

Identifying Types of Government

Lesson 1

Governments are usually identified as **unitary**, **confederate**, or **federal**. The United States has a federal government. At one time, the United States had a confederate government. The country was governed by the Articles of Confederation during the Revolutionary War.

A confederate government gives more power to the individual states and less power to the central government. The confederate system lasted until the present Constitution went into effect in 1789. During the Civil War, the Southern States referred to themselves as the Confederacy.

Unitary Government

Many countries in the world have a unitary system of government. One example of a country with a unitary government is the United Kingdom (Great Britain).

All of the power is held by the central government in the unitary system. The central government can decide if a local government (cities or counties) is needed. The local government can also be eliminated if the central government chooses to do so.

The British Government

In the British unitary system, there is a **Parliament**. The Parliament is similar to the Congress in the United States. However, the Parliament is made up of both the **legislative** (lawmaking) branch and **executive** (law enforcing) branch of the government.

The Parliament has two houses. The House of Lords has over 1,000 members. The members are not elected. The more powerful House of Commons has over 600 members. These members are elected by the people of the United Kingdom. An election must be held at least once every five years. The House of Commons chooses the prime minister. The prime minister is similar to the President of the United States. The prime minister can serve for many years.

If serious problems should occur during the prime minister's term or if there is dissatisfaction with the way the prime minister is performing, a "vote of confidence" can be required by the House of Commons. The prime minister and his or her cabinet must resign if the vote is less than a majority. If this happens, a new election is usually held soon after, and all the seats in the House of Commons are open for re-election.

A Complete the following exercise.

1. List three different types of government.

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

2. Which type of government does the United States have?

3. When did the United States have a confederate type of government? _____

4. In the confederate type of government, are the state governments stronger or weaker than the central government?

5. Many countries have a unitary type of government.

Give an example of a country that has this type of government. _____

6. What is the British legislative and executive branch called? _____

7. What title is given to the British leader? _____

8. How many houses does the British Parliament have?
What are they called?

9. How many members does each house have? _____

10. How and why can the prime minister be replaced in Parliament? _____

B Fill in each blank with the correct term. Choose the answer from the word box.

Word Box

election	Great Britain
House of Commons	executive
vote of confidence	prime minister
central	resign
United Kingdom	legislative
local	Congress

The Unitary Type of Government

A very good example of a country with a unitary type of government is the _____, which is sometimes called by the name of _____. All of the power is held by the _____ government. _____ governments, such as those for cities and counties, may or may not be needed.

The British Parliament is similar to our _____. The Parliament, however, is made up of both the _____ (lawmaking) branch and the _____ (law enforcing) branch of government.

The people of the United Kingdom elect all of the members of the _____. These members, in turn, elect a _____. If serious problems develop in the leadership of the government, a _____ can be required. If the prime minister does not get a majority, he or she must _____. A new _____ is usually held at that time for all of the elected officials of the Parliament.