

# About the U.S. Capitol

## VOCABULARY WORDS

- **Congress:** The branch of the U.S. government that makes laws. Citizens elect people to serve in the two parts that make up Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- **Sandstone:** A type of rock made of sand and quartz, typically yellow or red in color.
- **Cast Iron:** A hard metal made of iron and carbon, which can be molded into different shapes.
- **Marble:** A hard type of limestone rock that is typically white in color and commonly used for sculpture.



U.S. Capitol

## What is the Capitol?

The U.S. Capitol is one of the most important buildings in the United States. It is where **Congress** meets to make laws for our country. The building is known as the “The People’s House” because members of Congress represent the American people.

## Who built the U.S. Capitol?

Construction began in 1793 when George Washington laid the cornerstone. The U.S. Capitol grew in size over time, and enslaved workers built a significant portion. After slavery was abolished in Washington, D.C., in 1862, the remainder of the U.S. Capitol was built by paid workers hired by Congress.



Watercolor View of the Capitol, by William Birch, circa 1800

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



Construction of the Capitol  
Extension and Dome, circa 1861

## How was the U.S. Capitol built?

**Sandstone** was the material originally used to build the Capitol. It was brought to Washington, D.C., from Virginia and Maryland. Other types of stone, such as marble and granite, were also used as the building was expanded. The large dome in the center is made out of **cast iron** that was painted to look like **marble**.

## Why does the Capitol have a dome and columns?

The design of the Capitol was inspired by Greek and Roman classical architecture, which included those elements. The nation’s founders were influenced by the ideas and laws of those ancient civilizations. That style can be found in many American government buildings.



The Pantheon, Rome, A.D. 117-268

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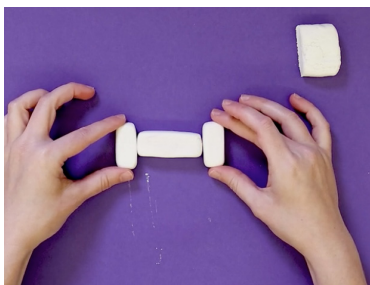
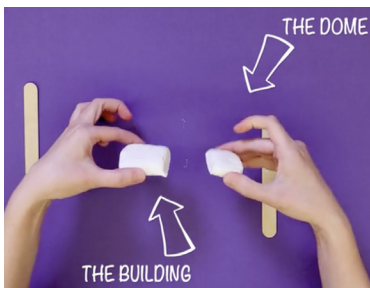
# Build a U.S. Capitol Model

BUILD A CAPITOL MODEL



## YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 popsicle sticks
- Modeling clay



1. **Divide your soft modeling material into two pieces**, one piece larger than the other. Save the smaller piece for later.
2. **Cut the larger piece into three sections**, one larger than the other two. Shape each piece into rectangles. Use the rectangles to make a capital “I” shape.
3. **Take the smaller piece of modeling clay** that was set aside during Step 1 and divide it into four sections, making each piece slightly smaller than the last. Roll three pieces into balls and save the fourth piece for Step 6.
4. **Take the two largest balls**, flatten each one, and stack on top of each other. This will make the bottom section of the Dome.
5. **Press on one side of the smallest ball** to make it flat and leave the other side rounded. It should look like half a sphere. This will be the top section of the Dome.
6. **Take the leftover piece** from Step 3 and pinch off five pieces.
7. **Roll three of the pieces into long thin strings**. Wrap those strings around the three levels of the dome.
8. **Shape one piece into a small point** with a flat bottom, making an ice cream cone shape. Place it on top of your dome, point side up.
9. **Use your popsicle stick to create vertical lines** on the front of your Capitol building to look like columns.
10. **Shape your final piece** of soft modeling material into a square to create the front steps of the Capitol.
11. **Congratulations! You’ve built a Capitol Model.**

