

Revision Summary Sheet - The British Constitution

Government	The Government runs the country. It is made up from elected members of the House of Commons and sometimes unelected members of the house of Lords. Ministers are chosen by the PM (Prime Minister)	Monarch	Head of state – King or Queen
Parliament	Decision and law-making body of the UK. Includes the House of Commons, Lords and the Monarch.	Bicameral	Meaning two chambers – House of Commons and Lords
Legislature	The name for Parliament as a whole. Place where laws are made.	Scrutiny	Examining in detail what governments are doing.
Parliamentary Sovereignty	Parliament in the supreme authority on law-making in the UK.	Bill	Document published by the Government – set out the plans to create a new law
Executive	Powerhouse of the government. PM is the head and chooses people to run the big government departments.	White Paper	Document setting out the Governments policy on an issue and inviting opinions
Judiciary	The system of courts and judges through which the law is applied.	Act	A law that has been passed through Parliament
Uncodified Constitution	A constitution in which not all parts are collected together in one document, but are found in many different sources.	Veto	The power to reject a proposal
Civil Service	Makes sure that the government runs properly and that decisions are carried out. Civil Servants provide advice and support to ministers	Oversight	The process of checking that something is being carried out properly.
Accountability	The responsibility to explain how or why something is being done	Official Opposition	The Official Opposition is the party who is not in government but has the second largest number of seats.
Commons Speaker	Special MP is the highest authority in the Commons. They chair debates and keep order in the chamber	Party Whips	MPs whose role it is to enforce party discipline. They persuade MPs and threaten them with isolation if they decide to vote against their party's policy.
Black Rod	An officer of the House of Lords who is responsible for security, and controlling order within the House of Lords. Plays a key role on the State Opening of Parliament.	Parliamentary Select Committee	Hold governments to account. They can ask ministers to appear before them and answer questions about their decisions and the workings of their departments.

- The Queen is the UK's Monarch and Head of State, but the Prime Minister is the head of the Government.
- Parliament scrutinises the PM's decision, votes on the proposals and makes new Laws.
- A constitution is a set of rules that sets out how a country is run. It regulates the relationship between the government and the people.
- Most countries have what is called a codified constitution. This means that all the rules about how that country is governed are set out in one document. The USA has a famous constitution that is codified. However, the UK has an **Uncodified Constitution**. The rules and important guidelines about how the country should be run are not found in one single document, they are scattered across many different sources. This reflects the UK's complex Union of four different nations – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The impact of bicameralism on the quality of the Government

Advantages	Disadvantages
Improves scrutiny of legislation – a second chamber provides a way to review bills and check them.	The Commons has democratic legitimacy because its members have been elected by the British people. The Lords lack this as it is made up of people who were born into rich families, have been appointed or are high in the church.
As the Lords is largely an appointed chamber, it is possible to recruit expertise from the worlds of business, arts, sport, science and industry to help create better laws.	The Lords can hold up the passing of new laws, which slows government down.
The Lords allow groups that are under-represented in the Commons to have a voice	It costs a lot to run the Lords as each one can claim £300 per day in expenses to attend the chamber.
It is traditional for the UK to have a bicameral system.	

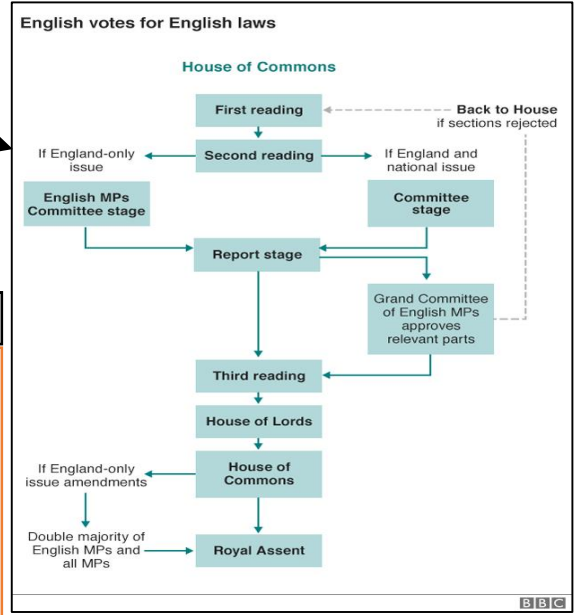
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The British Constitution

The structure of UK Government

There are several branches of the UK's system of government. At the centre is the Monarchy. We have a constitutional monarchy, which means that the Queen does not get involved in the day-to-day running of the country and their power is limited. However, laws cannot be passed without the agreement of the Monarch.




How laws are made



Elected Legislature	& The Executive
The House of Commons  Primary role Creates/designs laws Scrutinizes/approves laws Represents The will of the people	HM Government  Primary role Puts forward laws. Runs Government Represents The Will of the majority

The electorate
Citizens directly elect representative s every 5 years.

The executive, legislature and judiciary are separated in our constitution. This helps to spread power throughout the system so that one part of the government does not become too powerful. Each part helps to hold the others to account.

Appointed Legislature	The Crown	Judiciary
The House of Lords  Primary Role Scrutinizes/approves Laws. Acts as a safeguard Represents The unwritten constitution	The Monarch  Primary Role Represents the UK. Signs bills into law Represents Ceremony/tradition	The UK Courts of Law  Primary Role Upholds the law Represents The rule of Law

Relationship between branches of government
Conflict between politicians and judges can occur over the sentencing of offenders. It is the job of judges, with help from the Sentencing Council, to decide of custodial sentences. Judges refer to the key constitutional principle that the judiciary should have a high degree of independence from the executive.

How the Constitution works: Parliament in action

Different types of MP	On the other side of the House of Commons in the opposition. They have 'shadow' MPs to shadow the work of the minister. Each week, the opposition leader has the chance to hold the PM to account for their government at Question Time.
The Commons Speaker	Sits in the Speaker's chair between the Government and the Opposition benches. They are supposed to be impartial. In debates, the Speaker chooses MPs to speak and ensures they follow the rules of the House.
Party Discipline	Party whips are used to ensure that everyone follows the party line and that everyone works together.
State Opening of Parliament	The Monarch travels froth Buckingham Palace to Parliament to officially open each session of parliament.
The Budget	The budget speech is delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer every year and sets out the budget. There is then several days of debate before its agreed on.
The Civil Service`	Administrative body that follows governments instructions, implements government decision and provides policy advice to ministers.