



Congress Flashcards

Part of the AP U.S. Government collection

Overview

This resource contains a collection of 53 flashcards that will help students master key Congress concepts that may be covered on the AP U.S. Government exam.

These are not actual test questions, nor do they involve much “application” of knowledge. Instead, they focus on the basic factual and conceptual knowledge that students must first internalize if they are to successfully formulate logical responses to multiple-choice or essay questions on the eventual exam.

Brainscape has created this content in partnership with several AP U.S. Government teachers and tutors, as well as ex-executives from test prep publishers such as Kaplan and The Princeton Review. The material is as comprehensive as possible, while still being broken down into small bite-sized chunks that make it easy to study. We have included a variety of question formats to help students’ minds encode the knowledge as deeply as possible.

How to Use This Resource

Teachers and students can use these flashcards in a variety of creative ways. Below are a few common use cases:

1. Post this PDF on your class website, so students can download it on their own, and potentially print their own copy as a study aid (and even *cut out* individual flashcards)
2. Use these questions as inspiration for your own quiz questions
3. Use these flashcards as a “game”, where one student (or group of students) asks another student (or group) a random question, and keeps score of how well the questions are being answered
4. Encourage students to use the digital version of the flashcards (see below)

Online and Mobile Version

All of these flashcards are available to study on the Brainscape website (brainscape.com) and in our mobile app(s). Brainscape’s “smart flashcards” study system uses our unique “Confidence-Based Repetition” method, which repeats questions in a progressive pattern based on students’ personalized path of mastery. Teachers can track students’ progress and identify students who need more guidance.

Students can study a portion of Brainscape’s premium flashcards for FREE and can gain unlimited access for a small fee. Students can also use Brainscape to create & share their own supplementary flashcards (which is ALWAYS FREE).

If you are interested in a bulk class license for Brainscape’s web & mobile study system, please contact info@brainscape.com, and we can set up some time for a call.

#	Question	Answer
1	Which article of the Constitution established the legislative branch?	Article I of the Constitution established the legislative branch.
2	How is the number of representatives allotted to each state?	<p>The number of representatives in the House as a whole is capped at 435, and each state's representation in the House is in proportion to its population. Each state has at least one representative. The census, taken every 10 years, allows for reapportionment of the number of representatives to the states.</p> <p>California has the most representatives with 53, and several states only have one representative.</p>
3	How often must representatives stand for election?	<p>Each member of the House of Representatives stands for election every two years.</p> <p>While senatorial elections are also held every two years, only a third of the Senate stands for election every two years, and senators are elected to six-year terms.</p>
4	What are the three qualifications to be eligible for election to the House of Representatives?	<p>To be a member of the House, one must be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 25 years old 2. an American citizen for seven years 3. a resident of the state he/she represents <p>Not every state requires (but it is traditional) that the representative live in the district which he/she represents.</p>
5	How many members are in the Senate?	There are 100 senators, and each state has two. The vice president, who presides over the Senate and casts any necessary tie-breaking vote, is not considered a member of the Senate.
6	What are the three qualifications to be eligible for election to the Senate?	<p>To be a member of the Senate, one must be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 30 years old 2. an American citizen for 9 years 3. a resident of the state he/she represents

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7	How often do senators stand for election?	Senators stand for election every six years, but only 1/3 of the Senate stands for election every two years.
8	How did the 17th Amendment modify senatorial elections?	<p>The 17th Amendment provided for Senators to be elected by the people directly. Prior to the passage of the 17th Amendment in 1913, Senators were elected by their state legislatures.</p> <p>The Founding Fathers established indirect elections as a check on factions; but the amendment passed out of fears that the process had become corrupt.</p>
9	When may the vice president cast a vote in the Senate?	The vice president may only cast a vote in the Senate in the event of a tie.
10	Define: incumbency effect	<p>The incumbency effect refers to the advantage enjoyed by current officeholders in running for reelection against their opponents.</p> <p>Incumbent advantages include name recognition and easier access to campaign resources such as campaign workers, monetary funds, and group endorsements.</p>
11	Define: term limits	<p>Term limits restrict the number of terms an existing office holder may serve. While the 22nd Amendment limits the president to two consecutive terms, members of Congress do not have term limits.</p> <p>The Supreme Court has held that absent a congressional amendment, term limits may not be passed into law.</p>
12	What congressional duties does the Speaker of the House perform?	<p>The Speaker of the House is the House's most powerful member. As the leader of the House's majority party, the speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refers bills to committees • controls floor debate over bills • assigns members to committees

