

Limiting Government

Name: _____

Limiting Government? What's the Big Deal?

Sometimes you might hear people talking as if government is an evil monster. Are they overreacting? Are there reasons to fear government? Whose side is government on, anyway? Throughout history, there have been governments that had too much power and ended up abusing that power. They limited people's freedom, mistreated people, and even committed mass murders. In some places, that still happens today. Government isn't evil—but the people who run governments do need to be kept in check so they can't abuse their power. There are several ways to limit government power.



From 1926-1943, Benito Mussolini ruled Italy as a dictator with total control of the government.

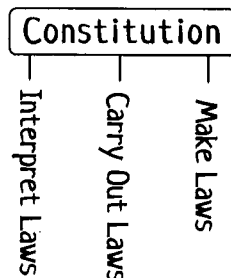
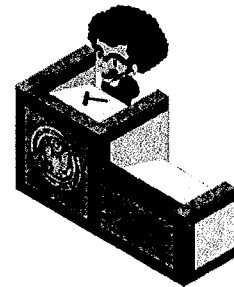


A Constitution

A **constitution** is the rulebook for a country's government. A constitution usually explains what kind of government a country has and how that government functions. It also tells how a country's laws are made, and it explains the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Most modern countries have written constitutions.

The Rule of Law

The **rule of law** means laws are fair, they're enforced, and nobody is above the law. When a country has the rule of law, everyone must follow the law—the government, government leaders, and even the president! Citizens feel secure that the government can't just do what it wants, and there are procedures in place to make sure the law is enforced.

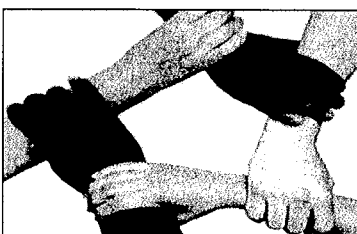


Separation of Power

Separation of power is dividing power among several branches of government. By dividing up the power, a country can make sure that no one person or part of government gets too much control. Separation of power works because each branch of government is able to "check," or limit, what the other branches can do. Each branch is responsible for a different government function.

Consent of the Governed

When you give your consent, you are giving permission. The **consent of the governed** means that the citizens of a country give their permission to be governed by the country's government, and they do this by voting. Citizens have the right to vote, and they can use their vote to change the government. By voting, citizens can even change the constitution!



Rights of the Minority

In a system where the citizens *are* the government because leaders are elected by voting, limiting government also means limiting the power of the majority. In voting, the majority rules. It would be possible for the majority to treat a minority group unfairly. Protecting the **rights of the minority** means protecting the rights of small or unpopular groups regardless of what the majority believes. Everyone must be treated fairly.