

The judicial branch of U.S. government

Directions: Read the informational (expository) text below about one of the 3 branches of government. You will use this information to fill in a chart about the 3 branches of government. Please highlight key terms or small phrases which list important information about each branch.

The United States government is divided into 3 branches of parts. They each have specific jobs that they perform. There is a separation of powers between the 3 branches which means that they each have certain powers that the other branches do not have and cannot violate or take away. The U.S. Constitution describes each branch and the powers they possess. No one branch has all power and they check and balance the power of one another. The final authority in our country is the U.S. Constitution.

The judicial branch's main job is to interpret or explain what the laws of the U.S. mean. The Supreme Court is the head of this branch, but there are many courts underneath them. There are 9 Supreme Court justices that are appointed by the President and confirmed (approved) by the United States Senate to serve life terms. Once they become a Supreme Court justice, they are there for life unless they retire, die in office, or are forced out of their job by Congress due to wrong-doing (this is known as impeachment by Congress).

The Supreme Court has various powers, some of which are below:

- a. Original jurisdiction- they can be the first court to hear a case (example- if California and Arizona have a dispute over a boundary of their state.)
- b. Appellate jurisdiction- they can review the decision of a lower court and possibly change the decision.
- c. Judicial review- they can declare a law of Congress or an action of the President as unconstitutional. This is perhaps their most well known power.
- d. Their decisions are final and cannot be appealed. What they say goes!