Hello,
I'm Penny the Panther!
My friends, Mia the Messenger and Noah the Page, and I will guide you through Florida’s House of Representatives!

To get started, find your county on the map, then visit [www.MyFloridaHouse.gov](http://www.MyFloridaHouse.gov) and see who represents your district of Florida.
Each year, the Florida House of Representatives gives students a unique opportunity to participate in the legislative process through the Page and Messenger Program. Students aged 13-18 from around the state are chosen to serve in the Florida House to see their state government in action. For more information about the Page and Messenger Program, let’s hear from Mia and Noah.

Hi, I’m Mia the Messenger! Messengers are students between the ages of 15-18. My typical day consists of running errands throughout the Capitol Complex, including picking up and delivering materials to representatives and legislative offices. My days are very busy. Now, here’s Noah to tell you about being a Page.

Thanks, Mia! I’m Noah and I’m a Page! Pages are students between the ages of 13-14. I get to serve in the House Chamber when the House is in legislative session. I assist the representatives on the floor. The opportunity to create a bill and learn the steps to get it passed is my favorite activity.

Each representative has an opportunity to sponsor one Page and one Messenger during each regular legislative session. Pages and Messengers serve at the Capitol for one week and receive service credit hours. Your application requires three signatures: the representative who is sponsoring you, your parent/guardian, and the principal of your school. For more information about the Page and Messenger Program, contact your representative or visit our website at www.MyFloridaHouse.gov

**Q&A:** How many signatures are needed for a Page and Messenger’s application?

**Answer:** 3 signatures are needed: 1 from the representative, 1 from a parent/guardian, and 1 from the principal.
The House of Representatives

Speaker of the House
The Speaker is a constitutional officer who leads the House for a two-year term, manages its operations, and presides over its legislative sessions. The Speaker is elected by his or her fellow representatives.

Speaker pro tempore
The Speaker pro tempore is also elected by his or her fellow representatives. In the absence of the Speaker, the Speaker pro tempore may exercise the authority of the Speaker.

Non-Member Officers
Clerk of the House
The Clerk of the House is a constitutional officer who maintains an accurate record of the actions of the Florida House.

Sergeant at Arms
The Sergeant at Arms is a constitutional officer who is in charge of maintaining order in the House Chamber and in committee rooms. The Sergeant also maintains the House’s property.

The Senate

President
The President is a constitutional officer and the highest held position in the Senate. He or she is designated as President by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the Senate.

President Pro Tempore
The President Pro Tempore is chosen by the President and although he or she may preside in the Chamber during the absence of the President, a different senator could also be chosen to preside.

Non-Member Officers
Secretary of the Senate
The Secretary of the Senate is a constitutional officer who maintains an accurate record of the actions of the Florida Senate.

Sergeant at Arms
The Sergeant at Arms is a constitutional officer who is in charge of maintaining order in the Senate Chamber and in committee rooms. The Sergeant also maintains the Senate’s property.

Q&A: Who chooses the President Pro Tempore?
Answer: The President pro tempore is chosen by the Senate President.
Get Involved!

Being a Page or Messenger is a great way to witness firsthand how our government works. Here are some other ways to get involved before you are old enough to vote.

Become an advocate for a cause!

1. Write or email your legislator
2. Go to town hall meetings
3. Visit the Capitol
4. Watch the Legislature on TheFloridaChannel.org

To find out more information, please visit the House website at www.MyFloridaHouse.gov or download the free FL House app at the following web addresses:


Q&A: Where can you watch the Legislature?

Answer: The Legislature can be watched on your computer or mobile device at www.TheFloridaChannel.org.
5 How an Idea

Concerned Citizens suggest legislation.

Representative submits the idea to bill drafting.

Bill Drafting writes the bill so the representative can file it.

Committees & Subcommittees (Members of the Florida House of Representatives) may discuss the bill, amend the bill, hear public testimony, and vote on the bill.

Speaker of the House refers the bill to committees, subcommittees, or the House Calendar.

Clerk’s Office “reads” (publishes) the bill the first time in the Journal.

Q&A: Which group may make changes to the bill?

Answer: Committees and Subcommittees may make changes to the bill.
The Bill is placed on the House Calendar.

Rules & Policy Committee places the bill on the Special Order Calendar to be considered for action in the House Chamber.

House Chamber reads the bill a second & third time—this is when the members may amend, debate and vote on the bill.

The House sends the bill to the Senate with a message stating the House passed the bill and would like for the Senate to do the same.

The Senate takes the bill through a similar process, passes the companion bill, and returns the bill with a message to the House.

The Governor receives the bill when it passes both houses. He can (1) sign the bill, (2) allow it to become law without a signature, or (3) veto (reject) the bill.

Law!

Q&A: Who has the ability to allow the bill to become law without a signature? 
Answer: The Governor can sign the bill, allowing it to become law without a signature, or veto the bill.
3 Branches of Government

**Legislative Branch**

The Legislature is divided into two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 120 Representatives and 40 Senators.