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13	The _____ is typically the longest serving Senator of the majority party.	<p>President Pro Tempore</p> <p>The role of the President Pro Tempore is largely ceremonial, but the person is third in line to the presidency.</p>
14	What role does the House and Senate majority leader fulfill?	<p>The House majority leader is the Speaker of the House's primary assistant. Generally, the majority leader is responsible for management of the House committees and for maintaining the House floor's legislative calendar, but the majority leader's role can vary based upon the leadership style of the Speaker of the House.</p> <p>The Senate majority leader serves many of the same functions in the Senate, although he/she also has direct control over his/her party.</p>
15	What roles do the House and Senate majority and minority whips play?	<p>The majority and minority whips manage their respective parties' legislative programs on the House and Senate floor. The whips' primary task is to make sure that all party members are present to vote upon important measures.</p>
16	What role is typically fulfilled by the House and Senate minority leaders?	<p>The House and Senate minority leaders serve as the spokespersons of the minority party in the House or Senate.</p> <p>The minority leader's main role is to spearhead the effort to retake majority control of the House or Senate. Efforts range from stalling congressional debates, promoting the party's agenda, and providing campaign assistances.</p>
17	In the House and Senate, what bodies typically perform most of the day-to-day work?	<p>Committees perform most of the Congress' day-to-day work and handle specific duties (rather than the general duties of the Congress as a whole).</p> <p>Not all the House and Senate committees mirror each other; for instance, only the House has a committee on Natural Resources, while only the Senate has an Indian Affairs committee.</p>

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18	How is membership on a given congressional committee determined?	Committee membership is determined by the percentage of each party's membership in their respective houses. Deference is given where possible to the interests of committee members' districts (e.g. congressmen for Alaska may serve on the committee overseeing fisheries).
19	In the House, which committees assign members of their party to other committees?	In the House, Democratic Party members are assigned to various committees by the Steering and Policy Committee of the House Democratic Caucus. For the House Republican Conference, this function is carried out by the Republican Steering Committee.
20	Each House and Senate committee is headed by a chairperson, who is typically the majority party's longest serving member of the committee. What does this individual do?	The chairperson is typically responsible for managing floor debate when one of the committees' bills is presented. The chairperson assigns members to sub-committees within the committee and determines which witnesses to call during committee hearings.
21	What is a standing committee?	A standing committee is a permanent House and/or Senate committee that is responsible for a specific area of foreign and domestic policy. Examples of standing committees include Agriculture, Defense, and Budget.
22	What are select committees?	Select committees are congressional committees established for specified purposes. As an example, the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming existed from 2007-2011.
23	Define: joint committees	Joint committees are composed of members of both the House and the Senate and are convened for a special purpose. During the Civil War, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was established to investigate the conduct of several Union generals and was composed of four senators and four representatives.

