

# WRITING A STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

As you know, a **constitution is a document that sets forth the basic laws of a governing body** – in this case, your school’s Student Council. Your Student Council may already have a constitution. If so, read it over and make copies to distribute to your student representatives at the first or second meeting.

**If your Student Council is new**, you will have to write a constitution. If your Student Council has an existing document that was written some time ago, you may want to consider amending it to reflect more current school or Student Council needs.

Engaging your students in drafting a new or revised constitution (whether you choose to do so with the Student Council as a whole or in committee) presents an excellent opportunity for your students to learn more about US history. Use this time to review the historical facts and events surrounding the writing of our country’s Constitution. Bring in copies for the Student Council to read, take representatives to the library to see a copy, or ask a teacher in your school whose specialty is American history to make a presentation to the Student Council. Challenge your students to let the words and sentiments of our founders inspire them in writing or amending their document.

## On the Web:

To learn more about the United States Constitution, visit the National Archives Web site: [www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html](http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html). Here you will find a copy of the Constitution, along with its history and information about the men who wrote the Constitution.

Also see the Constitutional Rights Foundation Website: [www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org). This site contains a variety of on-line lesson plans and



# CONSTITUTION OUTLINE

## Article I: Name

- What is the name of the group (school/Student Council)?

## Article II: Objectives

- What are the reasons that the Student Council exists?

## Article III: Membership

- Who are the members and how are they chosen?
- What do they do?
- How can a member be removed from office?

## Article IV: Officers

- Who are the officers?
- What are their duties?
- How are officers nominated and elected?
- What are the guidelines for meetings and special sessions?
- How often will Student Council meetings be held?
- What is the process for calling a special meeting?

## Article V: Other Members

- Who are the other members (for example, advisor, resource volunteer/parent and principal)?

## Article VI: Committees

- What are the names of the standing or permanent committees?
- What are their responsibilities?
- How can special or temporary committees be formed?

## Article VII: Meetings

- What are the guidelines for meetings and special sessions?
- How often will Student Council meetings be held?
- What is the process for calling a special meeting?

## Article VIII: Rules

- What are the rules and voting procedures?

## Article IX: Amendments

- How can the constitution be changed?



# SAMPLE STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

## Reviewing Objectives

Objectives define in broad terms why your Student Council exists. They should be reviewed thoroughly with all students, but especially with the Student Council representatives.

**A constitution is a document that embodies** the basic organizational and governance structure and procedures of the Student Council. It provides the foundation for the Student Council's operation.

The following sample constitution will help you work with your Student Council members to develop or (if necessary) revise your Student Council's constitution. Refer to the advisor and member handbooks for more information about Student Council constitutions.

### Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be (            ), hereafter called the Student Council.

### Article II: Objectives

The purpose of the Student Council shall be to:

1. Strive for good citizenship;
2. Respect all individuals in the school and community;
3. Involve students in the sharing ideas to help make our school the best it can be;
4. Help all students work together for our school; and
5. Give all students practice in democracy in action.

### Article III: Membership

**Section One:** All students in (    ) shall have the opportunity to be nominated, to vote and to offer ideas for Student Council actions.

**Section Two:** The members of the Student Council shall be the representatives elected by their classrooms, the officers, the advisor, the resource volunteer (parent) and the principal.

**Section Three: Qualification of Representatives:**  
A student who wishes to be a candidate for the Student Council shall:

1. Be a good citizen
2. Be a hard-working student
3. Relate well to others and
4. Be interested in serving as a representative



# SAMPLE STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

## (continued)

### Section Four: Nominations

Each class in grades ( ) shall nominate two (or more) students to be candidates for election.

### Section Five: Elections

Elections of Student Council representatives shall take place within each classroom in grades ( ) on ( ). The student receiving the second highest number of votes shall serve as alternate and shall take over if the representative is unable to complete his or her term.

### Section Six: Powers and Duties

Each representative shall be responsible for performing the duties of the representatives as listed in the Student Council Member Handbook.

### Section Seven: Term of Office

The term of office shall be for one calendar year, beginning ( ) and ending ( ).

**Section Eight:** Any officer or representative may be removed from office by a majority vote of the Student Council for poor attendance at meetings, failure to perform duties or failure to follow school or class rules.

