

Checks and Balances in Action

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

The student will apply the system of checks and balances to real government scenarios.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- index cards
- pen
- scissors
- paper for a flowchart

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. On 6 index cards, write 6 different government scenarios, such as: 'Congress passes a law the President disagrees with,' 'The President appoints a judge,' 'The Supreme Court rules a law unconstitutional,' 'Congress wants to remove a corrupt President,' 'The President vetoes a bill,' and 'Congress overrides a veto.'
2. For each scenario card, write on the back which branch is acting and which branch(es) have the power to check that action.
3. Sort your 6 cards into 3 piles based on which branch is being 'checked' (limited) in that scenario: Legislative checked, Executive checked, or Judicial checked.
4. On paper, draw a triangle with the 3 branches at each corner, and draw arrows between each pair of branches, labeling each arrow with one specific check that branch has on the other.
5. Choose one scenario card and write a 3-4 sentence explanation of how that check prevents any one branch from having too much power.

QUESTIONS

1. **What check does the President have over Congress when Congress passes a law?**
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2. **What check does Congress have over a presidential veto?**
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3. **What check does the Judicial branch have over laws passed by Congress?**
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4. **Explain, using one of your scenario cards, how checks and balances prevents any single branch from becoming too powerful.**
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