**Political System of Great Britain**

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a constitutional monarchy. It means that the sovereign reigns but does not rule.

Britain does not have a written constitution, but a set of laws.

Parliament is the most important authority in Britain. Technically Parliament is made up of three parts: the Monarch, the House of Lords; and the House of Commons. In reality the House of Commons is the only one of the three which has true power.

The monarch serves formally as head of state. But the monarch is expected to be politically neutral and should not make political decisions.

The present sovereign is Queen Elizabeth II. She was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1953.

The House of Commons consists of Members of Parliament. There are 650 of them in the House of Commons. They are elected by secret ballot. General elections are held every five years. The country is divided into 650 constituencies. All citizens, aged 18 and registered in a constituency, have the right to vote. But voting is not compulsory in Britain. Only persons convicted of corrupt and certain mentally ill patients don't take part in voting.

There are few political parties in Britain thanks to the British electoral system. The main ones are: the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal / Social Democratic Alliance.

Each political party puts up one candidate for each constituency. The one who wins the most votes is elected MP for that area.

The party which wins the most seats in Parliament forms the Government. Its leader becomes the Prime Minister. His first job is to choose his Cabinet. The Prime Minister usually takes policy decisions with the agreement of the Cabinet.

The functions of the House of Commons are legislation and scrutiny of government activities. The House of Commons is presided over by the Speaker. The Speaker is appointed by the Government.

The House of Lords comprises about 1,200 peers. It is presided by the Lord Chancellor. The House of Lords has no real power. It acts rather as an advisory council.  
It's in the House of Commons that new bills are introduced and debated. If the majority of the members are in favour of a bill, it goes to the House of Lords to be debated. The House of Lords has the right to reject a new bill twice.

But after two rejections they are obliged to accept it. And finally a bill goes to the monarch to be signed. Only then it becomes law.

Parliament is responsible for British national policy. Local governments are responsible for organizing of education, police

The [British Monarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy_of_the_United_Kingdom), currently [Queen Elizabeth II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II), is the Chief of State of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). Though she takes little direct part in government, the Crown remains the fount in which ultimate executive power over Government lies. These powers are known as [Royal Prerogative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Prerogative) and can be used for a vast amount of things, such as the issue or withdrawal of passports, to the dismissal of the Prime Minister or even the Declaration of War. The powers are delegated from the Monarch personally, in the name of the Crown, and can be handed to various ministers, or other Officers of the Crown, and can purposely bypass the consent of Parliament.

The head of [Her Majesty's Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom); the [Prime Minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom), also has weekly meetings with the sovereign, where she may express her feelings, warn, or advise the Prime Minister in the Government's work.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_United_Kingdom#cite_note-2)

According to the uncodified constitution of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), the monarch has the following powers

**The United Kingdom Government**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Coat_of_Arms_of_the_United_Kingdom_(HM_Government).svg)

Arms of the British Government (a variation of the [Royal Arms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_coat_of_arms_of_the_United_Kingdom))

The monarch appoints a [Prime Minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom) as the head of [Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Her_Majesty%27s_Government_in_the_United_Kingdom), guided by the strict convention that the Prime Minister should be the member of the House of Commons most likely to be able to form a Government with the support of that House. In practice, this means that the leader of the [political party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party) with an absolute majority of seats in the House of Commons is chosen to be the Prime Minister. If no party has an absolute majority, the leader of the largest party is given the first opportunity to form a coalition. The Prime Minister then selects the other [Ministers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_(government)) which make up the Government and act as political heads of the various [Government Departments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_(government_department)). About twenty of the most senior government ministers make up the [Cabinet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_the_United_Kingdom) and approximately 100 ministers in total comprise the government. In accordance with [constitutional convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_convention_(political_custom)), all ministers within the government are either [Members of Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Members_of_Parliament) or [peers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peerage) in the [House of Lords](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Lords).

As in some other [parliamentary systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system) of government (especially those based upon the [Westminster System](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_System)), the executive (called "the government") is drawn from and is answerable to Parliament - a successful [vote of no confidence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_of_No_Confidence) will force the government either to resign or to seek a [parliamentary dissolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissolution_of_parliament) and a [general election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_elections). In practice, members of parliament of all major parties are strictly controlled by [whips](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whip_(politics)) who try to ensure they vote according to party policy. If the government has a large majority, then they are very unlikely to lose enough votes to be unable to pass legislation.

The Prime Minister is the most senior minister in the Cabinet. They are responsible for chairing Cabinet meetings, selecting Cabinet ministers (and all other positions in Her Majesty's government), and formulating government policy. The Prime Minister is the de facto leader of the UK government; since they exercise executive functions that are nominally vested in the sovereign (by way of the Royal Prerogatives). Historically, the British monarch was the sole source of executive powers in the government. However, following the rule of the Hanoverian monarchs, an arrangement of a "Prime Minister" chairing and leading the Cabinet began to emerge. Over time, this arrangement became the effective executive branch of government, as it assumed the day-to-day functioning of the British government away from the sovereign.

Theoretically, the Prime Minister is *primus inter pares* ( Latin for "first among equals") among their Cabinet colleagues. While the Prime Minister is the senior Cabinet Minister, they are theoretically bound to make executive decisions in a collective fashion with the other Cabinet ministers. The Cabinet, along with the PM, consists of Secretaries of State from the various government departments, the [Lord High Chancellor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_High_Chancellor), the [Lord Privy Seal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Privy_Seal), the [President of the Board of Trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_Board_of_Trade), the [Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chancellor_of_the_Duchy_of_Lancaster) and [Ministers without portfolio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_without_portfolio). Cabinet meetings are typically held weekly, while Parliament is in session.

#### Government departments and the Civil Service

The Government of the United Kingdom contains a number of [ministries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_(government_department)) known mainly, though not exclusively as departments, e.g., [Department for Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_for_Education). These are politically led by a [Government Minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_(government)) who is often a [Secretary of State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secretary_of_State_(United_Kingdom)) and member of the [Cabinet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_(government)). He or she may also be supported by a number of junior Ministers. In practice, several government departments and Ministers have responsibilities that cover England alone, with devolved bodies having responsibility for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, (for example - the [Department of Health](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_of_Health_(United_Kingdom))), or responsibilities that mainly focus on England (such as the [Department for Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_for_Education)).

Implementation of the Minister's decisions is carried out by a permanent politically neutral organization known as the [civil service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_service_of_the_United_Kingdom). Its constitutional role is to support the Government of the day regardless of which political party is in power. Unlike some other democracies, senior civil servants remain in post upon a change of Government. Administrative management of the Department is led by a head civil servant known in most Departments as a [Permanent Secretary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permanent_Secretary). The majority of the civil service staff in fact work in [executive agencies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_agency), which are separate operational organizations reporting to Departments of State.

"Whitehall" is often used as a [metonym](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metonymy) for the central core of the Civil Service. This is because most Government Departments have headquarters in and around the former Royal Palace [Whitehall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitehall).