

Topic Page: [Parliamentary Government](#)

Definition: **parliamentary government** from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate(R) Dictionary* (1844) : a system of government having the real executive power vested in a cabinet composed of members of the legislature who are individually and collectively responsible to the legislature

Summary Article: **parliamentary government**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Form of government in which the executive (administration) is drawn from and is constitutionally responsible to the legislature (law-making body). This is known as the 'fusion of powers' as distinct from the 'separation of powers', in which the three branches of government the executive, legislature, and judiciary (courts system) are separated in terms of personnel and constitutional powers.

The separation of powers is one of the major characteristics of the US system of government. Most countries in Western Europe and the Commonwealth have adopted some form of parliamentary government, although there are significant variations in practice.

In most Commonwealth countries all ministers are included in the cabinet, although under Liberal-Country party governments Australia followed the British practice of having an inner group of ministers who form the cabinet. A further important variation in Australia and New Zealand is the influence of the parliamentary party, or caucus, in the selection of the ministry when the Labour Party is in power. In the Australian case ministers are actually elected by the caucus although the prime minister allocates portfolios (responsibilities).

France under the Fifth Republic also provides an important variation in that the French political system is a hybrid of parliamentary government and the US presidential-congressional system. The French president is directly elected by universal suffrage and is not constitutionally responsible to the French parliament, while the prime minister and other ministers may not be members of the Senate or the National Assembly. They are, however, constitutionally responsible to the National Assembly and may participate in its proceedings. France therefore has a mixture of the fusion and separation of powers.

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