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24	What role do conference committees play in the lawmaking process?	Since bills passed by the House and Senate may contain varying language and provisions, conference committees are joint committees that resolve differences between bills. After a perfected bill is created, the conference committee returns it to the House and Senate for a final vote.
25	What function does the House Rules Committee have?	Controlled by the Speaker, the House Rules Committee establishes the rules under which a bill is presented to the House. The Rules Committee can limit the number of amendments from the floor and the time for debate. Since the Rules Committee can limit the time for debate, filibusters cannot take place in the House. In the Senate, however, there is no committee on rules or debate time limits. Only in the Senate are filibusters possible.
26	In the congressional context, what are caucuses?	Caucuses are informal congressional groups formed by legislators who share similar beliefs and goals. There are a wide variety of caucuses, ranging from the House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children to the Congressional Black Caucus.
27	The congressional practice of sending mail without affixing a stamp is known as the _____.	franking privilege In practice, the franking privilege is not absolute. Congressional members have a limit on the amount of mail they may frank, and the frank is only to be applied to official business.
28	Members of Congress enjoy what two immunities?	Members of Congress cannot be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. arrested while engaged upon official business 2. sued for slander for remarks made in a Congress

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29	What role does each branch of Congress play in the impeachment process?	<p>The House of Representatives may vote to impeach the president or other official for committing "bribery, treason, or high crimes and misdemeanors."</p> <p>The Senate determines whether or not to remove a government official by holding an impeachment hearing, presided over by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.</p>
30	In the event no presidential candidate receives a majority of the electoral votes, what role does the House of Representatives play?	<p>Pursuant to the Constitution, if no candidate receives a majority of the electoral votes, the House of Representatives chooses the new president from among the top three candidates.</p> <p>The Senate performs the same function, if no candidate receives the majority of the electoral votes for vice president.</p>
31	After a congressional member introduces a bill on the floor of either the House or the Senate, what happens next?	<p>Once a bill is introduced, it is assigned to the appropriate committee. The bill is then often sent to a sub-committee. For instance, a House bill on the speed limit would likely go to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and then to the Sub-Committee on Highways and Transit.</p> <p>The sub-committee then studies the bill and returns it to the committee with a recommendation. The committee then votes yea or nay on the bill.</p>
32	Once a committee approves a bill, what happens next?	<p>If a committee approves a bill, it is introduced to the House and Senate for debate and amendments, and a vote is taken. If the bill passes, it is sent to the other house of Congress, where the process repeats itself.</p>
33	If both the House and Senate have approved a bill, how are differences between the two bills resolved?	<p>A joint conference committee, composed of members of the House and Senate, hammers out the differences between the two bills. Identical bills are then sent to the House and Senate for a final vote.</p>

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34	Once both the House and Senate have passed a final version of a bill, it goes before _____.	<p>the president</p> <p>The president may either veto the bill (deny) or sign the bill (enact into law). If the president vetoes the bill, Congress can override the veto by a two-thirds majority in each house.</p> <p>If the president does not affix his signature within 10 days, the bill automatically becomes law.</p>
35	What takes place during a markup session?	In a markup session, a committee or sub-committee makes changes to the original language of a bill. A markup session can take place at numerous points along a bill's route to becoming a law.
36	Define: filibuster	<p>A filibuster is a means of extending or delaying a vote on a given bill. A formal filibuster can only take place in the Senate. Senate rules allow a senator, or a number of senators, to speak for as long as they wish on any topic they wish.</p> <p>The longest filibuster on record is 24 hours and 18 minutes by Strom Thurmond against the Civil Rights Act of 1957.</p>
37	Define: quorum	<p>A quorum refers to the minimum number of legislators who must be in attendance for the actions of that branch to be official.</p> <p>In both the House and Senate, a simple majority constitutes a quorum.</p>
38	Define: cloture	Cloture is a Senate motion to end a filibuster, and it requires the approval of 60 senators.
39	What is "pork barrel" legislation?	<p>Pork barrel legislation is legislation that funds initiatives in the legislator's home district. Pork barrel projects are added to the federal budget by members of the appropriation committees of Congress.</p> <p>The most famous recent example of pork barrel legislation was for the "Bridge to Nowhere," a \$398 million Alaskan bridge that was supposed to connect Gravina Island's 50 residents with the Alaskan mainland.</p>