**Section Nine:** The principal shall be the final authority over all actions of the Student Council.

### Underlying the Importance of Elections and Membership Clauses

The membership article defines in general terms the composition of the Student Council. The election of representatives is one of the most important activities involving all students. Each student has the opportunity to be a candidate, and each class elects its own representative/alternate. If you determine that all grade levels are not to be represented on the Student Council, be sure to specify the eligible grades in Section Four and Five.

You will need to determine the best date on which to conduct the elections. Holding the elections in May works well. Then the installation ceremony for officers and representatives can take place before the close of school. Training can take place right after school closes or just before school opens in the fall. Section Eight enables students to help police their own operations. It increases their awareness of the responsibility a representative or officer has in the school.



# SAMPLE STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION (continued)

## Article IV: Officers

**Section One:** The officers shall be the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer (and parliamentarian).

### Section Two: Nominations

Two or more candidates for the office of president shall be nominated from the grade five classrooms. Two or more candidates for the office of vice president shall be nominated from the grade four classrooms. Two or more candidates for the office of secretary shall be nominated from either grade four or grade five classrooms. Two or more candidates for the office of treasurer shall be nominated from either grade four or grade five classrooms.

Nominations shall take place according to procedures approved by the principal.

(The president, with the approval of the advisor, shall appoint the parliamentarian.)

### Section Three: Elections

The election of officers shall take place on ( ) and shall follow procedures approved by the principal.

### Section Four: Power and Duties

The officers shall have the powers and duties that are listed for each office in the Student Council Member Handbook and such other powers and duties as may be approved by the principal.

### Section Five: Term of Office

The term of office for all officers shall be one calendar year, beginning ( ) and ending ( ).

## Article V: Other Members

### Section One: Advisor

The advisor shall be a member of the school staff who shall be responsible for fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of an advisor as described in the Student Council Advisor Handbook.

### Section Two: Resource Volunteer (Parent)

The Student Council resource volunteer shall serve as an assistant to the advisor.

### Section Three: Principal

The principal shall have final authority over all Student Council activities.



# SAMPLE STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION (continued)

## Article VI: Committees

### Section One: Standing Committees

Standing committees shall include the Executive Committee, the Elections Committee, the Service Committee and the Welcome Committee.

The Executive Committee shall include the officers, the advisor, the resource volunteer, and the principal. No meeting of the Executive Committee shall take place without either the advisor or the principals in attendance.

The Elections Committee shall consist of five members. It shall be responsible for making arrangements for general elections, notifying all teachers when classroom and school elections are to take place and conducting the general election.

The Service Committee shall consist of five members. It shall be responsible for coordinating at least two Student Council service activities each year.

The Welcome Committee shall consist of two students from each grade level. Members shall be responsible for serving as friendly hosts to new students and to visitors to the school.

### Section Two: Special Committees

Special committees may be appointed by the president to plan and carry out activities approved by the Student Council and the principal. The vice president shall coordinate all committee activities.

#### Spotlight on Special Committees

Special Committees are those formed to complete a specific task. They are dissolved upon completion of that task – e.g., Kite Day, Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies Week, International Night.



# SAMPLE STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION (continued)

## Meet Regularly

It is very important that meetings be scheduled and held regularly. Irregularly scheduled meetings and canceled meetings tend to leave the impression that the Student Council isn't very important. Setting the agenda for each class meeting is a responsibility of the advisor and the Executive Committee.

Class meetings should be held before and after the Student Council meeting to strengthen student leadership skills as well as to ensure opportunities for all students to offer ideas for Student Council activities and to learn what the Student Council has done.

## Article VII: Meetings

### Section One: Student Council Meetings

Student Council meetings shall take place on the first and third (day of the week) of each month or on the ( ) of each month. An agenda shall be prepared and shall be given to each member of the Student Council at least two days before each meeting.

### Section Two: Class Meetings

Class meetings shall be conducted by each representative at least one day before and within one day after each Student Council meeting.

## Article VIII: Rules

**Section One:** Each representative has one vote.

**Section Two:** All motions require a majority vote of the members of the Student Council in order to pass.

**Section Three:** Roberts Rules of Order shall be the authority on any questions of parliamentary procedure.

**Section Four:** No action of the Student Council becomes official until it is approved by the principal.

## Article IX: Amendments

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Student Council.

**A constitution must always contain a means of revision.** Because the constitution is the basic governing document, it requires a more substantial vote for amendment than a simple majority.

