

# Congress and Civility by Design

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## Worksheet 1 Answer Key: Studying Actions of the House of Representatives, April 6, 1789

### Instructions:

Using the following table, list the 6 actions undertaken by the House of Representatives. The first column contains the word from the Journal indicating the start of the action, for example, "Ordered." Complete the table by filling the blank column with a brief summary of the action written in your own words.

Answer the questions by drawing from your summaries.

Action	Summary of the action in your words
<b>Ordered</b>	That Representatives be given permission to introduce a bill creating the oath that the Constitution requires members of Congress to take.
<b>Resolved</b>	That Members of the House of Representatives take this oath: "I, A B, a Representative of the United States in the Congress thereof, do solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be) in the presence of Almighty God, that I will support the Constitution of the United States. So help me God."
<b>Message Received</b>	Senator Ellsworth brings a message from the Senate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A quorum – the number of Senators required by the Constitution to take action – is present.</li><li>• A temporary President (of the Senate) has been elected to count the votes that Electors in each state had cast for President and Vice President of the U.S. as specified in the Constitution.</li><li>• The Senate is now ready for the House to join them and count the electoral votes.</li><li>• The Senate has appointed one of its members to sit at the Clerk's table to make a list of the votes, and the House is invited to appoint one or more of its members to do the same task.</li></ul>
<b>Resolved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Speaker of the House and House Members go to the Senate chamber, to count the electoral votes.</li><li>• Representatives Parker and Heister sit at the Clerk's table with the member of the Senate, and make a list of the votes as they are read.</li></ul>
<b>Ordered</b>	A message be delivered to the Senate by Representative Madison letting them know that the House agrees that the Senate should inform the winning candidates for President and Vice President.
<b>Adjournment</b>	The House agreed to meet again the next day at noon.

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## Questions

1. How many of the actions listed above reflect decisions reached by the House by majority vote?

*Five actions were decided by vote. The action not voted on was receiving a message from the Senate.*

2. Which actions show the House fulfilling Constitutional responsibilities? (Refer to a copy of the Constitution if in doubt.)

*Introducing a bill, taking an oath of office (See Article VI), counting the electoral votes with the Senate (See Article I, Section 1).*

3. How does the way these were undertaken and how they were recorded reflect the saying that “public office is a public trust”?

*The members were careful to record all their actions to document what they did on behalf of the people who elected them to office. They took a formal oath to be faithful to the public’s trust. They followed constitutional procedure in counting the electoral votes.*

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## Worksheet 2 Answer Key: Studying the U.S. Senate's Rules for Debate

### Instructions:

Study each pair of rules adopted by the Senate on April 16, 1789 and answer the questions below it. Then use your results to answer the summary questions at the end of this worksheet.

*Note: Students responses to these questions will vary, this answer key offers suggested responses as a guide.*

Rule 2: No member shall speak to another, or otherwise interrupt the business of the Senate, or read any printed paper while the journals or public papers are reading, or when any member is speaking in any debate.

Rule 3: Every member, when he speaks, shall address the chair, standing in his place, and when he has finished, shall sit down.

### **Question 1. How would these two rules help create a polite and orderly debate?**

*Senators would not display inattention or distracted behavior that might seem rude. Senators would not speak directly to one another, they each would have to wait until the other finished speaking before responding.*

### **Question 2. How would Rule 3 help prevent Senators from verbally attacking one another?**

*Not speaking directly to one another would reduce the chance that Senators would express anger directly to one another.*

Rule 4: No member shall speak more than twice in any one debate on the same day, without (permission) of the Senate.

Rule 5: When two members rise at the same time, the President (of the Senate) shall name the person to speak, but in all cases the member first rising shall speak first.

### **Question 3. How would Rule 4 cause Senators to be more careful about points they raise in debate?**

*If a Senator can only speak twice, he or she must be thoughtful in how they use their opportunity to speak.*

### **Question 4. How would Rule 5 help preserve fairness in opportunities to speak in debate?**

*This rule would make it harder for one person to dominate the debate over an issue.*

Rule 6: No motion shall be debated until the same shall be seconded.

Rule 7: When a motion shall be made and seconded, it shall be reduced to writing, if desired by the President (of the Senate) or any member, delivered in at the table, and read by the President (of the Senate), before the same shall be debated.

