As the colonies were established, they set up governments through which everyday life could be organized and administered. The types of governments that were established were largely based on the circumstances under which they left England and their relationship with the English Crown. They are outlined below.

**Royal**
Most common type of colony and subject to most direct control by the Crown.

**Proprietary**
Second most common type of colony and subject to somewhat less control by the Crown.

**Charter**
Least common of all colonies and subject to the least amount of royal control.

### Natural Rights
Colonial governments protected people’s rights to life, liberty, and property.

### Higher Law
Colonial governments could not violate English law.

### Separation of Powers
Colonial governments had separate branches—executive, legislative, and sometimes judicial.

### Checks and Balances
Each branch of government was subject to approval or monitoring by the other branches.

### Representative Government
At least one house in each legislature was composed of members elected by male landowners.