Types of Government

*by Spencer Parker*

First, click on the link below to view the slideshow. Then, read the passage.

<http://www.slideshare.net/mrsharrisonss/types-of-governments-1899942?qid=45af1c73-2fea-489b-b04d-85c27dc54839&v=qf1&b=&from_search=3>

1. To govern means to rule. A government is any organization set up to make and enforce rules. You probably live under at least three different levels of government. The city or town in which you live has a government. It makes and enforces rules for the people in your community. At the next level, your state government makes and enforces rules for you and the other people in your state. At the national level, the federal government makes and enforces rules for all the people in the United States.
2. Every country in the world has a government. However, these governments are not all alike. There are many important differences in the way they govern. They differ in the way their leaders are chosen and in the amount of power held by the people. Each country’s government has been shaped by the beliefs of the people and by their history.
3. In times past, the governments of many countries were monarchies, which means they were controlled by monarchs, such as kings or queens. They often held all the power in their country’s governments, and they were able to rule by force. They were called absolute monarchs because they held total power.
4. A country that has only one person holding the power and making all decisions themselves is an autocracy. In an autocracy, the ruler answers only to themselves, not to the people they rule. The person attempts to control all aspects of citizens’ lives, including their religious, cultural, political, and personal activities. An absolute monarchy is an autocracy because one person has all of the power to make all decisions.
5. Today there are few absolute monarchs left. Most countries that have monarchs greatly limit the monarch’s power. The monarch generally serves as a ceremonial head of the country. The power of the government lies elsewhere, usually in a legislature or parliament that upholds the laws of a constitution. These countries have a constitutional monarchy.
6. In some countries, one small group of people holds all the power. This type of government is called an oligarchy. The small group holds the power and has absolute control over the government. A form of government that falls under an oligarchy is communism. Communism is an economic system based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They believed that companies across the world were getting rich by treating their workers unfairly. They argued that the working class would one day take over all factories and businesses. Under communism, no single group would own or control all the means of business. Private individuals would not be permitted to own or control a business to make profits. Everything would be owned by the government in the name of the workers.
7. A second type of oligarchy is socialism, which also comes from Marx’s ideas. Like communism, in a socialist society, the government owns and controls all businesses rather then individuals or private companies. The major difference between communism and socialism is that in a communist society, wealth is redistributed so that everyone in society is given equal share of the benefits of work. However in a socialist society, wealth is redistributed so that everyone is given somewhat equal benefits of work, but people can earn more if they work harder. In a communist society, all work is controlled by the country, but in a socialist society, all work is controlled by the workers. Another major difference is that in a communist society, freedom of religion might be abolished, but a socialist society allows religious freedoms.
8. Other countries have democratic governments. In a democracy, the people of a nation either rule directly, or they elect officials who act on their behalf. The word democracy comes from an ancient Greek term meaning “rule of the people.”
9. There are two forms of democracy. In a direct democracy, all voters in a community meet in one place to make laws and decide what actions to take. Historically, this form has been suited to only small communities. In a representative democracy, the people elect representatives to carry on the work of government for them. The people consent to be ruled by their elected leaders who follow a set of laws, or a constitution. This system of government is called a republic. It is the form of government in the United States and many countries around the world.

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| Type of Government | Examples of Countries |
| Republic Democracy | United States, Mexico, Brazil |
| Absolute Monarchy | Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Brunei |
| Constitutional Monarchy | United Kingdom, Denmark, Netherlands |
| Communist Oligarchy | China, North Korea, Cuba |