

The Bill of Rights (Plain Text Version)

Ratified December 15, 1791

Amendment I

Congress should not say that the nation has only one religion, or tell people they cannot practice a religion of their own choice; it should not tell people what to say or what to write in the press; it should not tell people they can get together to protest peacefully, and to write to the government to complain about a decision that has been made.

Amendment II

The right for the government to organize an army, and for individual citizens to own and use guns, should not be taken away.

Amendment III

No soldier, when there is peace, should live in a house without the owner saying it's okay. If there is a war, then the soldier needs to follow the law about living in other people's houses.

Amendment IV

Search warrants (specific permission) shall be necessary for any search of a person's house or belongings. Officials must present good evidence as to why the warrant should be given.

Amendment V

The rights of a person accused of a crime must include an official statement about the crime, and a person may not be tried twice for the same specific criminal incident. All of the steps of the must be followed in order to punish a person or take away their property.

Amendment VI

A person accused of a crime has the rights to a fair trial by a jury, to question witnesses for or against him or her, and to be provided a lawyer if he or she cannot afford one.

Amendment VII

In civil suits (not criminal) that involve property more than twenty dollars, a jury trial may be requested.

Amendment VIII

Bail should never be set too high, and punishments should never be cruel and unusual.

Amendment IX










Any right not listed in the Bill of Rights is not necessarily denied to the people.

Amendment X

Any power not given to the United States or to the individual states is reserved for the people.

The Bill of Rights

A bill of rights is a written document that defines the rights of citizens and establishes limitations on the government. Bills of rights were included in most of the state constitutions in the early republic as they are today. The original Constitution did not contain a Bill of rights-a fact the Anti-Federalists used as an argument against ratification of the proposed constitution. Fearing passage of a national constitution without a written bill of rights, several states sent suggestions for amendments to be added when they ratified the Constitution. James Madison took their ideas and developed twelve amendments, ten of which were passed by the states. These first ten amendments were called the Bill of Rights and added to the Constitution in 1791.

1st Amendment	
2nd Amendment	
3rd Amendment	
4th Amendment	
5th Amendment	
6th Amendment	
7th Amendment	
8th Amendment	
9th Amendment	
10th Amendment	