Checks and Balances

The word “check” has many meanings. One of them is to limit, or stop.
The term “checks and balances” refers to the limits put on each branch of government so that one branch cannot overpower another branch.
The writers of the Constitution “checked” the powers they gave each branch of government. The writers wanted the government’s power to be “balanced,” or evenly shared, among the three branches.

They thought checks and balances would make government safe and secure. They did not want one branch to threaten our freedom.

Voting power

Three of the Constitution also checked the power of government by setting elections. Members of Congress and the president are elected for limited terms. If voters want a change, they can go to the polls and vote officials out of office.

Article II

Article II of the Constitution is about the executive branch (the president). It has four sections.

Section 1

The executive power shall be vested in a president:

• elected for a term of four years,
• there should also be a vice president chosen for the same term.

The section explains how the president and vice president will be elected. (This changed in 1804 with the 12th Amendment.) The president will:

• be a natural-born citizen.
• be at least 35 years old.
• have lived in the United States for 14 years. If the president dies, the vice president is the successor, or replacement.

CITIZEN, COMMANDER, BRANCH, CHECK, ARTICLE, BALANCE, OATH, SUCCESSOR, TERM, VETO, VICE, VOTING.