

Principles of Government

SECTION 1

GOVERNMENT AND THE STATE

TEXT SUMMARY

Government is the institution through which a society makes and enforces its **public policies**—all those things a government decides to do. Every government has three kinds of power: **legislative power**, or the power to establish law; **executive power**, or the power to carry out the law; and **judicial power**, or the power to interpret laws and settle disputes. These powers are often outlined in a **constitution**—

the body of laws that sets out a government's structure, principles, and processes.

In a **dictatorship**, one person or a small group may exercise all the powers of

government. In a **democracy**, supreme authority over government rests with the people.

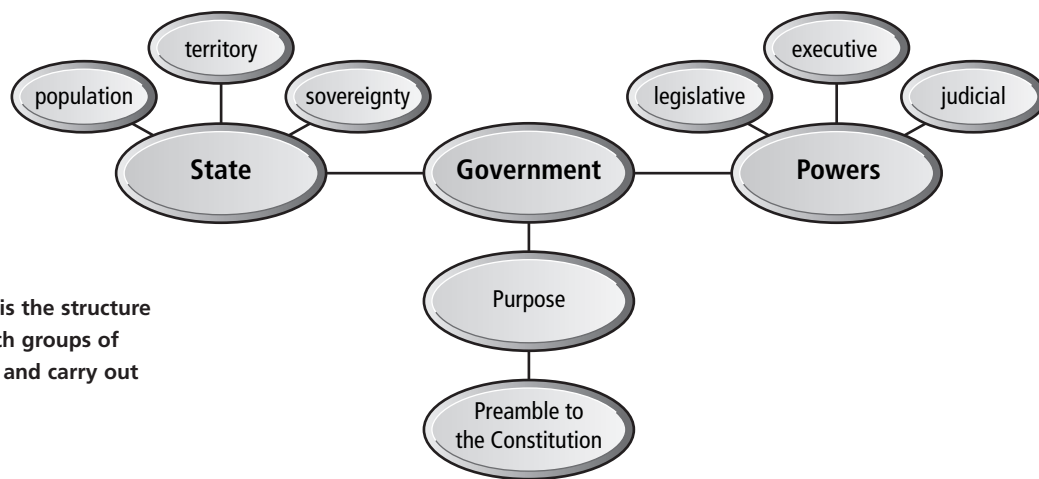
The world's dominant political unit is the **state**—a body of people living in a defined territory, often called a nation or country. Every state has a **sovereign** government, or one with absolute power.

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution describes the goals of the United States' Federal Government. It says that government should form a more perfect union, or keep the States working together; establish justice; ensure domestic tranquility, or keep order; provide for the common defense; promote the general welfare; and secure the blessings of liberty.

THE BIG IDEA

A government enables a society to carry out its policies and protect its citizens from violence and injustice.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Structure of Government



Government is the structure through which groups of people make and carry out laws.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a state and a government?

2. **Diagram Skills** What three types of power does a government have?