



## Welcome to The Coolidge Citizenship Challenge

*“American citizenship is a high estate. He who holds it is the peer of kings.”*  
--Calvin Coolidge

*“The more I study it the more I have come to admire it, realizing that no other document devised by the hand of man ever brought so much progress and happiness to humanity.”*  
--Calvin Coolidge, on the Constitution of the United States

The Coolidge Foundation and Seeking Educational Excellence invite students in middle school and high school students entering ninth or tenth grades to participate in the Coolidge Citizenship Challenge, a nationwide contest on citizenship and civics. Show your knowledge of the United States Constitution, American civics, and President Calvin Coolidge, our country’s thirtieth president!

Our Study Guide and flashcards will help you prepare. This Study Guide has one hundred and eight questions and the answers to each of those questions. For each round of the competition, students will be asked twenty-five questions randomly selected from the Study Guide. The preliminary round of the competition will be virtual, on a Zoom interview call with a single contestant, a contest judge, and a Foundation staff member. The judge will ask the contestant twenty-five questions. A Foundation staff member will score the answers. Preliminary rounds will take place on Zoom September 17-24, 2021.

Top contestants in the preliminary round will be brought to Washington and Coolidge House, along with a parent or guardian, for the final round of competition, a civics-themed tour of our nation’s capital, and the awards ceremony. The final round of the Challenge will take place November 11-13, 2021.

As described in our Study Guide, students may earn extra credit by memorizing and reciting portions of either a speech or a letter written by President Calvin Coolidge, or by reciting the names of the presidents of the United States. For Extra Credit Opportunities, see pages 15 through 18 of our Study Guide.

To register for the Coolidge Citizenship Challenge, [click here](#).

To view the Coolidge Citizenship Challenge Study Guide flashcards on Quizlet, [click here](#).

For more information and for any questions, please call 202-827-4270 or email Colleen Stamos at [cstamos@coolidgefoundation.org](mailto:cstamos@coolidgefoundation.org).

## Coolidge Citizenship Challenge Questions and Answers

### Our Constitutional Republic

Welcome to our study guide! Below are one hundred and eight questions and answers to those questions. You will be asked to answer twenty-five questions randomly selected from the questions below.

**1. What is the supreme law of the land?**

The Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land.

**2. What are the first three words of the Constitution?**

“We the People” are the first three words of the Constitution.

**3. What is the mechanism used to change the Constitution?**

Amendment is the mechanism used to change the Constitution.

**4. What is an amendment?**

An amendment is a change or addition to the Constitution.

**5. How many amendments to the Constitution are there?**

There have been 27 amendments to the Constitution.

**6. What are the first ten amendments to the Constitution called?**

The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights.

**7. What freedoms does the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantee?**

The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, speech, and press.

**8. What rights does the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantee?**

The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceably assemble and to petition the government.

**9. What are three rights the Declaration of Independence says each person has?**

The Declaration of Independence says each person has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**10. What is an unalienable right?**

An unalienable right is a right that cannot be taken away from the people.

**11. According to the Declaration of Independence, who gives people unalienable rights?**

Unalienable rights are given to the people by their Creator.

**12. What is the economic system of the United States?**

Capitalism is the economic system of the United States.

**13. The federal government is divided into how many branches?**

The federal government is divided into three branches.

**14. What are the three branches of the federal government?**

Legislative, executive, and judicial are the three branches of the federal government.

**15. Why did the drafters of the Constitution separate the legislative, executive, and judicial powers?**

The drafters separated the three branches to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

**16. Which branch of government passes federal laws?**

The legislative branch passes federal laws.

**17. What is the name of the legislative branch?**

Congress is the name of the legislative branch.

**18. What are the two parts of Congress?**

The House of Representatives and the Senate are the two parts of Congress.

**19. How many voting members does the House of Representatives have?**

The House of Representatives has four hundred and thirty-five voting members.

**20. How many years is a term of office for a United States representative, or congressman?**

A congressman is elected for a term of two years.

**21. How is the number of United States representatives for each state determined?**

The population of the state determines the number of representatives for each state.

**22. What is the name of your United States representative? (or delegate in the House of Representatives?)**

A good place to look for the answer for your home town is <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Type in your zip code and hit enter. If more than one representative is listed, enter your address to find the representative for your district.