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## Worksheet 2 Answer Key: Studying the U.S. Senate's Rules for Debate

**Question 5. How would Rule 6 limit the number of motions that could be raised?**

*A Senator must first convince another to agree with his or her motion before it will be considered by the whole group. This would screen out ideas only one person was interested in discussing.*

**Question 6. How would Rule 7 help keep debate on topic?**

*When a debate started all the participants would know what the topic was. This would keep the debate on track.*

Rule 16: When a member shall be called to order, he shall sit down until the President (of the Senate) shall have determined whether he is in order or not; and every question of order shall be decided by the President (of the Senate), without debate; but, if there be a doubt in his mind, he may call for the sense of the Senate.

Rule 17: If a member be called to order for words spoken, the exceptionable words shall be immediately taken down in writing, that the President (of the Senate) may be better enabled to judge of the matter.

**Question 7. How would Rule 16 help control undisciplined Senators.**

*A Senator who is out of order has to obey the instruction of the President of the Senate to sit and stop talking. This would rein in Senators who crossed the bounds of Senate order. Appealing to the full Senate would allow the whole body to decide if the Senator was truly out of line and would be a balance on the power of the President of the Senate. This would preserve the equality of Senators, as the President of the Senate would have to go along with what the group said.*

**Question 8. How would Rule 17 contribute to resolving disputes over statements?**

*If the offensive words spoken in debate are immediately written down, then it will be easier to respond to exactly what was said rather than to what was thought to have been said. Avoiding misunderstandings is critical to resolving this sort of dispute in a civil fashion.*

**Summary Questions:**

1. Why do you think rules such as these would be useful and necessary for the Senate to adopt?

*The Senate is made up of two representatives of each state and all are equal. They debate the most challenging issues of the day. Having rules that allow for peaceful disagreements about serious issues while respecting each other's equal status is critical to preserving the nation and solving the great problems its leaders face.*

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## Worksheet 2 Answer Key: Studying the U.S. Senate's Rules for Debate

2. How do these rules reflect the fact that each Senator is an equal representative of a state?

*Senate rules control debate in a way that preserves the opportunity for each Senator to contribute in a fair and respectful discussion. The rules allow Senators to disagree, but within the bounds of politeness. They provide a fair way to prevent individuals from dominating discussion and a means for addressing Senators who have broken the rules.*

3. Which of these rules would make the greatest contribution to civility in the Senate?

*Students might choose any of the rules in response to this question. The most successful answer would be that which reflects understanding of the intent of the rule and is best explained.*

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## Worksheet 3 Answer Key: Reflection Questions

**Instructions:** Use the responses you recorded on Worksheets 1 & 2 to answer these questions in your small group. Be prepared to share your answers in a whole class discussion of these questions.

*Note: The answers to these questions will vary. These responses are given as a guide.*

1. How would the procedures and rules of debate have reminded the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the importance of their service to the nation?

*As a Representative or a Senator, a person acts as the representative of a group of constituents. Members of the House and Senators are not fully free to act as they wish or express their personal opinions. They have taken an oath to support the Constitution. The formality of processes and the rules of debate remind the members of Congress that they are serving the people and the nation.*

2. How would the procedures and rules of debate have helped the members of House of Representatives and the Senate Congress treat one another with the respect?

*A meeting of Congress is not an ordinary social event. Each of the participants was chosen to represent a group of constituents. They are all elevated to an equal status as representatives of the people and together given the responsibility of guiding the nation. The procedures and rules remind members of their special status and great responsibility by being more formal and restrained than the actions of everyday social life.*

3. Why was civility important to the success of Congress in its service to the nation?

*Congress tackles the most difficult issues facing the nation. Inevitably, differences of opinion will exist in the House or Senate on any of the issues of the day.*

*Members of Congress have to find ways to work with others to form majorities in support of positions in response to issues. Civility helps people work together.*

*Civility preserves an atmosphere of respect in which diverse points of view can be heard and taken seriously. This helps insure that legislation will address the needs of a widest possible range of the public.*

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## Worksheet 3 Answer Key: Reflection Questions

4. How does it benefit the Senate to continue to follow these rules of civility by design today?

*Following the rules created by the First Congress enables the Senate to debate potential controversial issues that members have deep differences over in a polite and respectful atmosphere. Following rules of civility helps remind members that, as Senators, they serve in an institution as representatives of the people of their state. Civility helps Senators put aside their personal feelings and work to do the public good.*