

The four countries of the UK

The United Kingdom, also called the UK, is a big country of 66 million people.

The UK is really four different countries – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The UK has many different names, and it is a little difficult to remember.

Its full name is 'the united Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.

This is very long so everybody calls the place 'the UK'. People also use the name 'Britain' or 'Great Britain' – but this does not include Northern Ireland. Britain is the name we use for the big island that is the home of England, Wales and Scotland.

United Kingdom is the name we use for the political idea that is England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland as well.

England

England is the biggest country, with about 55 million people.

The capital city is London, which is the capital of the UK and a very large city – about 9 million people live in London.

There is a very famous Parliament in London – the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Sometimes we use the name 'Westminster' for the parliament and the government together – that's the name of the area.

This is the Parliament for all of the UK. It has been in London for many hundreds of years – it is one of the oldest parliaments in the world. The oldest is in Iceland.

England is the biggest country in the UK, but there is no independent parliament for England itself – Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland have independent parliaments, but not England.

England is a very old country. The Romans came to England 2000 years ago, and everybody spoke Latin, not English, at that time. The English people, came to England from Europe, more than 1500 years ago – they were called Anglo-Saxons at that time.

Wales

Wales is a small country with about 3 million people. The capital city is Cardiff. There is an independent parliament for Wales, in Cardiff.

Wales has its own language and culture. Welsh is a very old language, similar to Gaelic in Scotland and Irish in Ireland. Many television and radio programmes are in Welsh. Wales has beautiful countryside and history with

many ancient castles to visit. Wales has famous writers like Dylan Thomas. The singer Bob Dylan took his name from the name of his favourite writer, Dylan Thomas.

Scotland

Scotland is a small country with about 5.5 million people.

The capital city is Edinburgh. There is an independent parliament for Scotland, in Edinburgh.

Scotland has its own language and culture. The Scottish language is called Gaelic – people spoke this language in Scotland 2000 years ago. Scotland has the biggest mountains in the UK, where you can go skiing, and a lot of very beautiful countryside to visit.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is a small country with about 2 million people.

The capital city is Belfast. There is an independent parliament for Northern Ireland, in Belfast. It has beautiful lakes and rivers to go fishing. The ship Titanic was built in Belfast.

New words for this article

1	capital	the central city of a country
2	Latin	the language of the Romans, from Italy
3	similar to	almost the same as
4	ancient	very old
5	castle	a very old building, made to keep the city safe

Comprehension Questions

- 1 Where is the capital of Wales?
- 2 Which ship was built in Belfast?
- 3 What can you do in the mountains of Scotland?
- 4 Where did the English come from?
- 5 How many people live in Scotland?

- 1 English started in England about 500 AD – about 1500 years ago
- 2 English has the biggest number of words from many languages including from French, German, Arabic, Chinese and other languages.
- 3 English started in Australia in 1770, when Captain Cook and English people arrived in ships
- 4 There are 11 official languages

Comprehension questions

Answers