

Study Guide for Alabama Civics Test

In 2017, the Alabama Legislature passed a law that requires public high school seniors to pass an American civics test as part of their graduation requirements. The test questions are the 100 questions about American history and government on which the U.S. citizenship and naturalization exam is based.

This study guide is designed to prepare you for the civics test, which will be in multiple choice format. You must answer 60 test questions correctly in order to pass, and you may take the test as many times as necessary.

Political history, principles of American democracy, and system of American government

The colonists fought the British because they were angry about **taxation without representation**. **Thomas Jefferson** wrote the Declaration of Independence, which **declared America's independence from Great Britain**. It was adopted on **July 4, 1776**. Americans celebrate Independence Day on **July 4**. The original 13 states were **Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia**. Rights in the Declaration of Independence are **life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**.

The Constitutional Convention was held in **1787**, and it is when the **U.S. Constitution was written**. One thing Benjamin Franklin is famous for is being the **oldest member of the Constitutional Convention**. The Federalist Papers were written to support the passage of the Constitution. Their three writers were **Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison**. **George Washington** was the first president and is considered the "Father of our Country."

The two major political parties in the United States are the **Democratic and Republican parties**. The 13 stripes on the American flag **represent the 13 original colonies**. The 50 stars on the American flag **represent the 50 states**. The national anthem of the United States is "**The Star-Spangled Banner**."

The supreme law of the United States is the **Constitution**, which **sets up the government**. The first three words of the Constitution, "**We The People**," embody the idea of self-government. America's government consists of the **legislative, executive, and judicial branches**. **Checks and balances** keep each branch of government from becoming too powerful relative to the others. The Constitution protects private property, which is the basis for America's **capitalist economy**. Under the Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. One of these powers is to **declare war**. Under the Constitution, some powers belong to the states. One of these powers is to **provide schooling and education**.

The men who designed the Constitution knew it wasn't perfect, so they created a way to **change it through amendments**. The Constitution has **27 amendments**. The first 10 amendments together are called the **Bill of Rights**, and they protect individual liberties. The First Amendment protects **religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly**. Freedom of religion means that **you can practice any religion, or not practice a religion**. There are four specific amendments that expanded voting rights for most Americans: A citizen's voting rights cannot be taken away based on their **race, gender, age (over 18), or financial status**.

The two parts of the U.S. Congress are the **Senate and House of Representatives**, and they are tasked with **making federal laws**. The House of Representatives is the largest part of Congress with **435 voting members**. The number of House members each state has is determined by each **state's population**. Members of the U.S. House serve **two-year terms**. Auburn's representative in the U.S. House is **Mike Rogers**. The Senate, the smaller house of Congress, has **100 voting members**. Our two senators represent **all people of our state**. Senators serve **six-year terms**. Alabama's two U.S. senators are **Richard Shelby and Doug Jones**.

The **President** is in charge of the executive branch. Our current president is **Donald J. Trump**, who is a member of the **Republican Party**. Presidents serve terms of **four years**. The president **signs bills into law**, can **veto bills**, and is the **Commander in Chief of the military**. The President's Cabinet **advises the President**. Two of those Cabinet positions are **Secretary of State and Attorney General**. If the president can no longer serve, the **vice president** becomes president. The current vice president of the United States is **Mike Pence**. If both the president and the vice president can no longer serve,

the **Speaker of the House** becomes president. The current speaker of the U.S. House is **Paul Ryan**.

The judicial branch is our **federal court system** and the highest court in the United States is the **Supreme Court**. The judicial branch's job is to **resolve disputes and decide if a law goes against the Constitution**. The Supreme Court has **nine Justices**, and the current chief justice of the Supreme Court is **John G. Roberts, Jr.**

The Governor of Alabama is **Kay Ivey**.

American History

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the **Native Americans** lived in America. One of the American Indian Tribes in the United States is the **Choctaw**. Colonists came to America to enjoy **religious freedom and economic opportunity**. **People from Africa** were taken to America and sold as slaves.

In 1803 the United States bought the **Louisiana Territory** from France. One war the United States fought in during the 1800s was the **Spanish-American War**. The **Civil War** was the U.S. war fought between the North and the South. One problem that led to the Civil War was slavery. One important thing that Abraham Lincoln did was issue the **Emancipation Proclamation**, which **freed the slaves**. Susan B. Anthony **fought for women's rights**.

Woodrow Wilson was president during World War I. **Franklin Roosevelt** was president during the Great Depression and World War II. The United States fought **Japan, Germany, and Italy** in World War II. Before he was president, Dwight D. Eisenhower was a military general in **World War II**. The goal of the **civil Rights Movement** was to end racial discrimination. Martin Luther King, Jr. **fought for civil rights**. One war fought by the United States in the 1900s was the **Vietnam War**. During the Cold War, the main concern of the United States was **communism**.

On Sept. 11, 2001, **terrorists attacked the United States**.

Rights and Responsibilities

People living in America agree to abide by the "rule of law," which means that **everyone – including leaders in the government – must follow the law**. We vote for president in **November** of every fourth year. One responsibility that is only for U.S. citizens is **voting in federal elections**. One right that is only for U.S. citizens is **running for federal office**. Two rights of everyone living in the United States are **freedom of speech and freedom of religion**. When we say the Pledge of Allegiance, we are showing loyalty to **the United States**. One promise you make when you become a United States citizen is that you will **defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States**. Citizens have to be **18 years old** to vote for president. Two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy are by **voting and giving elected officials your opinions on issues**. The last day you can send in federal income tax forms is **April 15**. All men must register for the Selective Service **at age 18**. Two national U.S. holidays are **Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and Memorial Day**.

Geography

The capital of Alabama is **Montgomery**. The two longest rivers in the United States are the **Missouri and the Mississippi**. The ocean on the west coast of the United States is the **Pacific Ocean**. The ocean on the east coast of the United States is the **Atlantic Ocean**. One U.S. territory is **Puerto Rico**. One state that borders Canada is **Vermont**. One state that borders Mexico is **New Mexico**. The capital of the United States is **Washington, D.C.** The Statue of Liberty is in **New York Harbor**.

