1 COMMITTEES
- Not mentioned in the Constitution, but have been a fixture in Congress since the first meeting.
- Smaller groups can tackle issues and draft more precise laws than the entire House and Senate.
- Allow for expertise and make moving legislation manageable.

2 STANDING COMMITTEES
- Permanent and cover a particular subject.
- Chaired by a senior experienced member in the majority party. The vice chair is the senior member of the minority party.
- The majority party hold the majority seats on each committee and therefore controls the legislation.
- Before the entire House or Senate votes, a bill must first clear committee with a majority vote.
- The Senate’s committees often hold confirmation hearing for presidential appointments.

3 JOINT COMMITTEES
- Most standing committees are in one chamber, but a few permanent joint committees exist to unite members from the House and the Senate.
- Such as the one to manage the Library of Congress and the Joint Committee on Taxation.

4 SELECT COMMITTEES
- Put together periodically for some particular, short-lived reason.
- Common when investigation of scandal, such as Watergate or the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s.
- These groups investigate issues to determine if further congressional action is needed.
- Should Congress regulate seatbelts? Should Congress regulate and intervene in MLB to prevent steroid abuse?
- Can be exclusive to one house, or combine members from both houses.
CONFERENCE COMMITTEES
- Created temporarily to iron out differences on bills that passed each house, but in slightly different forms.
- When two similar bills pass each house, a compromise can be reached, and members from both houses meet for a markup session.
- This is a process by which the bill is amended.
- The final draft must pass both houses and receive the president's signature to become a law.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
- Every representative is a member.
- A state of operation in which the House rules are relaxed to speed business.
- No role call voting took place during the Committee of the Whole until 1971.
- The nonvoting delegates from U.S. territories can vote.
- Only 100 members must be present to act, but a full quorum must be present to vote the final passage of a bill.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
- Representatives and Senators seek particular committee appointments because they likely arrive to Congress with an expertise in a specific field, or they are from a state/district that has a high interest in certain congressional matters.
- The parties put forth certain members for committee assignments, but ultimately each full house votes to approve committee membership.
- The Democrats' Policy and Steering Committee and the Republicans' Committee on Committees both recommend committee assignments.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT
- Congress, through committees, conducts congressional oversight to ensure executive branch agencies, such as the FBI and IRS, are carrying out the policy or program as Congress intended.
- When corruption or less than adequate job is suspected, committees call agency directors to testify.
- Other hearings may simply be fact-finding exchanges between
lawmakers and cabinet secretaries or agency directors about funding, efficiency, or just general updates.

9 COMMITTEE REFORMS

- The committee chairman absorbed much of the Speaker's power.
- Gatekeepers of legislation for two generations.
- For decades, southern conservatives prevented civil rights proposals.
- The seniority rule made it difficult to unseat autocratic chairpersons who bottled up legislation that did not favor.
- Seniority has gradually lost importance
- Finally Congress addressed the problems and required committee role call votes and Committee of the Whole votes to be made public.