

Forming a government

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Following an election, the process of forming a single party or coalition government begins. The monarch appoints the Prime Minister and reads a speech in the State opening of Parliament.

Forming a single-party government

A party can form a single-party government if it has a majority.

- * A majority is formed by winning over half the results in an election (326 or more of 650 seats).
- * A majority is essential for Parliament to work, as each new law proposed by government needs to be voted on. If there is no majority, the opposition MPs could vote out proposed laws.

Forming a coalition government

If a party does not win a majority it is known as a hung parliament.

- * The party with the most seats may form a coalition government with the support of another political party.
- * Coalition government can mean it is more difficult to pass laws, as party values might need to be compromised to agree with coalition partners and vote laws through.

Confidence and supply agreement

Instead of forming a coalition government, a 'confidence and supply' agreement can be made with another party to support the government on a vote by vote basis.

Role of the monarch

There are two key roles for the monarch in forming a new government.

- 1 **Appointing the government.** The monarch meets the leader of the winning party. After the leader confirms they can form a new government, the monarch appoints them as Prime Minister.
- 2 **Reading the speech at the State opening of Parliament.** The monarch reads a speech in the House of Lords to officially open the new sitting of Parliament. This is written by the new government and outlines their policies and proposed legislation.



The monarch appoints Black Rod, whose role includes responsibility for major ceremonial events. After the monarch has read the speech, Parliament starts debating the issues in the speech.

Black Rod's ceremonial role

The tradition of the State opening of Parliament goes back to the 14th century.

- * It takes place in the House of Lords, which consists of about 800 unelected peers from a mixture of backgrounds.
- * Black Rod, a senior officer in the House of Lords, summons the House of Commons which consists of 650 elected Members of Parliament, to hear the speech.
- * The doors of the House of Commons are first shut in Black Rod's face as a symbol of independence from the monarchy, a tradition from the Civil War.
- * After Black Rod strikes the door three times it is opened, and the MPs follow Black Rod to the House of Lords to hear the speech.

Forming a cabinet

The Prime Minister then has a duty to appoint around 22 trusted party members, known as the cabinet, to develop policies and lead departments.

Now try this

Explain two reasons why a party would prefer to form a majority government.

(6)