

Government Notes

Why do we have government?

1. **To Keep Order** – If there were no laws, people would do whatever they wanted, thus government is established in order to prevent chaos.
2. **To Protect Lives** – If there were no laws, people may endanger other people in order to get what they want, thus government is established in order to protect the lives of its citizens.
3. **To Safeguard Property** – Just like protecting lives, government is established in order to keep personal belongings safe from others who might try to take or damage them.

What forms of government exist?

Monarchy

- **Absolute Monarchy** – A king or queen has total control over the nation and all the people who live there.
- When the ruler dies, power is passed down to one of his/her children, usually the 1st born son. This means that the people have no control over selecting the next ruler.
- **Divine Right** – The king or queen's power is said to come directly from God. They claim it is God's will that he or she should govern, so who can argue with that? (see theocracy below)
- **Constitutional Monarchy** – There is a king/queen, but the real power lies in the hands of an elected official who must follow the rules of a written constitution. The king/queen only has ceremonial duties.

Dictatorship

- Government is controlled by a single leader or a small group of people who have absolute power with no limits. The leader does not have to answer to the people.
- Elections, if they exist, are not legitimate. They are manipulated by the people in charge in order to get the results they want.
- Decisions are made quickly by one person or a small group and he does not need to consult with the people.
- Uses force or threats to control its citizens. If you challenge the dictator, you are often punished severely.
- A secret police force keeps people in fear and enforces the wishes of the dictator.

Democracy

- Government takes its power from the consent of the people.
- Leaders must act under the rule of law, meaning that even they are held accountable to rules of the government.
- Citizens are protected against random and impulsive acts by the government or from unfair treatment.
- People have the power to vote for their government officials. If they don't like the way a government official rules, he or she can be voted out during the next election.
- Ultimate power is in the hands of the people.
- **Direct democracy** – Every person votes on every issue. This is good for small populations.
- **Representative democracy** – People elect an official who does their voting for them. This is better used with larger populations because people don't have the time or desire to vote on every single issue.

Theocracy

- A government operated under divine rule where a God or deity is actually in charge and the rulers of the country are carrying out God's will. It is similar to an absolute monarchy.
- It's not just that country leaders believe in God, it's that the lawmakers of the country actually write laws based on what God wants them to do and what is written in their holy books.