



Written by [Mary Koch](#) on November 25, 2008

Americans Score an “F” in American History

The 2008 report asked 2,508 American adults from various backgrounds 33 civics questions (to take quiz, [click here](#)). Shockingly, 71 percent of adults surveyed failed the test with an overall average score of only 49 percent. In fact, only 272 of those surveyed even made a passing grade of a “C” or better.

The questions asked in the survey are not difficult, and many should be answered without much thought or hesitation. Some of the questions asked in the quiz include identifying the three branches of government, understanding the contents of the Bill of Rights and who has the power to declare war, and defining a free market system.

The report’s summary begs the obvious question, “Do Americans possess the knowledge necessary to participate wisely in the affairs of the nation?” If the overall average of the survey was not eye-opening enough, one of the findings in the report indicate that our elected officials know even less about American civics than the general public. The elected officials scored an average of 44% ... 4 percentage points lower than the average quiz taker. A November 20 ISI [press release](#) stated: “There is an epidemic of economic, political, and historical ignorance in our country,” says Josiah Bunting, III, Chairman of ISI’s National Civic Literacy Board. “It is disturbing enough that the general public failed ISI’s civic literacy test, but when you consider the even more dismal scores of elected officials, you have to be concerned. How can political leaders make informed decisions if they don’t understand the American experience? Colleges can, and should, play an important role in curing this national epidemic of ignorance.”





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Don't let the title fool you. Engaging in frequent conversations about politics and other public affairs, reading history books, or even participating in community activities may just make you more knowledgeable about American civics than elected officials, or those with college degrees alone.

If Americans do not become more knowledgeable about their historical roots, how can we preserve our wonderful Constitutional Republic for future generations to enjoy? Americans must begin to take an active interest in American civics, and promote a stronger emphasis in American history and heritage in our educational institutions, if we wish to reverse this gradual decline of understanding basic American principles.

Interested in learning your grade in American civics? [Take the online quiz](#) and see where you rate in the national average. (This writer scored 82 percent).

Good luck!

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