

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Municipal Governments

By Phyllis Naegeli

---

According to the 2002 Census of Governments, there are 19,429 municipalities in the United States. Some are large, and some are very small. Approximately 230 million people live in these municipalities.

A municipality is a city, town, or village that holds a state granted charter outlining their powers. Larger municipalities provide many different services to its members. These include trash collection, sewer systems, parks, public buildings, public transportation, and police and fire departments. Municipal governments also adopt zoning laws to separate business and residential areas. Large municipalities have three basic types of government. These are mayor-council, council-manager, and commission.

The mayor-council type of government is the most popular form for running a city. In this type of government, there is an elected mayor and a separate elected city council. The mayor is the chief executive and the council is the legislative body. There are two separate forms of this type of city government - the weak mayor and the strong mayor. In the weak mayor form, the mayor plays a small part in the city's government. The mayor does not have the ability to veto laws or appoint department leaders. Many cities choose this type of plan to avoid giving too much power to one individual. Cities with a strong mayor grant their leader the power to appoint and dismiss department heads without council intervention. A strong mayor oversees all aspects of city government, prepares a budget, and approves the plans and programs of the city council.

The second type of city government is called the council-manager government. In this type of government, the city council hires a city manager to control the daily operations of the city. Some cities with this type of government also have a mayor - an elected official who performs ceremonial duties and/or serves as the leader of the council. This type of government has been found to be the most efficient. City managers are usually trained in business or public administration. City managers usually start their careers working under other city managers. This gives them the knowledge and experience to run a city with great efficiency.

The third way of running a city is the commission government. This is the least popular way cities are run. In a commission government, an elected board holds both legislative and executive powers. Each member of the board is the head of one of the city's departments. They meet together regularly to discuss city policy. Only about one hundred twenty-five cities use this form of government. The largest city today with a commission government is Portland, Oregon.

Where do you live? Would your neighborhood be classified as rural or urban? Do you reside in a suburb of a large city? Municipal governments preside over all of these different areas. What type of government does your city have?

### Municipal Governments

## Questions

---

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Approximately how many people live in the 19,429 municipalities in the United States?

- A. 23,000,000
- B. 230,000
- C. 230,000,000
- D. 2,300,000

2. Why do municipal governments adopt zoning laws?

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which is the most popular form of municipal government?

- A. weak mayor
- B. mayor-council
- C. commission
- D. council-manager

Name \_\_\_\_\_



4. What is the largest city with a commission type of government?

---

---

---

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Which type of municipal government hires a city manager?

- A. council-manager
- B. commission
- C. mayor-council
- D. strong mayor

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In a mayor-council form of municipal government, which type of mayor has veto power over council decisions?

- A. strong
- B. weak

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. In a commission form of municipal government, a mayor is the head of the commission.

- A. true
- B. false

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In a council-manager form of municipal government, there is always a mayor.

- A. true
- B. false