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Dictionary

govern

verb | gov·ern | \ˈgə-vərn\

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: to officially control and lead (a group of people) : to make decisions about laws, taxes, social programs, etc., for (a country, state, etc.)

: to control the way that (something) is done

: to control or guide the actions of (someone or something)



How many of these **commonly misspelled words** can you spell? >

Full Definition of GOVERN

transitive verb

- a** : to exercise continuous sovereign authority over; *especially* : to control and direct the making and administration of policy in

b : to rule without sovereign power and usually without having the authority to determine basic policy
- a** *archaic* : **MANIPULATE**

b : to control the speed of (as a machine) especially by automatic means
- a** : to control, direct, or strongly influence the actions and conduct of

b : to exert a determining or guiding influence in or over <income must *govern* expenditure>

c : to hold in check : **RESTRAIN**
- : to require (a word) to be in a certain case
- : to serve as a precedent or deciding principle for <customs that *govern* human decisions>

intransitive verb

- : to prevail or have decisive influence : **CONTROL**
- : to exercise authority

— gov·ern·able  | \-vər-nə-bəl | *adjective*

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manqué

unfulfilled in one's ambitions or talent

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Examples of GOVERN

- The tribe is *governed* by a 10-member council.
- They want to form their own country and *govern* themselves.
- The scandal limited her ability to *govern* effectively.
- How would he *govern* if he were elected president?
- She suggested changing the state's laws *governing* the sale of alcohol.
- The council *governs* fishing in the region.
- We will be studying the forces that *govern* the Earth's climate.
- Tradition *governs* all aspects of their lives.
- He allows himself to be *governed* by his emotions.

Ask The Editor Videos



Lay vs. Lie

'Try and' vs. 'Try to'



Origin of GOVERN

Middle English, from Anglo-French *governer*, from Latin *gubernare* to steer, govern, from Greek *kybernan*

First Known Use: 14th century

Related to GOVERN

Synonyms

[boss](#), [captain](#), [command](#), [control](#), [preside \(over\)](#), [rule](#), [sway](#) [*archaic*]

Antonyms

[lose](#)

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GOVERN Defined for Kids

govern





verb | gov·ern | \ˈgə-vərn\

gov·erned **gov·ern·ing**

Definition of GOVERN for Kids

- 1 : ²[RULE](#) 1
- 2 : to influence the actions and conduct of : [CONTROL](#) <"... a kind word will *govern* me ..." — Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*>
- 3 : to serve as a rule for <Laws *governing* the Internet are changing.>

Learn More About GOVERN

-  [Thesaurus: All synonyms and antonyms for "govern"](#)
-  [Spanish Central: Spanish translation of "govern"](#)
-  [NGLISH: Translation of "govern" for Spanish speakers](#)
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