**23. What does the Speaker of the House of Representatives do?**

The Speaker presides over the House of Representatives.

**24. Originally, the Constitution said that the legislature of each state chooses two senators to serve in the United States Senate. How did the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913 change that?**

The Seventeenth Amendment changed the way senators are chosen. People in each state now elect the two senators from their state.

**25. What is the total number of United States senators?**

The total number of United States senators is one hundred.

**26. How many senators does a state send to Washington?**

A state sends two senators to Washington.

**27. How many years is a term of office for a United States senator?**

A term of office for a United States senator is six years.

**28. What job do American vice presidents get automatically?**

The Vice President of the United States gets the job of President of the Senate.

**29. Is there a limit to the number of terms a United States representative or senator can be elected to Congress?**

There is no limit to the number of terms a United States representative or senator can be elected to Congress.

**30. Who is head of the executive branch of the federal government?**

The President is head of the executive branch.

**31. How many years is a term of office for President?**

The term of office for president is four years.

**32. Under the Twenty-second Amendment to the Constitution, how many full terms can a president serve in office?**

A president can serve two four-year terms.

**33. Does the Constitution define the members of the President's Cabinet?**

The Constitution does not define the members of the President's Cabinet.

**34. What do members of the President's Cabinet do?**

Members of the Cabinet advise the President.

**35. If the President is incapacitated, who becomes President?**

If the President is incapacitated, the Vice President becomes President.

**36. Who becomes President if both the President and the Vice President are incapacitated?**

If the President and Vice President can no longer serve, the Speaker of the House becomes President.

**37. Who is the Commander in Chief of the military?**

The President of the United States is the Commander in Chief of the military.

**38. Who signs federal bills into laws?**

The President of the United States signs bills into laws.

**39. When the President rejects a bill passed by Congress, what is that action called?**

When the President rejects a bill passed by Congress, this action is called a veto.

**40. How can Congress override a veto by the President?**

Congress can override a veto if two-thirds of the House of Representatives and two-thirds of the Senate vote for the bill to become law.

**41. What is the highest court in the United States?**

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the United States.

**42. How many justices sit on the Supreme Court of the United States?**

Nine justices sit on the Supreme Court of the United States.

**43. How many years can a federal judge stay on the court?**

A federal judge can stay for life.

**44. Is the power to declare war a federal power or a state power?**

The power to declare war is a federal power.

**45. Which Amendment to the Constitution says that certain powers are reserved to each State or to the people?**

The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution says that certain powers are reserved to each State or to the people.

**46. What Amendment to the Constitution legalized the national income tax?**

The Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution legalized the national income tax.

**47. What Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed the right to vote to women?**

The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed the right to vote to women.

**48. Who is the governor of your state now?**

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**A good place to look up the answer for your state is:**

<https://www.nga.org/governors>

**(D.C. does not have a governor)**

**49. What are the two major political parties in the United States?**

The Democratic Party and the Republican Party are the two major political parties in the United States.

**50. What does the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the Constitution say about voting rights?**

The Twenty-fourth Amendment says it is illegal to make anyone pay a poll tax or any other tax in order to vote.

**51. According to the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution, who has a right to vote?**

The Twenty-sixth Amendment says United States citizens who are eighteen or older have a right to vote.

**52. The Pledge of Allegiance is a declaration of loyalty to what?**

The Pledge of Allegiance is a declaration of loyalty to the United States flag and to the Republic for which it stands.

**53. What is Selective Service registration?**

Selective Service requires that when a male turns 18 he must register for military service.

**54. What war did the Americans fight to win independence from Britain?**

The Revolutionary War is the war Americans fought to win independence from Britain.

**55. What is one important reason the colonists rebelled against Britain?**

Taxation without representation is one important reason the colonists rebelled against Britain.

**56. Who is the main author of the Declaration of Independence?**

Thomas Jefferson is the main author of the Declaration of Independence.

**57. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?**

The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776.

**58. Where was the Declaration of Independence adopted?**

The Declaration of Independence was adopted at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

**59. To what ruler was the Declaration of Independence directed?**

The Declaration of Independence was directed to King George III of Britain.

**60. When was the United States Constitution written?**

The United States Constitution was written in 1787.

**61. In what years did the first thirteen States ratify the United States Constitution?**

The first thirteen States ratified the United States Constitution from 1787 through 1790.