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40	What is logrolling?	Logrolling is the process by which legislators trade favors. One representative might agree to vote for another member's bill in return for support on his or her own bill.
41	_____ are attachments to pieces of legislation, generally having no connection with a bill.	<p style="text-align: center;">Riders</p> <p>There are two reasons riders are used. First, riders can be attached to a bill to make it unpalatable to a majority; this is known as a "poison pill." Second, a rider can be attached to a bill because the rider usually wouldn't pass on its own.</p>
42	What are earmarks?	<p>Earmarks are special spending projects that an individual congressperson includes in a bill, especially for their constituents.</p> <p>An earmark can take the form of a project grant, a grant-in-aid, and almost any form of federal funding.</p>
43	What is it called when a change is made to a bill that deals with the purpose of that bill specifically?	This process is known as an amendment.
44	Both the Senate and the House have a committee on appropriations. What do these committees do?	The committees on appropriation are responsible for setting specific monetary expenditures by the federal government. The Constitution requires "appropriations made by law" and, after a budget is approved, the committees pass legislation appropriating funds.
45	What are the responsibilities of the House and Senate budget committees?	<p>The House and Senate budget committees draft and prepare a concurrent resolution on the president's budget for their respective houses, which sets aggregate levels of spending and revenue for a given year.</p> <p>The House and Senate appropriations committees use the concurrent resolutions on the budget in drafting their appropriations legislation.</p>

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46	The House Ways and Means Committee performs what function?	<p>The House Ways and Means Committee is the chief tax committee in the House of Representatives; the committee has jurisdiction over taxation, tariffs, and other revenue-raising measures. In addition, the Ways and Means Committee has jurisdiction over Medicare, Social Security, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.</p> <p>Since the House has priority on revenue bills, there is no Ways and Means Committee in the Senate.</p>
47	What are the differences between the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Judiciary Committee?	<p>Pursuant to the Constitution, the Senate is responsible for approving federal court judges, and the Senate Judiciary Committee conducts hearings on potential judicial nominees before a vote on the Senate floor. The Senate Judiciary Committee also works on federal criminal law. The Senate Judiciary Committee also reviews proposed amendments.</p> <p>The House Judiciary Committee has a more limited role, overseeing the federal law enforcement agencies (such as the FBI), and justice administration within the administrative agencies and federal courts. It also proposes federal criminal laws.</p>
48	How are representative districts determined?	<p>After the decennial census, the individual state legislatures redraw the state district lines. Depending on population shifts and other factors, this process of redistricting can sometimes eliminate some districts, and/or add others.</p>
49	Define: Gerrymandering	<p>Gerrymandering is the drawing of legislative districts to benefit a particular political party.</p> <p>For instance, if a state legislature is in control of the Democratic Party, state-level districts may be drawn to ensure that a safe number of Democratic voters reside in each district, ensuring the election of a Democratic representative.</p>

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50	How are territories such as Puerto Rico represented in Congress?	<p>Territories such as Puerto Rico send congressmen, who are not entitled to vote, but can advise Congress about issues relating to their territories.</p> <p>The same holds true for the District of Columbia. However, the District is entitled to three electors.</p>
51	What is the legislative veto?	<p>The legislative veto is the power of one or both house(s) of Congress to override a presidential decision. For instance, the president may send troops into a foreign country, and Congress could pass a bill denying the president the right to do so.</p> <p>Once a common practice, the one-house legislative veto was deemed unconstitutional by the Court in <i>INS v. Chadha</i> (1983), as violating the principle of separation of powers. The power of Congress acting as a whole to pass a legislative veto has not yet been tested.</p>
52	Describe: National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius (2012)	<p>In <i>N.F.I.B. v. Sebelius</i>, several states sued Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, in her official capacity, claiming that the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act were unconstitutional. The Court upheld the portion of the act containing an individual mandate to buy health insurance as a constitutional exercise of Congress' taxing power.</p>
53	When does reapportionment take place?	<p>Reapportionment takes place every 10 years, after the decennial census.</p> <p>Since the House is capped at 435 members, shifts in population require a change in representation from each state. Thus, every ten years the number of representatives for each state is reapportioned.</p>