

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The First Amendment

Introduction:

The First Amendment is home to some of America's most important freedoms. These rights are the pillars of our republic. The Founders of our country wanted to protect the citizens from an all-powerful government. Over time, the interpretation of this amendment has changed. But the spirit of protection has remained the same.

The text of this amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Questions:

1. What year was the First Amendment ratified?
2. What five freedoms are protected by the first amendment?
3. Many of our earliest colonists left England to avoid religious persecution. Where is this seen in the text of the First Amendment?
4. Which of our five freedoms was essential to the Founders?
5. How might free speech be more valuable with a free press?
6. Explain the quote by Thomas Jefferson, "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press,..."
7. Why would the Supreme Court limit our freedom of speech? Note the Schenck case.
8. Why is it important to separate our religious and government institutions?
9. Out of the five freedoms of expression, what one do you think is the most important? Why?
10. What other freedom of expression would you include if you could rewrite the First Amendment?