

# FEATURES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

- The first of the ten features of the parliamentary system of government is the supremacy of its legislative branch. This is its defining feature. The legislative branch conducts its business through a unicameral (one house) or bicameral (two houses) Parliament. This group is composed of representatives or members that are elected by citizens of the country. The primary job of members of Parliament is to create and pass laws.
- The parliamentary system of government, unlike the presidential system, creates a divide between the roles of Head of Government and Head of State. Rather than citizens, members of Parliament elect the Prime Minister, who is the Head of Government. The Prime Minister oversees Parliament. This creates an overlap between the legislative and executive branches of government. The Head of State in a parliamentary system is largely a symbolic role. Hereditary monarchs typically have this role reserved.
- The Prime Minister has no official term length. Thus, so long as Parliament is satisfied, the Prime Minister remains in position. Should it ever be called for, members of parliament will use a majority vote known as a “vote of no-confidence” in order to remove a Prime Minister from office.
- Majority vote of Parliament passes laws. Then, they are signed into legislation by the Prime Minister, who does not have veto power. This is contrary to the presidential system. In the case of disagreement, the Prime Minister can return a bill to Parliament. However, a majority vote by Parliament can veto that return.
- In most parliamentary systems of government, there is a Supreme Court that can declare a law as unconstitutional. This would be done if it were to pose violations against the nation’s constitution. However, some countries, such as Great Britain and New Zealand, lack provisions for judicial review. In these countries, the only check against the legislature is the results of the next election season.
- Though uncommon, some parliamentary systems have an elected president who exercises foreign powers. An example of some foreign powers would be national defense and military command. The elected president exercises these powers. Some countries that follow this system are Lithuania, Bangladesh and France.
- Though members of Parliament hold their positions in office by each election season, they can be turned out of office. If one respective party loses majority holdover members of Parliament, they can be removed. Other members of Parliament, as well as the Prime Minister, are then able to vote out a member of Parliament. A no-confidence vote accomplishes this.

- Parliamentary systems lack what presidential systems call “Checks and Balances.” Therefore, the parliamentary system tends to be more efficient. This is because political gridlocks cannot delay them.
- A parliamentary system of government consists of members serving various political parties. Therefore, coalitions are a very popular type of agreement in parliamentary governments. Members of opposing political parties will often form a coalition, otherwise known as a temporary union. This alliance utilizes its combined resources to accomplish a common goal.
- Depending on the rules of voting within a country, the political representation within members of Parliament may consist of one party. It may also be proportionally representative of the nation. If a country follows a “first-past-the-post” (FPTP) principle, Parliament will most likely consist of one or two majority political parties. An FPTP is a principle in which candidates with the most ballots win a seat. However, some countries follow a rule of proportional representation. This means that the political makeup of Parliament members is appropriate to that of the nation.