Your notes

GCSE Citizenship Studies: revision notes

Democracy and government

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Types of democracy

- **Democracy** means rule by the people. In a **direct democracy**, citizens vote on decisions themselves, such as in a referendum.
- In a **representative democracy**, citizens elect representatives (such as MPs) to make decisions for them. The UK is a representative, parliamentary **democracy**.
- The UK is also a **constitutional monarchy**: the monarch is head of state, but their powers are used on the advice of the government.

The UK constitution

- A constitution is the set of rules about how a country is governed. The UK's constitution is uncodified: it isn't written in one document, but comes from Acts of Parliament, court judgments, conventions and important documents such as Magna Carta (1215).
- Parliamentary sovereignty means Parliament is the highest law-making body.
- The **rule of law** means everyone, including the government, must obey the law.

Separation of powers

- The legislature (Parliament) makes laws. The **executive** (the Prime Minister, Cabinet and government departments) runs the country. The **judiciary** (judges) interprets the law.
- The Prime Minister is usually the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons. The Cabinet is the group of senior ministers.
- Civil servants run government departments and are politically neutral.

British values

- **Democracy**, the **rule of law**, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.

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Key terms

Democracy	A system where the people hold power, usually through voting.
Direct democracy	Citizens voting on decisions themselves.
Representative democracy	Citizens electing representatives to make decisions.
Constitutional monarchy	A system where the monarch is head of state but government is by elected politicians.
Uncodified constitution	A constitution not written in one single document.
Rule of law	The principle that everyone must obey the law.
Executive	The branch of government that runs the country.
Judiciary	The judges who interpret the law.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is representative democracy?
2. What is direct democracy?
3. What type of constitution does the UK have?
4. What is the rule of law?
5. Which branch of government makes laws?
6. Who is usually Prime Minister?
7. What is the Cabinet?
8. Which document from 1215 limited the power of the monarch?

Answers

1. Citizens elect representatives to make decisions for them
2. Citizens voting on decisions themselves
3. Uncodified
4. Everyone, including the government, must obey the law
5. The legislature (Parliament)
6. The leader of the largest party in the House of Commons
7. The group of senior government ministers
8. Magna Carta

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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