

Powers of the President

The President of the United States has a very demanding job. The Constitution outlines many of the duties of a president, but modern society and technology have also changed and expanded the expectations placed on a president in some ways. These are seven of the major areas of responsibility that presidents manage.

1. Head of State

This role requires a president to be an inspiring example for the American people. In some nations, the head of state is a king or a queen who wears a crown on special occasions, celebrates national holidays, and stands for the highest values and ideals of the country. As the American Head of State, the president is a living symbol of the nation. It is considered a great honor for any citizen to shake the president's hand.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Awarding medals to the winners of college scholarships
- Congratulating astronauts on their journey into space
- Greeting visitors to the White House
- Making a patriotic speech on the Fourth of July

2. Chief Executive

The president is the "boss" for millions of government workers in the Executive Branch. He or she decides how the laws of the United States are to be enforced and chooses officials and advisors to help run the Executive Branch.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Appointing someone to serve as head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
- Holding a Cabinet meeting to discuss government business
- Reading reports about problems of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

3. Chief Diplomat

The president decides what American diplomats and ambassadors shall say to foreign governments. With the help of advisors, the president makes the foreign policy of the United States.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Traveling to London to meet with British leaders
- Entertaining Japanese diplomats in the White House
- Writing a message or a letter to the leaders of Russia

4. Commander-In-Chief

The president is in charge of the U.S. Armed Forces: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps. The president decides where troops shall be stationed, where ships shall be sent, and how weapons shall be used. All military generals and admirals take their orders from the president.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Inspecting a Navy yard
- Deciding, in wartime, whether to bomb foreign cities
- Calling out troops to stop a riot at the request of the state's legislature or governor

5. Legislative Leader

Only Congress has the actual power to make laws, but the Constitution gives the president power to influence Congress in its lawmaking. Presidents may urge Congress to pass new laws or veto bills that they do not favor.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Inviting members of Congress to lunch in the White House
- Signing a bill of Congress
- Making a speech in Congress

6. Party Leader

In this role, the president helps members of his or her political party get elected or appointed to office. The president campaigns for those members who have supported his or her policies. At the end of a term, the president may campaign for reelection.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Choosing leading party members to serve in the Cabinet
- Traveling to California to speak at a rally for a party nominee to the U.S. Senate

7. Economic Leader

In this role, the president is concerned with such things as unemployment, high prices, taxes, business profits, and the general prosperity of the country. The president does not control the economy, but is expected to help it run smoothly.

Examples of Responsibilities:

- Meeting with economic advisors to discuss ways to reduce unemployment
- Meeting with business and labor leaders to discuss their needs and problems

Adapted from *The Presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court*, Scholastic Inc., 1989.