

Name: _____ Date: _____

Chapter 2: Government and Civics Quick Notes



Section 1: What Is Government?

➤ Essential Question:

- What is the purpose of government?

Section 1: What Is Government?

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- government
- sovereignty
- legislative branch
- executive branch
- judicial branch

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Forms of Government

- **Government** is the system by which a country is organized, from the earliest of tribes to the most powerful nations today.
- People create governments to keep civil order and protect the people, but there are many different responses to the question of what rules should be made, which has led to the creation of many types of governments.
- The idea of government began when people discovered that protection was easier if they stayed together and elected a leader.
 - The idea of **sovereignty**, or right of a group to be free from outside interference, has led governments to build defenses against possible attackers.

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Branches of Government

- Government functions are usually separated into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.
- ❖ The **legislative branch** is typically made up of elected members and is supposed to make laws for the country, with either one or two groupings of members.
- ❖ The **executive branch's** job is to enforce laws passed by the legislative branch and deal with foreign nations.
- ❖ The **judicial branch** is in charge of the courts in a country that settle disputes among citizens and between citizens and the government.
- Its main purpose is to interpret laws of a country and apply them to court cases.

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Section 2: Distribution of Power in Government

- **Essential Question:**
 - What are some ways governments distribute power?

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Section 2: Distribution of Power in Government

- What terms do I need to know?
 - unitary government
 - confederation government
 - federal government

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The Distribution of Power

- People must decide how to set up their government, and countries must decide how to organize and distribute power.
- Power can be held completely by the central government, or it can be spread among the lower levels of government.
- Governments can be unitary, confederation, or federal.

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Levels of Government

- In a **unitary government**, the central government holds nearly all the power, giving the central government near-absolute power over how things function in the country.
 - Examples include the United Kingdom and Cuba.
- In a **confederation government**, local governments hold all the power, with little power given to the central government.
 - Examples include the United Nations and OPEC.
- In a **federal government**, power is shared among the different levels of government, with each having little overlapping control of each other and both having their own duties.
 - An example of a federal government is the United States.

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Section 3: Citizen Participation in Government

- Essential Question:
 - What does “citizen participation” mean?

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Section 3: Citizen Participation in Government

- What terms do I need to know?
 - autocracy
 - dictatorship
 - absolute monarchy
 - head of government
 - oligarchy
 - democracy

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The Power of the Citizens

- There are three types of citizen participation: autocracy, oligarchy, and democracy.
- The most important distinction among these three types is who or how many people rule or control the government.
- The citizens living under these different types can usually recognize the differences in their lives compared to others around the world.

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Types of Citizen Participation

- In an **autocracy**, the ruler has absolute power to do whatever he or she wishes, including making and enforcing whatever laws he or she desires.
 - Citizens living in an autocracy have very few rights, do not get to choose their leader, or get to vote on the laws that are made.
 - Two types of autocracies are **dictatorships**, in which one person that is supported by the military rules the country, and **absolute monarchies**, where the sovereign gained his or her power through inheritance from the previous sovereign.
 - Both dictators and sovereigns serve as the **head of government**, the person in charge of running the country day-to-day.

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Types of Citizen Participation (cont.)

- In an **oligarchy**, a political party or other small group makes all the major decisions, with citizens having little choice but to go with the decisions of the group.
 - While citizens do have more power since there are more people in control, citizens' rights to choose their leader is limited.
- In a **democracy**, citizens have the power to choose their leaders.
 - Citizens have the most power because they have the ability to vote for those who make laws.
 - Direct democracies allow citizens to vote on all decisions, while republics have representatives that citizens use to vote for them.
 - In a republic, a head of government may be elected to manage the government day-to-day.

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Magna Carta

- For most of history, countries were ruled by one person, typically a monarch.
 - The monarch had little restrictions on power and, as long as he had the military's backing, there was little the common people could do but go along with it.
 - The monarch's word was law, even if it was biased or unfair to the people.
- This stopped with King John of England in 1215, who was quite the tyrant.
 - After his issues with the church, building a navy with tax money, and losing most of his territory in France, his military leaders forced him to sign the Magna Carta.
 - This document listed rights of the free people of England and forced a monarch to govern according to law.
 - Many of the ideas in this document would go on to influence government structure globally. [Return to Main Menu](#)

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Section 4: Two Types of Democracies

- Essential Question:
 - Why would a government choose one type of democracy over the other?

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Section 4: Two Types of Democracy

- What terms do I need to know?
 - parliamentary democracy
 - head of state
 - constitutional monarchy
 - presidential democracy

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Forms of Democracy

- As stated before, a democratic government is one in which citizens vote on laws and make decisions in the government.
- However, there are two major forms of democratic governments: parliamentary and presidential.
- Each form of government is designed to represent and protect the people of its country.

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Parliamentary Democracy

- In a **parliamentary democracy**, the citizens vote for representatives from a few political parties to form a parliament.
- Parliament's purpose is to make and carry out the laws of the country.
- The party with the majority of members after voting gets to choose the head of government, who holds power for the term allowed.
- There is typically also a position called **head of state**, which is typically a leader who has very little power.
 - Australia's **constitutional monarchy** has a sovereign as head of state, whose powers are limited by the constitution.

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Presidential Democracy

- In a **presidential democracy**, citizens elect the president as head of government separately from the legislature.
- The legislative and executive branches are separate and can stop the other branches' powers if needed.
- The legislature cannot dismiss the president, and the president cannot dismiss the legislature.

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