

# Lesson Plan: Chief Executive

Class: U.S. Government

Unit: Executive Branch

**Unit Essential Question:**

What is the role of the Executive Branch in the Government of the United States of America?

**Guiding Question(s):**

- What duties/powers are tied to the President's role as Chief Executive?

**Objective(s):**

- Students will be able to describe the responsibilities tied to the President's role of Chief Executive
- Students will be able to differentiate between an executive order and a law.

**Teacher Background information:**

The President of the United States serves as Chief Executive of the Nation. The powers tied to this responsibility originate in Article II of the United States Constitution. The powers and responsibilities of the Chief Executive are the delivery of the State of the Union Address, the nomination of political appointees, and control of executive agencies. A crucial tool in the President's toolbox is the executive order or E.O. that allows the President to direct executive agencies without Congressional interference. However, the E.O. is not the same as a law. E.O.'s are not as long lived as laws and can be overturned by the next administration with the swish of a pen. Further, E.O.'s are limited in their scope as they can only address matters that fall within the purview of the President's powers.

**Materials needed:**

- [Google Slides presentation](#)
- [E.O. worksheets \(one per student\)](#)
- Projector
- Device capable of casting slideshow to projector
- Timer

**“Do Now”/ Hook/ Opening activity:**

- Open with review: “last class we talked about the four roles of the President of the United States. What are they?”
  - Write the roles on the board and refresh the student’s memory by playing a portion of these video clips and asking the students which of the clips shows the President acting as Chief Executive.
    - [Clip #1](#)
    - [Clip #2](#)
    - [Clip #3](#)
- Orient students to focus on Chief Executive, the topic of today’s lesson.
- Ask students to recall the powers tied to the President’s role as Chief Executive (that were previously discussed in lesson #1) and write them on the board. These should be:
  - State of the Union
  - Nominations of political appointees
  - Control of executive agencies/the cabinet

**Activities:**

- 1) Work into a miniature lecture (5 minutes) and briefly discuss the State of the Union Address, nomination of political appointees, and the executive cabinet/executive agencies.
- 2) Present students with Executive Order [#13190](#) and discuss what exactly an Executive Order is, and its parts.
  - a) Discuss the highlighted portions of the EO and their correlation with the five parts of an executive order:
    - i) Green: Heading
    - ii) Blue: Title
    - iii) Pink: Introduction
    - iv) Yellow: Body
    - v) Purple: Signature
  - b) Have students read the introduction (pink) aloud
    - i) “Where does President Clinton’s authority for this EO originate?”
  - c) Have students read Section 1 aloud
    - i) “Why does President Clinton feel that this EO needs to be written?”
- 3) Present students with a fictitious scenario in which they are President of the United States and a question has arisen in regards to weekend homework for high school students. Ask students to pen their own executive order to address the question “How much homework should high school students be given over the weekend?”
  - a) Divide students into groups of no more than four but at least two and give them ten minutes to write their (very simple) Executive Order on the E.O. Worksheet provided.
  - b) Spend ten minutes visiting the groups and ensuring that students are on task and writing.
  - c) After, discuss limitations to executive orders including the difference between an executive order and a law.

*Add on Activity (time permitting) or Homework Assignment:*

Assign students to research the executive cabinet by picking a cabinet position and writing a short paragraph profile of the position's duties and responsibilities. The student should conduct their research on the cabinet member's .GOV website.

**Closing:**

- “Based on these powers and responsibilities under Chief Executive, take five minutes and try to write a one sentence definition of this role.”
  - Have each student read their definition aloud and catch key words from them, write on the board.
  - Create a composite definition for the class to agree upon, write on the board.
- Preview next lesson on “Commander in Chief”

**Assessment:**

Use the worksheet the students completed during the E.O. activity and score for participation.

**Modifications:**

- Ensure that students are grouped heterogeneously by skill with at least one strong reader and one strong writer per group.
- Use easy to read fonts on the Executive Order worksheet.

**Resources:**

- [Text of the Constitution](#)
- [Powers of the Presidency Portal, Chief Executive Module from the Clinton Presidential Library](#)
- [What is an Executive Order? American Bar Association](#)
- [Executive Order 13190](#)
- [Markup Version of E.O. 13190](#)