



The U.S. & The World: SS.7.CG.3.2
Systems of Government
VIDEO SCRIPT



1. Today we are going to be discussing systems of government. Government systems focus on the rules of how the government functions.
2. We will be looking at different systems of government. To do this, we will :
 - ✓ recognize examples of different systems of government,
 - ✓ apply our understanding to several systems of government,
 - ✓ compare the organizational structures of systems of government,
 - ✓ explain the advantages of a federal system of government
3. How do the people of a country decide how to distribute power at different levels? This is a question that understanding systems of government will help us answer. Let's look at a system of government that is most familiar to us. A federal system of government, like the one we have in the United States, is where the power is shared between the central (national) government and the states. In this system, both the states and the central government have a similar structure. Citizens elect members of the legislative, executive, and sometimes even the judicial branch.
4. Another good example of a federal system of government is Argentina. This country has an elected President, National Congress, and even Supreme Court. Argentina has provinces, or states, that have their own constitutional and legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The central government shares powers with those provinces, just as the United States' central government shares power with the states. We will discuss the advantage of a federal system a bit later.
5. Let's check in: In a federal system of government, how is power shared?
6. ANSWER TO QUESTION
7. Let's take a look at another system of government. A confederal system of government is where the power is focused at the state level. The first government of the United States was a confederal system under the Articles of Confederation. This means that government power was located with the states and there was little to no power in the central government.
8. Another good example of a confederal system of government is the European Union. It is a partnership among 27 countries in Europe. Everything that happens among those countries comes from treaties (which are formal agreements) agreed to by the members, and the member countries have most of the power.
9. Confederal systems sometimes struggle to maintain unity because each of the member states often will do their own thing and be unable to reach agreement on certain important issues.

10. Let's check in: What makes up a confederal system of government, and where is the government power held?

11. ANSWER TO QUESTION

12. Let's take a look at the last system of government. A unitary system of government is where the national government conducts all functions of government. A national government may choose to give powers to smaller government units, such as states. Some unitary governments hold power at the national level while other unitary governments delegate authority to regional or state or even local governments. But almost all of the power is always in the hands of the central or national government.

13. An example of a unitary system of democratic government is the country of Japan. It has a strong central government with the legislative branch, called the Diet, and the executive branch, led by the Prime Minister and lower ministers. The 47 provinces, or states, of Japan rely heavily on the central government for money and support.

14. While unitary governments often have strong unity, they may fail to protect against authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is when personal rights and freedoms are limited in favor of obedience to government authority. Because unitary governments have all of the power in the hands of the central government, it can potentially lead to the abuse of power as the government may have few limits on what it can do. An example of this would be the People's Republic of China, which has a unitary government that is also a communist dictatorship.

15. Let's check in: Who usually holds most of the power in a unitary system of government? What is the relationship between the national government and the states in this system of government?

16. ANSWER TO QUESTION

17. Ultimately, a federal system of government, because it splits power at multiple levels, has an advantage over confederal and unitary systems of government in balancing local sovereignty with national unity and protecting against authoritarianism. It allows states and citizens to have a say in government (providing local sovereignty and freedoms) while also ensuring that the nation has a shared agenda (national unity). We are one nation of We the People.

18. Let's check in: How does a federal system balance local sovereignty with national unity and protect against authoritarianism?

19. ANSWER TO QUESTION

20. So what have we learned here today? Let's go back to our question we started with: How do the people of a country decide how to distribute power? As we have seen, it comes down to the system of government they choose. A federal system shares power between member states and the central government. A confederal system places almost all power in the hands of member states, leaving a weak central government. A unitary system goes in the other direction, giving most power to the central government.

21. Let's wrap up by looking at a few scenarios to see if you can determine the system of government being described.

22. Scenario 1: There is no central power of government, instead government power is held with at the lower government unit level, such as a state. Which system of government is this?

23. ANSWER TO SCENARIO

24. Scenario 2: The power of government is shared between the central government and the states. Which system of government is this?

25. ANSWER TO SCENARIO

26. And finally, scenario 3: Government power is held with the central government. Which system of government is this?

27. ANSWER TO SCENARIO

28. That wraps up our video today. Thanks so much for joining us.