

Before Your Visit to the Court: Preparing for the Tour

Dear Teacher,

The Supreme Court of Florida is excited about your upcoming visit! This sheet provides a number of items that you should discuss with your students before your visit. We look forward to seeing you soon.

What is the U.S. Constitution, and what does it do?

The U.S. Constitution is a written document that establishes our country's government, states how the government will be organized, and states what the government's powers will be. It is known as the "supreme law of the land."

Does Florida have a Constitution?

Yes. Florida and all of the other states have their own constitutions. A state's constitution may not conflict or go against the U.S. Constitution.

What are the three branches of government?

The U.S. Constitution and Florida's Constitution provide for three branches of government: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.

What are the jobs of each branch of government?

Legislative branch: makes the law; Executive branch: enforces the law; Judicial branch: interprets the law.

Who makes up the three branches of the federal (U.S.) government?

(1) **Legislative** : U.S. Congress (U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate);
(2) **Executive** : President of the United States; (3) **Judicial**: U.S. Supreme Court.

Who makes up the three branches of Florida's state government?

(1) **Legislative** : Florida Legislature (Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate);
(2) **Executive** : Governor of Florida; (3) **Judicial**: Supreme Court of Florida.

What branch of government are courts a part of?

Courts are a part of the judicial branch.

What jobs do courts do?

Courts resolve disputes between parties such as people, businesses, and governments. Some disputes are criminal, which involve breaking a law. In a criminal case, the government is one of the parties. Others disputes are civil, which involve a dispute between two private parties.

What are the two categories of Florida courts?

Florida's courts fall into two categories: trial courts and appellate courts.

Where are disputes usually decided first?

Disputes are usually decided first in the trial court.

What is an appeal?

When a party is unhappy with the outcome of a case, a party may file an appeal. An appeal is taken to a higher court with jurisdiction, that is, power to review and revise a lower court's decision.