



Political System of Great Britain

Read the text and check your answers.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a constitutional monarchy. It means that the sovereign reigns but does not rule.

Britain does not have a written constitution, but a set of laws.

Parliament is the most important authority in Britain. Technically Parliament is made up of three parts: the Monarch, the House of Lords; and the House of Commons. In reality the House of Commons is the only one of the three which has true power.

The monarch serves formally as head of state. But the monarch is expected to be politically neutral and should not make political decisions.

The present sovereign is Queen Elizabeth II. She was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1953.

The House of Commons consists of Members of Parliament. There are 650 of them in the House of Commons. They are elected by secret ballot. General elections are held every five years. The country is divided into 650 constituencies. All citizens aged 18 and registered in a constituency, have the right to vote. But voting is not compulsory in Britain. Only persons convicted of corrupt and certain mentally ill patients don't take part in voting.

There are few political parties in Britain thanks to the British electoral system. The main ones are: the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal / Social Democratic Alliance.

Each political party puts up one candidate for each constituency. The one who wins the most votes is elected MP for that area.

The party which wins the most seats in Parliament forms the Government. Its leader becomes the Prime Minister. His first job is to choose his Cabinet. The Prime Minister usually takes policy decisions with the agreement of the Cabinet.

The functions of the House of Commons are legislation and scrutiny of government activities. The House of Commons is presided over by the Speaker. The Speaker is appointed by the Government.

The House of Lords comprises about 1,200 peers. It is presided by the Lord Chancellor. The House of Lords has no real power. It acts rather as an advisory council.

It's in the House of Commons that new bills are introduced and debated. If the majority of the members are in favour of a bill, it goes to the House of Lords to be debated. The House of Lords has the right to reject a new bill twice.

But after two rejections they are obliged to accept it. And finally a bill goes to the monarch to be signed. Only then it becomes law.

Parliament is responsible for British national policy. Local governments are responsible for organizing of education, police and many others.

I. Read the text again and fill in the gaps.

In the UK there is no president, the Queen is ... of the
There are two Houses in the Parliament: ... and
People who sit in the ... Commons are called
People who sit in the ... Lords are called
British people ... for MPs at a general
The party which wins a general ... forms the ... and their leader
becomes
After the Queen approves the bill, it becomes