

# Lesson Plan: Be a Founder! Crafting Your Own Bill of Rights

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## Materials Needed:

- Computer or tablet with internet access
  - A printed, simplified version of the U.S. Bill of Rights
  - Paper (plain white or, for extra fun, parchment-style paper)
  - Pens, pencils, and markers
  - Optional Fun Item: A "quill" pen (a feather with a pen tip) and a bottle of ink or a fancy felt-tip pen
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## Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, Ann will be able to:

1. Explain, in her own words, the main reason the Bill of Rights was added to the U.S. Constitution.
  2. Create a "Mock Bill of Rights" for a group of her choice, including at least five rights that ensure fairness and freedom for its members.
  3. Connect the principles of the U.S. Bill of Rights (like freedom of speech and privacy) to her own life and community.
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## Lesson Activities

### Part 1: The Hook - Let's Start a Club! (5 minutes)

Let's begin with a fun thought experiment. Imagine you and your best friends are starting a brand new, super-secret, awesome club! You're the founder and leader.

Let's discuss:

- What would be the most important rules to make sure everyone is treated fairly?
- How would you make sure every member gets to share their ideas, even if others disagree?
- What would happen if one person tried to make all the decisions for everyone else?

**Teacher's Note:** This brief discussion connects the abstract idea of "rights" to a relatable concept of fairness and rules within a group. You've just done the same kind of thinking that the founders of the United States did!

### Part 2: The Story of the Bill of Rights (15 minutes)

After the United States was formed, it had a rulebook called the **Constitution**. But many people felt something important was missing. They were worried the new government might become too powerful and bossy, just like the king they had just fought a war to get away from!

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A smart leader named **James Madison** listened to these worries. He promised to add a list of specific protections to the Constitution to make sure every citizen's basic freedoms were safe. This list became the first ten changes, or "amendments," to the Constitution, and we call it the **Bill of Rights**.

### Activity: Watch a Video

Let's watch a short, engaging video to see how this all happened. A great option is the Schoolhouse Rock "The Preamble" video, followed by a simple explanation video on the Bill of Rights (a quick search for "Bill of Rights for Kids" on YouTube will yield great choices).

### Discussion after the video:

- Why were some people afraid of the new Constitution without a Bill of Rights?
- Whose job was it to write these new amendments? (James Madison)

### Part 3: What Are These Rights, Anyway? (10 minutes)

Let's look at a simplified version of the Bill of Rights. Instead of reading the old-fashioned language, let's figure out the "Big Idea" behind a few of them.

**Teacher's Note:** Read these simplified versions together and discuss what they might look like in Ann's world.

- **Amendment 1: The Five Freedoms.** The right to say what you believe, practice any religion, publish your ideas, gather in groups, and complain to the government. (*"This is like being able to tell your parents you think bedtime is too early!"*)
- **Amendment 4: The Privacy Right.** No one can search your body, your house, or your things without a very good reason. (*"This is like having a rule that no one can go through your backpack without your permission."*)
- **Amendment 8: No Cruel or Unusual Punishments.** If you get in trouble, the punishment has to fit the mistake. (*"This means if you forget to do one chore, your punishment can't be 'no dessert for a year!'"*)

### Part 4: Your Turn to Be a Founder! (20-25 minutes)

Now for the main event! You get to be the James Madison for a group of your choice. You will create your very own **Mock Bill of Rights**.

#### Step 1: Choose Your "Country."

Who are you writing these rights for? Pick one:

- The "Family of [Your Last Name]"
- A new club you invent (e.g., The "Awesome Artists Club" or "Expert Dog Walkers")
- Your own fictional kingdom or planet
- The "Homeschool Classroom of Ann"

#### Step 2: Brainstorm Your Rights.

Think about what is most important for the people in your group. What will keep things fair, fun, and safe? You need to create at least **five** amendments. Here are some questions to help you brainstorm:

- What freedoms should everyone have? (e.g., Freedom to choose the family movie on Fridays,

freedom to have quiet reading time.)

- What protections do people need? (e.g., Protection from having your diary read, protection against unfair chores.)
- How will everyone's voice be heard? (e.g., The right to suggest a new dinner recipe, the right to vote on a vacation spot.)

### **Step 3: Write Your Bill of Rights.**

Take your nice paper (and your special pen if you have one!) and write out your Bill of Rights. Give it a title, like "A Bill of Rights for the Smith Family."

Write each right out clearly. For example:

- **Amendment I: The Right to Creative Expression.** Every member shall have the freedom to play music, draw, and build forts in the living room, as long as they clean up afterward.
- **Amendment II: The Right to Privacy.** No one may enter another person's room without knocking first.

When you are finished, sign your name at the bottom as the "Founder."

### **Part 5: Presentation and Reflection (5 minutes)**

Present your Bill of Rights! Read it aloud with pride.

Let's talk about what you created:

- Which right that you wrote is the most important to you? Why?
- How does your Bill of Rights make life better or fairer for the people in your group?
- How was this project similar to what the founders of the United States had to do?

**Teacher's Note:** This final step assesses Ann's understanding. Her ability to justify the rights she created demonstrates that she has grasped the core concept of why a Bill of Rights is important—to protect freedoms and ensure fairness for everyone.

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### **Extension/Enrichment Idea:**

Create a poster illustrating one of the amendments from the actual U.S. Bill of Rights or one from the Mock Bill of Rights you created. Use drawings, magazine clippings, or digital tools to show what that right looks like in action.