

Fiche

1. Basic facts

Capital city	London
Countries	Great Britain: England, Scotland, Wales
	Northern Ireland (Ulster)
Currency	Pound sterling (£)
The national flag	The Union Jack composed of 3 crosses: St George's (England); St Andrew's (Scotland); St Patrick's (Ireland)
The national anthem	<i>God Save the Queen</i>
National emblems	rose (England) leek (Wales) thistle (Scotland) shamrock (Ireland)
National motto	<i>bonni soit qui mal y pense</i> (shamed be he who thinks ill of it)

2. British institutions

The Government	Executive power	The Prime Minister: Head of the Cabinet The Cabinet (Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance); the Lord Chancellor (justice); the Home Secretary; the Foreign Secretary; the Defence Secretary ...)
	Legislative power	The Houses of Parliament: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the House of Commons (650 elected members); • the House of Lords (92 non-elected members).
The monarch	Queen (or King): represents the nation → a constitutional monarchy	
The Commonwealth	The Commonwealth of Nations → an intergovernmental organization of 54 independent member states. (All except Mozambique and Rwanda used to be part of the British Empire) The Commonwealth was created in 1926: Britain and its dominions agreed that they were ' <i>equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs</i> '. The member states share common values including the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Head of the Commonwealth → Queen Elizabeth II.	

3. Key dates

1066	William the Conqueror (Duke of Normandy) invaded Britain → the Battle of Hastings.
1509-1547	The reign of Henry VIII (monarch with 6 wives) → he caused the Reformation: the Church of England left the Roman Catholic Church to become independent.
1642-	

1660	The Civil War: Oliver Cromwell became head of the 'republic'.
1833	The abolition of slavery in the British Empire. The British Empire developed the slave trade during the 18 th century to increase its economic prosperity by forcing slaves from Africa to work on its plantations in the West Indies. The British slave trade was ceased in 1807 and slaves in the British Empire emancipated in 1834.
1837-1901	The reign of Queen Victoria: the British Empire was at its height in terms of expansion and prosperity.
1936	King Edward VIII abdicated to marry an American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Elizabeth II's father George VI became King.
1952	Coronation of Elizabeth II.
2011	Prince William, heir to the throne, married Kate Middleton.

4. Places of power

10 Downing Street	Official residence of the Prime Minister
Westminster	Site of the Houses of Parliament (and Big Ben)
Buckingham Palace	The Queen's official residence in London
The City	The historical centre of London, home to the Stock Exchange and the major banks
Oxford and Cambridge	The two oldest and most prestigious British universities