

Qualifications for President of the United States of America

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Qualifications Specified in the United States Constitution

- The United States Constitution only lists three requirements for holding the office of President.
 - 35 years of age
 - A natural-born citizen
 - A resident of the United States for at least 14 years

Critical Thinking Exercise: Why do you think the Founders listed each of these requirements in the Constitution? What problems do you think they were worried about?

Informal Requirements for the Presidency

- Although the Constitution only lists three requirements for the presidency, the American people have had other informal expectations and requirements for who they would elect. For most of our history, the expectation was that the president would be a white male. That has changed in recent years.
- More recently, some Americans have thought that the president should be well-educated and a college graduate. Several presidents have not graduated college (most recently, Harry S. Truman). Is a college degree a reasonable expectation for a candidate for president?

Critical Thinking Exercise: What characteristics do you think a president should have? What kind of background do you think they should have? Are there any other informal, unwritten requirements that would keep the American people from electing someone president?

Ethics and Finances

- The president has always been the focus of much of the nation's attention, but modern communications have placed the president under much more scrutiny than the first men to hold the office. History notes many failed candidates who never won election because the press discovered an incident in their past.
- Ever since the Watergate scandal, an unwritten expectation has emerged that presidents would make their tax returns public. Every president except two since Richard Nixon have made their returns public.

Critical Thinking Exercise: How much of a presidential candidate's personal life should be revealed to the public? Does this discourage talented individuals from running for the office? Does the public have a valid concern to know about a president's financial dealings?

Determining qualifications for the presidency

Examine Article II of the Constitution and review what you learned in this lesson to help you complete the following chart. You might cooperate with one or more students to do so.



Duties, powers, limits

PRESIDENT

Qualifications

What are the duties of the president?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What are the powers of the president?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What are the limits on the powers of the president?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What qualifications should a person have to carry out these duties?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What qualifications should a person have to exercise these powers?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What qualifications should a person have to observe these limits to power?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

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What are the duties and powers of a President?

- Article II of the Constitution lists the duties and powers of the President.
- Work in pairs or small groups to use the chart comparing the duties and powers of the President of the United States with the qualifications.
- Critical Thinking Exercise: Do the explicit qualifications meet the duties and powers of the presidency, or should requirements about ethics and finances be added? Should limits on age be added?