



# What Does it Mean to be a United States Citizen?

By: Amanda Martin

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Social Studies  
Grades 3–5



## Introduction

Why are our rights important? What are our rights? Students will discover the important rights that are granted to American citizens and determine why they are important.

## Learning Objectives

Students will discover the important rights of the citizens of the United States. ([NSS-C.K-4.5 Roles of the Citizen](#))

## Materials Needed

- Journals/notebooks
- [Why is This Right Important? worksheet](#)

## Procedure

1. To jumpstart the lesson and capture student attention, show students [this short video](#) about America by Jack Hartmann. (Please review the video before use to ensure that it is appropriate for your students.)
2. Ask students to think about this question: What does it mean to be an American? Students may pair and share their thoughts with those around them. Allow students to brainstorm and share with partners for roughly 3 minutes. Then, ask for several students to share out. Discuss responses as a class. Feel free to elaborate on responses to enhance student learning. It would also be important to mention that there are other countries throughout the world do not enjoy the freedoms that Americans have. (Optional: The teacher may decide to compile a list of student responses on the board.)
3. Display a picture on the board asking: *What Are Rights?* Explain to the students that Americans are granted several rights. Ask students the question: What are rights? Allow a few students to share their responses to the question. Then, give students the full definition of “rights.” Rights are freedoms that are protected by laws. Name several of the most important freedoms granted to citizens of the United States: right to vote, right to bear arms, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.

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4. Students are now ready to participate in a role-playing activity. Students should be challenged to be creative and have fun. Students should be divided into groups of three or four. Each group should be given one of the rights of American citizens. Groups must act out their assigned right and perform it for the class. Give groups roughly 10 minutes to determine their plan, make a script, and practice acting it out. Then, when time is up, groups will perform their rights for one another. (Optional: Students may come up with their own role play/script, or you can create one for them.)
5. To close the lesson, students will be tasked with an assignment (see worksheet). They must draw a picture of the right that they think is the most important and explain why it is important.

## Evaluation

Student work will be evaluated through the completion of a short worksheet that requires students to draw a depiction of the right they find the most important. They must also explain why that right is of importance to American citizens.