Each year, the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate meet in Tallahassee to make laws.

**Executive Branch**

The Governor of Florida is the chief executive of the state. He leads the executive branch of government. When a bill comes to the Governor’s desk, there are three actions:

1. The bill can be signed into law.
2. The bill can be allowed to become law without a signature.
3. The bill can be vetoed (rejected).

If the Governor vetoes the bill, a two-thirds vote of the membership in both the House and Senate can override the veto.

**Judicial Branch**

The highest court in our state is the Florida Supreme Court. There is a Chief Justice who serves as the highest ranking member of the Supreme Court with six other justices, making a total of seven justices.

The Supreme Court makes sure that laws are constitutional, meaning that the laws of the state must adhere to the Constitution of the State of Florida.

**Q&A:** How many members are in the House of Representatives?

**Answer:** There are 120 members of the House of Representatives.
Florida's first Capitol building was a small log cabin built in 1824. Tallahassee was chosen as the Capitol site because it was the midpoint between the existing government centers in St. Augustine and Pensacola.

A two-story masonry building was built in 1826. The plan was for this building to serve as a wing of a larger structure to be built in the future.

As Florida grew, so did the need for a larger Capitol. In 1845, a brick Capitol building was completed. Today, this structure remains the core of the Old Capitol.

In 1891, the Capitol building was expanded to accommodate a growing need to serve the people throughout our growing state. Major alterations were made in 1902 when two wings and a dome were added to the Old Capitol.

In 1977, the new Capitol was completed. The new Capitol Complex included House and Senate chambers and a 22-story executive office building. Today, the Historic Capitol (Old Capitol) is open to the public as a museum of Florida's government history.

**Q&A**: What is the **Historic Capitol** used as today?

**Answer**: The Historic Capitol building houses a museum of Florida's government history.
The phrase “5 Flags Over Florida” refers to the five nations that exerted sovereignty over all or parts of Florida at various times in its history: Spain, France, Great Britain, the Confederate States of America, and the United States of America. Numerous other unofficial flags have also been flown in Florida during the course of its history.

Spain

- **When Ponce de Leon** landed in Florida, Spain did not have an official national flag, so it used the Castle and Lion flag of the King. This is considered Florida’s first flag.
- The Burgundian Saltire, or Cross of Burgundy, represented the first Spanish occupation of Florida after their defeat of the French in 1565.
- Spain regained control of Florida from the British in 1784. Spain formally ceded Florida to the United States in 1821.

France

- The French flag flew over the short-lived settlement of Fort Caroline near present-day Jacksonville.

Great Britain

- Great Britain gained control of Florida from Spain in exchange for Havana, Cuba, as part of the treaty to end the French and Indian War. Florida was then split into two parts: East Florida, with its capital in St. Augustine, and West Florida, with its capital in Pensacola.
- The first national flag was hoisted above the Capitol on the day Florida ratified the Constitution of the Confederate States of America in April 1861.

Q&A: Which flag flew over Fort Caroline near Jacksonville?

**Answer:** The French flag flew over Fort Caroline from 1564 to 1565.
Symbols of Florida

State Marine Mammal: Manatee, 1975
State Reptile: American Alligator, 1987
State Butterfly: Zebra Longwing, 1996
State Gem: Moonstone, 1970
State Saltwater Mammal: Dolphin, 1975
State Freshwater Fish: Largemouth Bass, 1975
State Animal: Florida Panther, 1982
State Saltwater Fish: Sailfish, 1975
State Tree: Sabal Palm, 1953
State Bird: Mockingbird, 1927
State Wildflower: Coreopsis, 1991
State Shell: Horse Conch, 1969
State Flower: Orange Blossom, 1909
State Stone: Agatized Coral, 1979
State Soil: Myakka Fine Sand, 1989
State Song: “The Swannee River,” 1913
State Play: “Cross and Sword,” 1973
State Pie: Key Lime Pie, 2006
State Fruit: Orange, 2005

Q&A: What is the state song of Florida?

Answer: The state song of Florida is “The Swannee River” written by Stephen Foster in 1851.
Spot the Differences

Circle the differences between the two seals. Check your answers at the bottom.
Word Search

WORD BANK
CAPITOL
CAPITAL
DEMOCRAT
EXECUTIVE
FLORIDA
GOVERNOR
JUDICIAL
JUSTICE
LEGISLATURE
MEMBER
RECYCLE
REPRESENTATIVE
REPUBLICAN
SENIOR
SESSION
SUPREME COURT
TALLAHASSEE
VETO
The state animal of Florida is the **kangaroo**. 

There are **4** branches of government. 

The French flag that flew over Florida in 1564 has **3** colors. 

**Orange** is the state fruit of Florida. 

The state capital of Florida is **Miami**. 

Florida is known as the **sunshine** state. 

There are **120** counties in Florida. 

The Speaker can veto a **house bill**.
Use this page to write down your daily actions and what you learn about the Florida House of Representatives.