

# FORMS OF GOVERNMENT



SS.7.C.3.1 Compare different forms of government (direct democracy, representative democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy).

### Essential Question

Why do people create, structure, and change governments?

### Guiding Questions

1. What is the purpose of government?
2. What are the types of government?

### Terms to Know

**public policy**

the decisions and actions a government takes to solve problems

**representative democracy**

a government in which people choose leaders to represent them

**constitutional monarchy**

a government in which the power of the monarch is limited by a constitution

**majority rule**

democratic principle that says a majority of the people has the power to make laws binding on all the people

**authoritarian regime**

a government in which one person or a small group holds all the power

**totalitarian**

a system in which government controls people's lives

**ideology**

a set of ideas about life and society

### It Matters Because

*People form governments to establish order, provide security, and accomplish common goals.*

What would your community be like without any government for a week?

### What Do You Know?

Directions: You already know a lot about government. What kinds of governments are there? What do governments do? In the space below, list words you already know that relate to government. When you finish the lesson, add more words that you learn.



## Show Your Skill

### 1. Classify Information

What three types of services do governments provide?

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## Think Critically

2. Evaluate What government function do you think is the most important? Give two reasons for your answer.

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# The Importance of Government

A government is the ruling power for a community. Any group that can make and carry out laws and decisions for those living in a community is a government.

Government is important. It helps people to live together peacefully. Governments do many things. The most important purpose is to make rules for how people should act so they can live together peacefully. These rules are called laws. Laws help prevent conflict. They also help resolve conflict when it does occur. To resolve means to find a solution. Governments use police officers and courts to enforce the law.

Governments also keep the nation safe. They set up armed forces to guard the people from enemies.

Governments provide many other services. They run libraries, schools, hospitals, and parks. They build and repair streets and bridges. They collect garbage and deliver the mail. Some services are meant to keep people healthy and safe. These services include police and fire protection and licensing doctors. The government ensures the safety of food, medicines, and a long list of other products.

Functions of Government	
Keep Order	Provide Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pass and enforce laws to prevent crime, resolve conflict</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect public health</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish courts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect public safety</li><li>• Protect public welfare</li></ul>
Provide Security	Guide the Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish armed forces</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop public policy</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect citizens from foreign attacks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manage the economy</li><li>• Conduct foreign relations</li></ul>

Governments also help the poor and those who are out of work. They supply housing, health care, and special programs for people with disabilities.

Governments guide the community by making public policy. **Public policy** means the decisions and actions a government takes to solve problems. Putting public policies to work takes money. Since governments have limited funds, they must plan carefully.

Governments also guide the community by working with other nations. Trade and travel are two areas where governments must work together to help their citizens.

The United States has a federal system of government. This means that power is divided between the national government and the states. The states then give some power to local governments.

The national government makes and enforces laws for the entire country. It also sets the rules for citizenship. State and local laws cannot go against the laws of the federal government.

Each state has its own government. These governments make laws and create public policy for the people of their state. States do things such as make marriage laws, run schools, and hold elections. They protect public health and safety and build roads and bridges. States also can set up local governments.

Local governments are found in counties, cities, and towns. They help the local community by setting up police and fire departments and local courts. They light the streets and maintain parks. Like state governments, local governments cannot do anything that goes against the laws or authority of the federal government.

## The Types of Government

Nations have different forms of government. Not all nations are governed like the United States. But despite their differences, many countries do have a detailed, written plan of government called a constitution.

Democracy began in ancient Greece more than 2,500 years ago. The Greek city of Athens had a direct democracy. This meant that all male citizens met to discuss and vote on issues.

Today's nations are too large for direct democracy to work. Instead, many countries have **representative democracies**. This means the people choose leaders to represent them. The United States is the world's oldest representative democracy.

Government employees like this person fighting a forest fire near Taylor, Florida, protect and serve the citizens.



### Think Critically

**3. Contrast** What is the difference between state and federal governments?

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### Show Your Skill

**4. Draw Conclusions** Why is direct democracy impractical in the United States today?

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## Think Critically

**5. Compare** What is similar about republics and constitutional monarchies?

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**6. Summarize** Why is the concept of majority rule so important in a democracy?

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## Take the Challenge

**7.** Work in a small group and research the types of governments in ten countries. Make a graph to show the types of governments they have.

There are two types of representative democracies. They are republics and constitutional monarchies. The United States is a republic. In a republic, citizens play a part in choosing the head of government.

The second type is a **constitutional monarchy**. In a monarchy the head of government is not chosen by the people. Instead, a king or queen inherits this position. The power of most monarchs today is limited by a constitution. For this reason, these governments are called constitutional monarchies. The monarch has mostly ceremonial and social duties. Real power is found in an elected lawmaking body. The members of that body choose a leader called a prime minister.

Democracy works by **majority rule**. This means that citizens agree that they will abide by what most people want. At the same time, members of the minority keep their rights as citizens.

The government in power is called a regime. In a democracy, the people rule. In **authoritarian regimes** one person or a small group holds all the power. They do not answer to the people.

Monarchs with unlimited, or absolute, power are one kind of authoritarian government. A more common kind is a dictatorship. Dictators also have absolute power. They usually take over the government by force. To stay in power, dictators often rely on the army. Elections usually are not allowed. People do not have freedom and they cannot criticize the government.

Many dictators force the people to accept **totalitarian** rule. This means that the government controls people's lives. It decides what factories and farms will produce. It tells people what they can believe and what groups they can join.

Totalitarian leaders often have an **ideology** that they expect people to obey. An ideology is a strict idea about life and society. To enforce their ideas, these leaders control the media. They use fear, violence, and propaganda. Propaganda is information used to support a cause or to damage someone else's cause.



**NGSSS Check** Compare two types of governments you have learned about in this lesson. **SS.7.C.3.1**

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