

The Executive Branch: What Are the Executive Departments?

The United States Constitution divides the federal government into three equally important parts: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The executive branch includes the president, vice president, executive departments, and many other agencies that help to administer the laws of the United States. The 15 executive departments do important work. Almost 60% of people working for the federal government are a part of these departments.

Read about the main responsibility of each department. Then, answer the questions on page 2.

	Department of Agriculture	ensuring food safety and overseeing food assistance programs		Department of the Interior	overseeing the nation's land and other natural resources
	Department of Commerce	helping U.S. businesses and encouraging economic growth		Department of Justice	enforcing and prosecuting the nation's laws
	Department of Defense	protecting the nation and managing the armed forces		Department of Labor	helping workers and improving working conditions
	Department of Education	providing federal aid to schools and conducting educational research		Department of State	managing the nation's relationships with other countries
	Department of Energy	developing and protecting the nation's energy resources		Department of Transportation	regulating and maintaining highways, mass transit, railroads, and air travel
	Department of Health and Human Services	making policies about health and medicine and running programs such as Medicare		Department of the Treasury	managing the nation's money and finances
	Department of Homeland Security	responding to terrorist threats and providing border security		Department of Veterans Affairs	providing benefits, pensions, and medical programs to veterans
	Department of Housing and Urban Development	managing programs that help Americans find affordable housing			

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Fill in the blanks to identify the correct department. Each department will be used exactly once.

1. The Department of _____ would provide funding for new apartment buildings in U.S. cities where housing is expensive.
2. The Department of _____ is responsible for sending military forces around the world to protect the United States.
3. The Department of _____ would conduct studies on increasing solar and wind resources to fuel the nation's power grid.
4. The Department of _____ is responsible for repairing old or damaged highways and bridges.
5. The Department of _____ would argue court cases against people, states, and businesses who violate federal civil rights laws.
6. The Department of _____ is responsible for printing money, collecting taxes, and managing the public debt.
7. The Department of _____ would enforce safety procedures in the event of an outbreak of the salmonella bacteria in vegetables grown in the United States.
8. The Department of _____ would respond to threats of cyberterrorism or security issues along U.S. borders.
9. The Department of _____ would provide programs to help soldiers who were wounded during military service.
10. The Department of _____ is responsible for selecting ambassadors to develop relationships with governments around the world.
11. The Department of _____ is responsible for overseeing national park lands and protecting endangered animals.
12. The Department of _____ would organize the government's response during a pandemic or other medical emergency.
13. The Department of _____ would be involved in collecting data on the number of new jobs that are created every month.
14. The Department of _____ is responsible for creating new job safety policies to prevent workers from being injured in U.S. factories.
15. The Department of _____ is responsible for researching how American schools are performing and sharing this information with Congress, educators, and the general public.

Bonus activity: The leaders of the 15 executive departments create government policies and serve in the president's Cabinet. Research the current leaders of the executive departments. Write each leader's name under the department name on page one.