

The Westminster System

The Westminster System takes its name from the Palace of Westminster, where the Model Parliament of 1295 was held. England's Houses of Parliament are still at the Palace of Westminster. Westminster is actually the name of a borough of London and is home to some of London's most famous sights.



Houses of Parliament and Big Ben (Palace of Westminster)



Westminster Abbey



Buckingham Palace



Westminster Cathedral

Key Elements of the Westminster System of Parliament

The Westminster System of parliamentary government was developed over centuries. It is used in many countries but it varies depending on local conditions and history. However, there are some identifiable key elements that most variations use.

Activity: Match the key element on the left with its explanation on the right by drawing a connecting line as shown.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head of State | Drawn from parliament and answerable to parliament. Also called the Cabinet and made up of Ministers and the Prime Minister. |
| Head of Government | Made by the party (or parties) with the second largest number of seats in the lower house. Their job is to scrutinise government. (i.e. A multi-party system) |
| Executive branch | There is an independent judiciary (courts system) over which parliament has no influence on decisions made by judges and magistrates. |
| Elected Representatives | Constitutional Monarch who is 'above politics' and acts on advice from the Prime Minister. Can be represented by a Governor-General. |
| Government | All Members of the lower house (and often the upper house as well) are democratically elected to represent an electorate of people. |
| Opposition | The Prime Minister - who is the leader of the party which makes government. |
| Rule of Law | Made by the political party (or coalition of parties) with the majority of seats in the lower house. |

Some countries (beside Australia and Britain) which also use the Westminster System:



Canada



New Zealand



India



Malaysia



Singapore



Jamaica



Answers: Match the key element on the left with its explanation on the right by drawing a connecting line as shown.

