AP U.S. Government and Politics Practice

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Which article of the U.S. Constitution vests federal judicial power in the Supreme Court and any lower federal courts that Congress establishes?

A. Article III
B. Article I
C. Article II
D. Article IV

Correct answer: A. Article III

Article III establishes the Supreme Court and provides for lower courts that Congress creates. It assigns the federal judicial power to those courts.

2. A president nominates someone to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. Which chamber considers whether to consent to the appointment?

A. A joint session of both houses voting as one chamber
B. The U.S. House of Representatives
C. The U.S. Senate
D. The legislature of the nominee’s home state

Correct answer: C. The U.S. Senate

Article II assigns the president the power to nominate Supreme Court justices. The Senate decides whether to give the advice and consent required for the appointment.

3. Residents send Congress a written request to fix a public problem. Which First Amendment protection most directly describes this action?

A. The freedom of the press
B. The right to petition the government
C. The right to assemble peaceably
D. The free exercise of religion

Correct answer: B. The right to petition the government

A petition is a request to government. The First Amendment names petitioning for redress of grievances as a protected activity.

4. The U.S. Constitution delegates some powers to the national government and reserves others to the states or the people. Which principle describes this division?

A. Popular sovereignty
B. Judicial review
C. Bicameralism
D. Federalism

Correct answer: D. Federalism
Federalism divides governing authority between national and state levels. The Tenth Amendment addresses powers the Constitution neither delegates to the United States nor prohibits to the states.

5. A fictional student develops views about government through conversations at home, civics classes, and events covered in the news. Which process does that describe?

A. Reapportionment
B. Political socialization
C. Judicial review
D. Congressional oversight

Correct answer: B. Political socialization
Political socialization is the process through which people develop political beliefs and attitudes. Family, schools, and media can all influence that process.

6. A president vetoes a regular bill. On reconsideration the House reaches the required two-thirds vote, but the Senate supports it by only a simple majority. What happens to the veto?

A. It stands because each chamber must reach two-thirds to override it.
B. It is overridden because the House reached two-thirds.
C. It is overridden because both chambers supported the bill by a majority.
D. It is set aside until state legislatures vote on the bill.

Correct answer: A. It stands because each chamber must reach two-thirds to override it.
The Constitution requires a two-thirds vote in each house to override a veto. The Senate’s simple majority falls short of the required threshold.

7. In a fictional federal program, states can choose whether to accept money. Participating states can spend it only on digitizing government records. Which term best describes this funding?

A. A direct tax on state governments
B. A block grant for broad administrative costs
C. An unfunded mandate
D. A categorical grant

Correct answer: D. A categorical grant
A categorical grant restricts funding to a defined purpose. Here the states can use the grant only for the stated records work.

8. In a fictional case, a public school restricts students' quiet symbolic expression. The court asks whether the school could reasonably expect the expression to disrupt its work. Which finding would most directly address that question under Tinker?

A. The message is unpopular outside the school.
B. Several officials disagree with the viewpoint the students expressed.
C. Specific facts support a forecast of material and substantial disruption to schoolwork.
D. The students had never shared the message at school before.

Correct answer: C. Specific facts support a forecast of material and substantial disruption to schoolwork.
In Tinker v. Des Moines, the Supreme Court distinguished an evidence-based expectation of substantial disruption from general discomfort with a viewpoint. Specific facts about likely disruption would address the question in this example.

9. In a fictional case, an agency proposes to draw money from the U.S. Treasury for a program. No appropriation law covers the proposed spending. What would supply the missing constitutional authority?

A. An appropriation enacted into law
B. A request from an agency director
C. A resolution by one state legislature
D. An opinion issued by an advisory committee

Correct answer: A. An appropriation enacted into law
Article I requires an appropriation made by law before money can be drawn from the Treasury. An enacted appropriation supplies the authority in this example.

10. In a fictional poll, randomly assigned groups see the same library plan. One question calls it a proposal and 42% support it. The other calls it an overdue improvement and 58% support it. What does the comparison suggest?

A. The larger percentage is a better estimate because it reports more support.
B. Public opinion changed by 16 percentage points over time.
C. The second group necessarily understood the proposal better.
D. The wording may have influenced how people answered.

Correct answer: D. The wording may have influenced how people answered.
The groups received different wording about the same plan. The comparison suggests a possible wording effect, since one question implies that the improvement should already have happened.

11. An original classroom summary says Madison thought a larger republic would contain a wider range of interests. Which result ties that observation to his argument in Federalist No. 10?

A. A single faction can more easily control government as the number of interests grows.
B. All citizens in a larger republic will eventually hold the same interests.
C. A faction may find it harder to form a majority and act against others' rights.
D. Each faction gains an automatic veto over national decisions.

Correct answer: C. A faction may find it harder to form a majority and act against others' rights.
Madison argued that a wider range of interests reduces the chances that a majority will share the same motive to harm others' rights. It can also make coordination harder for a group with that motive.

12. A student summarizes the national bank dispute by saying Congress may use only tools named explicitly in the Constitution. Which revision best reflects the Supreme Court's reasoning in McCulloch v. Maryland?

A. Congress may choose any end it wants as long as it states a reason in the law.
B. Congress may use suitable means to carry out constitutional powers, within the limits of the Constitution.
C. Congress may use a tool only when at least one state has already adopted it.
D. Congress may use a tool absent from the text only after the states amend the Constitution to name it.

Correct answer: B. Congress may use suitable means to carry out constitutional powers, within the limits of the Constitution.
The Court distinguished legitimate constitutional ends from the means of carrying them out. It upheld Congress's authority to establish the bank as a suitable means for exercising its assigned powers.

13. In a fictional town, 125 of 500 citizens ages 18–24 report voting. In the group age 65 and older, 80 of 100 report voting. Which conclusion follows from the figures?

A. The two groups together reported a voting rate of 80%.
B. The younger group reported voting at a higher rate because more of its members reported voting.
C. The two groups reported voting at the same rate after accounting for group size.
D. The older group reported voting at a higher rate, even though it had fewer reported voters.

Correct answer: D. The older group reported voting at a higher rate, even though it had fewer reported voters.
The younger group's reported voting rate is 125 out of 500, or 25%. The older group's rate is 80 out of 100, or 80%. Different group sizes allow a higher rate and a smaller count to occur together.

14. In fictional records, outside groups pay for two public ads, each expressly urging election of a named federal candidate. The candidate’s campaign helped plan ad A. Ad B was prepared and paid for without any coordination with a campaign or party committee. Which ad meets the stated criteria for an independent expenditure?

A. Ad B only
B. Ad A only
C. Both ads
D. Neither ad

Correct answer: A. Ad B only
Both ads expressly advocate a candidate’s election. Only ad B lacks coordination with a campaign or party committee, which is also required for the independent-expenditure classification.

15. A fictional constitutional amendment received the required vote in both houses of Congress. Congress chose ratification by state legislatures, and 37 of the 50 states have ratified. A student says the president can now make the amendment effective by signing it. Which answer corrects the claim?

A. Congress can replace the remaining state ratification with another vote in each house.
B. The state threshold has been met, so the president’s signature is the only step left.
C. Ratification by at least one more state legislature is the remaining step.
D. All 50 state legislatures must ratify, and the president must then sign.

Correct answer: C. Ratification by at least one more state legislature is the remaining step.
Article V assigns the final decision to the states and requires ratification by three-fourths. With 50 states, the threshold is 38.