**62. Who was the first President of the United States?**

The first President of the United States was George Washington.

**63. In what year was George Washington elected President?**

1789 was the year George Washington was elected President.

**64. Who is known as the Father of the Country?**

George Washington is known as the Father of the Country.

**65. What is the name of the United States war between the North and the South?**

The Civil War is the name of the war between the North and the South.

**66. What was the major conflict in the United States that led to the Civil War?**

The major conflict that led to the Civil War was the conflict over the continuation of slavery.

**67. To what political party did Abraham Lincoln belong?**

Abraham Lincoln was a Republican.

**68. What is the name of the document Abraham Lincoln signed to free slaves in some Southern states?**

The name of the document President Lincoln signed to free the slaves was the Emancipation Proclamation.

**69. What did the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution make illegal?**

The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution made slavery illegal.

**70. In 1870, a former slave was the first African American elected to the United States House of Representatives. What is his name?**

The name of the first African American elected to the House of Representatives is Joseph Rainey.

**71. Who was the longest serving president?**

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the longest serving president.

**72. To what party did President Franklin Delano Roosevelt belong?**

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt belonged to the Democratic Party.

**73. What was the reason for the Cold War?**

The reason for the Cold War was the conflict between capitalism and communism.

**74. What was the goal of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States?**

The goal of the Civil Rights Movement was racial equality in the United States.

**75. “Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.”**

**Who spoke these words in his “I Have a Dream Speech” on August 28, 1963?**

Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke these words.

## Geography

**76. What country do California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas border?**

Mexico borders California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

**77. What country is on the northern border of the United States?**

Canada is on the northern border of the United States.

**78. What is the capital of the United States?**

Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States.

**79. What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?**

The Pacific Ocean is on the West Coast of the United States.

**80. What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?**

The Atlantic Ocean is on the East Coast of the United States.

## Symbols and Holidays

**81. How many stripes does the United States flag have?**

The United States flag has thirteen stripes.

**82. What do the thirteen stripes on the United States flag represent?**

The thirteen stripes on the United States flag represent the original thirteen colonies.

**83. How many stars does the United States flag have?**

The United States flag fifty stars.

**84. What do the fifty stars on the United States flag represent?**

The fifty stars on the United States flag represent the fifty states.

**85. What is the title of the national anthem of the United States?**

*The Star-Spangled Banner* is the title of the national anthem of the United States.

**86. What do Americans celebrate on the Fourth of July?**

On the Fourth of July we celebrate Independence Day.

**87. What do Americans do on Memorial Day?**

On Memorial Day we honor the men and women who died while serving in the United States military.

**88. What two past presidents died on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1826?**

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were the presidents who died on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1826.

Coolidge-related Questions

**89. Who is the only president of the United States born on July 4<sup>th</sup>?**

Calvin Coolidge is the only President of the United States born on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

**90. In what year was Calvin Coolidge born?**

Calvin Coolidge was born in 1872.

**91. Where was Calvin Coolidge born?**

Plymouth Notch, Vermont is where Calvin Coolidge was born.

**92. On what date did Calvin Coolidge become President of the United States?**

August 3, 1923 is the date Calvin Coolidge became President.

**93. Before becoming President, what office did Calvin Coolidge hold?**

Calvin Coolidge was Vice President of the United States before becoming President.

**94. Who swore Calvin Coolidge in as President?**

His father swore President Coolidge into office.

**95. What right did Calvin Coolidge believe is “the very essence to self-government” and “the foundation of our liberties”?**

The right to vote was what Calvin Coolidge called “the very essence to self-government.”

**96. What document did Calvin Coolidge begin to study when he was 13 years old?**

The Constitution is the document Coolidge began to study when he was 13 years old.

**97. Why did Calvin Coolidge fight to keep taxes low?**

Calvin Coolidge wanted to keep taxes low so Americans could work more for themselves than for the government.

**98. What did Calvin Coolidge say is “the chief business of the American people”?**

Calvin Coolidge said the chief business of the American people is business.

**99. What did Calvin Coolidge say is “the chief ideal of the American people”?**

Calvin Coolidge said the chief ideal of the American people is idealism.

**100. What did Calvin Coolidge say is “the real profession of every American”?**

Calvin Coolidge said the real profession of every American is citizenship.

