsibility do you think young people can have the greatest impact on today? Why?
3. How can students contribute to solving local issues, even before voting age?

Civic Action Challenge

Imagine your school or community wants to increase student participation in civic life.
Working individually or in small groups, design one simple initiative that encourages responsible citizenship.
Your initiative could involve:

- **A voter-education campaign**
- **A recycling or clean-up drive**
- **A peer-led discussion on rights and responsibilities**
- **Any other creative idea that promotes civic engagement**

Write a short plan (about one paragraph) describing:

1. **The goal of your initiative**
2. **The actions you would take**
3. **Who would be involved**
4. **How it benefits your school or community**

Case Study Guide:
How a Supreme Court Decision Shapes Daily Life

Equal Access in Modern America

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its famous decision in Brown v. Board of Education, declaring that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The ruling became a cornerstone of the Civil Rights Movement, affirming that "separate but equal" facilities were inherently unequal.

More than sixty years later, the question of equal access continues to shape American life. Court cases and public debates now extend beyond racial segregation to include issues such as access to technology, support for students with disabilities, and equality regardless of gender or economic background.

For example, in some communities, students lack reliable internet access, making it harder to complete schoolwork or apply for college. Others face barriers due to outdated facilities or unequal resources. These challenges raise the same essential question the Supreme Court faced decades ago: How can a democracy ensure fairness and opportunity for everyone?

The legacy of Brown v. Board of Education reminds citizens that equality is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing responsibility. Laws can establish fairness, but communities must continue working to remove obstacles that limit participation.

Today, civic engagement means noticing inequality in any form—educational, economic, or social—and taking steps to address it. Whether through volunteering, policy advocacy, or raising awareness, individuals play a vital role in keeping the spirit of justice alive in modern society.

- **Why do you think the Brown v. Board of Education case remains relevant today?**
- **What new forms of inequality exist in your community, and how could they be addressed?**
- **Do you believe that laws alone can ensure equality? Why or why not?**
- **Describe one action a student could take to promote fairness or inclusion at school.**
- **How does civic responsibility connect to the idea of justice?**

Community Action Template:
Plan a Local Improvement Project

Civic engagement means taking action to improve your community. Use this template to plan a small project that promotes positive change where you live or study.

Community Issue	**Example: Litter in local park**
Why It Matters	**Explain how this issue affects your community.**
Action Plan	**Describe specific steps you and others can take to improve the issue.**
People Involved	**List who can help (students, local leaders,**
Expected Outcome	**What changes or benefits do you expect from your**

Reflection: After completing your plan, discuss how individual actions can lead to community-wide improvement.