

# INTRODUCTION TO HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT - History Form 1

## Notes

- [The Meaning of History](#)
  - [Characteristics of historical events](#)
- [The Meaning of Government](#)
  - [The legislature](#)
  - [The executive](#)
  - [The Judiciary](#)
- [Forms of Government](#)
  - [Democratic government](#)
  - [Aristocratic government](#)
  - [Monarchical government](#)
  - [Dictatorial government](#)
- [Importance of Studying History](#)
- [Importance of Studying Government](#)
- [Sources of Information on History and Government](#)
  - [Unwritten Sources](#)
  - [Written Sources](#)
  - [Electronic Sources](#)

## [The Meaning of History](#)

History is an account of events that took place in the past. History may also be defined as a branch of knowledge which deals with past events of human beings and their response to their environment over the years. R.G Collingwood, in his book *The Idea of History* (OUP 1994) defined history as a “science concerned with the human actions in the past, pursued by interpretation of evidence for the sake of Human self knowledge.”

That history is a science because it involves finding out things about the past Humankind. For example, the origin of Man, why he was a toolmaker, why he domesticated animals and plants. These are questions that provoke scientific curiosity.

The three definitions of History from the above are:

- History is the past of anything; of earth, man, disease or animals
- History is a branch of knowledge dealing with past events
- History is a science concerned with past Human actions

Since History at secondary level is specifically concerned with the past as it relates to humankind and his response to his environment over the years, the working definition of history is therefore;

- History is the endless story of mankind’s actions and events affecting him in the past.

Closely related to the term history is the term **PREHISTORY**. Prehistory refers to the unrecorded history- those activities that humans engaged in before writing and drawing were invented as ways of storing information.

Such information is gained from songs, myths, stories, artifacts, fossils and the language of a people.

A historical event needs to have recorded evidence in order to be referred to as a historical fact

## [Characteristics of historical events](#)

- They must have evidence.

- Historical information must be written or unwritten.
- Historical events only concern man.
- Historical events dwell mainly on the past happenings.
- Historical events must contain elements of truth.

The study of humankind's past can be classified systematically into three;

- Social history- dealing with the traditions, values and cultural practices of a people
- Economic history; dealing with the means of livelihood of a people, such as hunting, gathering, agriculture and trade.
- Political history; dealing with the control system in a society, for example maintenance of law and order, leadership and security.

## [The Meaning of Government](#)

Derived from the verb govern, government means to exercise authority over. To rule or control. Or having power to direct or conduct the policies and public affairs of a country or an institution. In our study, the term government refers to a group of people within a state or a country given authority to organize, direct and control the affairs of the state or country. In Kenya, the government has three arms.

### [The legislature](#)

Commonly referred to as parliament, this is a law making arm of government. It includes the National assembly and the president.

### [The executive](#)

This is the arm of government which implements laws. It includes the president, the cabinet and the civil service.

### [The Judiciary](#)

This is the arm of government responsible for seeing that the laws made are constitutional, that they are followed and that those who break them are punished. It is commonly referred to as the courts.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his book, **The Social Contract**, describes government as "an intermediate body set up by the subjects to ensure equity (fairness) and the execution of laws while maintaining social and political liberty"

In this sense, government is not dictatorial since its authority is derived from the people. People must however be free to choose their leaders, even remove those in power and replace them with others, in order to ensure the existence of the principal of fairness.

## [Forms of Government](#)

There are four forms of government:

### [Democratic government](#)

This is a type of government in which rulers regularly seek public mandate through popular vote. Such governments are based on the principles of free and fair elections. According to Abraham Lincoln, an American statesman, they are "governments of the people, for the people and by the people". In such a government, freedoms and rights are provided for in the constitution that governs the law of the nation.

### [Aristocratic government](#)

**Aristos** – best