**101. What did Calvin Coolidge call overtaxation?**

Calvin Coolidge called overtaxation “legalized larceny.”

**102. Why did Calvin Coolidge's opponents criticize tariffs?**

Calvin Coolidge's opponents criticized tariffs because tariffs hit the poor and farmers.

**103. What did Calvin Coolidge say about equality?**

Calvin Coolidge said that "If all men are created equal, that is final."

**104. What two documents did Calvin Coolidge call the "great charters of freedom and justice"?**

Calvin Coolidge called the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution the "great charters of freedom and justice."

**105. President Coolidge signed into law an Act declaring that all Native Americans are United States citizens. What is the name of the Act President Coolidge signed?**

The name of the Act that President Coolidge signed to make Native Americans citizens is the Indian Citizenship Act.

**106. What is one reason Calvin Coolidge believed a balanced budget is very important?**

Calvin Coolidge believed a balanced budget is very important because the government should not spend more money than it has.

**107. George Washington was the first President of the United States. Joe Biden is the forty-sixth. Who was number 30?**

Calvin Coolidge was the thirtieth President of the United States.

**108. During the presidency of Calvin Coolidge, what are three things that became common for many Americans?**

Three things that became common during the presidency of Calvin Coolidge are owning a radio, Saturdays off, and indoor plumbing.

## Extra Credit Opportunities

Students may earn extra credit by memorizing and reciting **one** of the three items below.

***The Inspiration of the Declaration of Independence***, a speech by President Calvin Coolidge given at Philadelphia on July 5, 1926, celebrating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence (*excerpt*).

To hear a model recitation of Coolidge's speech, as delivered by Charles Love, Executive Director, Seeking Educational Excellence, [click here](#).

**Extra Credit Opportunity #1: memorize and recite the following excerpt from the speech.**

About the Declaration there is a finality that is exceedingly restful. It is often asserted that the world has made a great deal of progress since 1776, that we have had new thoughts and new experiences which have given us a great advance over the people of that day, and that we may therefore very well discard their conclusions for something more modern. But that reasoning can not be applied to this great charter. If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final.

No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people. Those who wish to proceed in that direction cannot lay claim to progress. They are reactionary. Their ideas are not more modern, but more ancient, than those of the Revolutionary fathers.

**Letter from Calvin Coolidge to Charles F. Gardner, dated August 9, 1924.** President Coolidge responds to a man offended by the possibility of a Black man being nominated to be a Republican candidate for Congress in the state of New York (*excerpt*).

To hear a model recitation of Coolidge's letter, as delivered by Charles Love, Executive Director, Seeking Educational Excellence, [click here](#).

**Extra Credit Opportunity #2: memorize and recite the following excerpt from the letter.**

My dear Sir:

... I was amazed to receive such a letter... Our Constitution guarantees equal rights to all our citizens, without discrimination on account of race or color. I have taken my oath to support that Constitution. It is the source of your rights and my rights. I propose to regard it, and administer it, as the source of the rights of all the people, whatever their belief or race... The decision must be made by the constituents to whom he offers himself, and by nobody else. You have suggested that in some fashion I should bring influence to bear... In reply, I quote my great predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt:  
“\* \* \* I cannot consent to take the position that the door of hope—the door of opportunity—is to be shut upon any man, no matter how worthy, purely upon the grounds of race or color.”

Yours very truly, etc.

President Calvin Coolidge

**Extra Credit Opportunity #3: memorize and recite the names of the presidents of the United States in order.**

To hear a model recitation of presidents of the United States, as delivered by Charles Love, Executive Director, Seeking Educational Excellence, [click here](#).

