

Free Speech and the Pledge

In 2001, the Wisconsin state legislature decided that it was desirable to have all Wisconsin public school students say the pledge of allegiance each day in school. And yet, according to the [First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States](#), the government cannot abridge (shorten or put limits on) a citizen's right to speak freely. So while our school offers us the opportunity each day to say the pledge, each student [has the right](#) to decide if he or she will say it.

Speaking freely means to say what we believe. It does not, as some have interpreted it, give us the right to say whatever we want whenever we want. Some types of speech are not protected under the constitution. For example, hate speech and speech that incites violence or riots are not protected.

Also, it is important that we do not take this freedom lightly. In many countries, citizens are beaten, jailed, or even killed for speaking against the government or for saying something the government doesn't agree with.

We should make a choice consciously. We should know why we say or don't say the pledge of allegiance. But first we should understand exactly what we are saying.