

Name _____ **Democracy**



Democracy

A democracy is a system of government in which the people have a direct say in what is going on. A democracy is different from a monarchy or a dictatorship. In these forms of government all the power is concentrated in just one person (the monarch or the dictator).

There are two kinds of democracies. In a direct democracy, each individual citizen votes on every important decision. This kind of democracy originated in Athens, Greece, where all the citizens would gather in a central place to cast their votes on major issues. A direct democracy works best with a limited number of people, since as the population grows, it becomes increasingly more difficult and then impossible for every citizen to gather in one place. In a representative democracy, citizens elect people to represent them in the government, and then these elected representatives vote for or against the actual issues. The United States has a representative democracy. Our elected representatives include the president, the members of congress, and the members of the senate.

Democratic governments tend to have certain things in common. As described above, the citizens have power over what the country does, either by voting directly for or against an issue, or through elected representatives. In a democratic society, elections are conducted fairly, and citizens are free to vote however they want. Results are on the basis of majority rule, however, each individual, whether in the majority or the minority, has the same individual rights and freedoms. Democracies also impose limitations on what elected officials can do and how long each can serve. These limitations prevent any one elected official from becoming too powerful. Finally, a democracy is characterized by the participation of its citizens. This participation includes understanding the issues and exercising their right to vote.