George Washington  
John Adams  
Thomas Jefferson  
James Madison  
James Monroe  
John Quincy Adams

Andrew Jackson  
Martin Van Buren  
William Henry Harrison  
John Tyler  
James K. Polk  
Zachary Taylor

Millard Fillmore  
Franklin Pierce  
James Buchanan  
Abraham Lincoln  
Andrew Johnson  
Ulysses S. Grant

Rutherford B. Hayes  
James A. Garfield  
Chester A. Arthur  
Grover Cleveland  
Benjamin Harrison  
Grover Cleveland

William McKinley  
Theodore Roosevelt  
William Howard Taft  
Woodrow Wilson  
Warren G. Harding  
Calvin Coolidge

Herbert Hoover  
Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Harry S. Truman  
Dwight D. Eisenhower  
John F. Kennedy  
Lyndon B. Johnson

Richard Nixon  
Gerald Ford  
Jimmy Carter  
Ronald Reagan  
George H. W. Bush  
Bill Clinton

George W. Bush  
Barack Obama  
Donald Trump  
Joseph Biden

## Biographical Sketch of Calvin Coolidge

Calvin Coolidge, thirtieth president of the United States, was born on July 4, 1872. Coolidge was the only president to share a birthday with the country. Coolidge was born and raised in the Vermont hamlet of Plymouth Notch. There were no phones, or even electricity, in Plymouth Notch. No cars, either. Coolidge learned from a young age the meaning of hard work, the value of a dollar, and the benefits of common sense. The boy also learned the importance of citizens participating in local government. As a boy Coolidge attended town meetings. He watched his father serve as town deputy sheriff.

There was no high school in Plymouth. So Coolidge left his family for boarding school. Each week he rode a wagon to school -- or walked ten miles. After college, Coolidge became a lawyer in Massachusetts. Like President Lincoln, Coolidge learned the law by reading and working, rather than attending law school. In his twenties, the young lawyer got interested in politics. He married Grace Anna Goodhue, an instructor of the deaf, and the Coolidges had two sons, John and Calvin, Jr. Over years Coolidge worked hard and rose from local official to state representative to governor of the state. In the 1920 election, Coolidge ran for vice president on the Republican ticket with Senator Warren Harding. The Harding-Coolidge platform called for "normalcy." By "normalcy" Harding and Coolidge meant calm times and less government. In 1923, something dramatic happened. Vice President Coolidge was visiting the family homestead in Plymouth Notch. In the middle of the night Coolidge heard his father calling "Calvin." His father told Coolidge President Harding had died. The new President must be sworn in immediately! Coolidge's father, John, was a Vermont notary public and the only official for miles. Father Coolidge swore his son in by the light of a kerosene lamp. So it came that at 2:47 a.m. on August 3, 1923, Calvin Coolidge was sworn in as president of the United States.

Americans weren't sure Coolidge would make a good president. Some expected him to serve out Harding's term and then drop from sight. As president, Coolidge committed to honor the promises President Harding and he had made to the people. That meant continuing the fight for lower taxes, reduced federal spending, and a balanced budget. The plan worked and jobs became plentiful. Voters had a chance to reject Coolidge in the 1924 election. Instead they elected Coolidge to his own full term as president. At the time Coolidge left office in 1929, the size of the federal government was smaller than when he took office. Coolidge had honored a promise.

While in Washington Coolidge confronted bitter setbacks. One was the sudden death of his younger son, Calvin, Jr. A blister on Calvin's foot gave the 16-year-old an infection that killed him after a week. There were no antibiotics then. The President and Mrs. Coolidge were very sad.

But like Lincoln, President Coolidge did not give up after the death of his son. Throughout his time in Washington Coolidge fought for equality under law and for equal opportunity for all. Coolidge had been an early and enthusiastic supporter of women's right to vote. In 1928 Coolidge appointed the first female judge to a federal court. While vice president, and then as president, Coolidge repeatedly called for laws

making lynching a federal crime. In 1924, Coolidge received a letter from a voter who was offended by the possibility of a Black man being nominated for Congress. Coolidge would have none of that. Coolidge responded, "Our Constitution guarantees equal rights to all our citizens, without discrimination on account of race or color." In 1924, he signed into law the Indian Citizenship Act, which expanded citizenship to now include all Native Americans.

Many Americans criticize Coolidge for backing restrictions on immigration. But opposing unrestricted immigration did not mean Coolidge was a bigot. Coolidge chose to focus on the people who were already in America. Coolidge said, "No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat." Calvin Coolidge left office and returned to private life on March 4, 1929. That year he published his autobiography, ending with these words: "It was therefore my privilege... to retire voluntarily from the greatest experience that can come to a mortal man. In that way, I believed I could best serve the people who have honored me and the country which I love."

Coolidge did not live long after the presidency. When he was just 60 years old, Calvin Coolidge died at his home in Northampton, Massachusetts.