http://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm

Original Text	Explanation
Section 8	
The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;	Section 8 begins the enumerated powers of the federal government delegated to Congress. The first is the power to tax and to spend the money raised by taxes, to provide for the nation's defense and general welfare. This section was supplemented by the 16th amendment, which permitted Congress to levy an income tax.
To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;	Congress can borrow money through the issuance of bonds and other means. When it borrows money, the United States creates a binding obligation to repay the debt and cannot repudiate it.
To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;	The "commerce clause" is one of the most far-reaching grants of power to Congress. Interstate commerce covers all movement of people and things across state lines, and every form of communication and transportation. The commerce clause has permitted a wide variety of federal laws, from the regulation of business to outlawing of racial segregation. The "Indian commerce clause" has become the main source of power for congressional legislation dealing with Native Americans.
To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;	Acts of Congress define the requirements by which immigrants can become citizens. Only the federal government, not the states, can determine who becomes a citizen. Bankruptcy laws make provisions for individuals or corporations that fail to pay their debts.
To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures; To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;	These clauses permit Congress to coin money and to issue paper currency. By extension, under its ability to enact laws "necessary and proper" to carry out these powers (as stated at the end of Article 1, Section 8), Congress created the Federal Reserve System to regulate the nation's monetary supply.
To establish Post Offices and post Roads;	The postal powers embrace all measures necessary to establish the system and to insure the safe and speedy transit and prompt delivery of the mails. Congress may also punish those who use the mails for unlawful purposes.
To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;	Copyright and patent protection of authors and inventors are authorized by this clause, although it uses neither word.
To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;	The Constitution provides only for a Supreme Court, and left it to Congress to create lower ("inferior") courts, and to set their jurisdictions and duties.
To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;	Every sovereign nation possesses these powers, and Congress has acted under this authority from the beginning.
To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;	The "war powers" are defined here and in Article 2, Section 2. Congress declares war, while the president wages war. However, presidents have

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;

To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;—And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

committed U.S. forces leading to conflict without congressional declaration of war in Korea, Vietnam, and other places, provoking national argument over the meaning of these powers. Congress' control of funding the military provides another check on the executive branch.

Under these provisions, the right of the states to maintain a militia, including what is now the National Guard, is always subordinate to the power of Congress. In 1795 Congress first gave the president authority to call out the militia to suppress insurrections. Presidents employed this power to enforce federal law during desegregation disputes during the 1950s, and later during the civil disturbances in various cities during the 1960s

This clause enables Congress to govern the District of Columbia. Congress has now delegated that power to a locally elected government, subject to federal oversight. Congress also governs forts, arsenals, and other places obtained from the states for the federal government's purposes.

The "elastic clause" enlarges legislative power by enabling Congress to use any means it thinks reasonable to put these powers into action. This clause also authorizes Congress to enact legislation necessary to carry out the powers of the other branches, for example to organize and reorganize the executive branch.