

Improve your knowledge – Elizabethan England 1568-1603: Elizabeth and her Government.

Timeline of key events	
7 th Sept. 1533	Princess Elizabeth was born to King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. An act of succession followed which named Elizabeth, and not Mary (her Catholic sister born to Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon), as heir to the throne.
May, 1536	Henry VIII allows the execution of Anne Boleyn on charges of adultery, treason and witchcraft. Henry was almost immediately betrothed to Jane Seymour.
Jun. 1536	The Second Act of Succession: removed both Elizabeth and Mary from the line of succession leaving no heir. Edward VI was born 12 th October 1537.
Jul. 1543	The Third Act of Succession: returned Mary and her heirs followed by Elizabeth and her heirs to the line of succession after Prince Edward and his heirs.
Jan. 1547	Henry VIII died, Edward VI became King of England.
1549	Thomas Seymour, who married Catherine Parr (Henry VIII's 6 th wife) shortly after Henry's death, was executed on grounds of treason following the scandal with young Elizabeth.
Jul. 1553	Lady Jane Grey was Queen of England for 9 days following Edward's changes to his Devise (will). Mary became Queen of England following the nobles plot to put Protestant Lady Jane Grey on the throne.
17 Nov. 1558	After being imprisoned in the Tower of London, followed by a term of house arrest on command of her older sister, Elizabeth succeeded Mary following her death in November 1558.
15 th Jan. 1559	Elizabeth's coronation. Elizabeth inherited huge debts of around £300,000 but spent £16,000 on a grand coronation.
1559-1601	Parliament met for 13 sessions during this period meeting for 140 weeks in total over a period of 45 years. During this period Parliament passed 434 Acts.
Jan. 1559	By January 1559 Elizabeth had appointed 19 members to her Privy Council. ½ were from Mary's Council (experience) and ½ were brand new (allowing Elizabeth to award loyal followers). By the second half of her reign the Privy Council was a small, highly efficient group of educated, professional, full-time politicians largely from the gentry.

Timeline of key events continued.	
Jan-May 1559	In her first Parliament, Elizabeth I created a new Protestant Church by restoring Royal Supremacy over the Church of England (Act of Supremacy).
Summer 1559	Elizabeth went on her first progress. This allowed Elizabeth to be seen by her subjects regularly, to build up a relationship with her people and to flatter nobles who she chose to stay with (while living at the expense of her nobles during the disease ridden summer months which mainly affected London).
1590s	Elizabeth's government was in crisis. The country had been damaged by war, plague, increased poverty and harvest failures. One by one Elizabeth's trusted advisors died which led to factional rivalry.
1595	Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, became one of Elizabeth's favourites and she made him a Privy Councillor in 1595. Elizabeth gave Essex the monopoly of sweet wine in England. This meant by law anyone who wished to bring in sweet wine from abroad would have to pay him a tax making him wealthy.
1596	Essex gains further attention from Elizabeth due to his military success against the Spanish .
1598	Essex failed to defeat the Earl of Tyrone's rebellion (the Nine Years' War). He made a truce with them and abandoned his post and returned to England without the Queen's permission. He faced house arrest, was banished from court and took away most of his public offices. In November 1600 she also took away his monopoly.
8 th Feb. 1601	Essex launched a rebellion in London. He aimed to seize the Queen and force her to replace her closest advisers, especially Cecil, with himself and his follower.
25 th Feb. 1601	Essex was executed for treason. His rebellion had failed within a few hours as he received no support from ordinary Londoners and most of his supporters abandoned him too.

Focus

Elizabeth was inexperienced when she became Queen, but she quickly became an expert politician. The Royal Court was a political centre with a corrupt patronage system and where different groups competed for power and influence (factional rivalry). The Royal Court was also a social and cultural centre, designed to impress visitors with its magnificence and ceremony. The Queen famously went on progress most summers as public relations exercises. Elizabeth relied on a small group of trusted advisors who sat on a committee called the Privy Council. Elizabeth disliked Parliament, which was mainly called in order to grant taxes. Parliament grew in confidence and independence, at times being quite outspoken in its criticism of Elizabeth's government. Elizabeth's key advisors died, leaving her isolated and bitter towards the end of her life. A rebellion was mounted by one of her former favourites towards the end of her reign. There was great prejudice against female monarchs. Elizabeth disagreed with Parliament and Council over her succession and marriage. Elizabeth chose not to marry, keeping her independence but resulting in the end of the Tudor Dynasty.

Key terms	
Abdicate	When a monarch gives up their throne.
Accession	The time when an individual becomes a monarch.
Ambassador	The official representative of a foreign ruler at the Court.
Bull	A decree issued by the pope
Bureaucracy	A system of government involving lots of departments and paperwork.
Court	The residence of the monarch and their household
Courtiers	Members of the Royal Court who attended and advised the Queen.
Death Warrant	An official order for the execution of a condemned person. It had to be signed by the monarch, the authenticated with Royal Seal, and then delivered to the place of execution.
Dynasty	A ruling family.
Debasement	To reduce the amount of precious metal in a coin
Gentry	Well-born families who owned land, but did not have titles and so were below the rank of the nobility.
Great Chain of Being	An idea that everything in the universe had its place in a rigid hierarchy.
Heir	Next in line to inherit the throne.
House Arrest	The state of being kept a prisoner in a house, rather than prison.
Illegitimate	The opposite of legitimate, meaning a child born out of wedlock.
Justices of Peace	A JP is a magistrate who hear minor cases in local areas.
Legislation	Acts of Parliament (laws) had to be approved by the monarch and both Houses of Parliament.
Monopolies	Royal licences giving individuals sole right to sell or make a product, leading to their profit and often leading to high prices.
Patronage	Using wealth, power and influence to promote individuals who then owe their patrons loyalty.
Peers	Members of the nobility sitting in the House of Lords.
Personal Monarchy	Where politics and government revolve around the monarch and their court.
Privy Councillors	Members of the Privy Council, the committee of ministers appointed to advise the monarch.
Progresses	Royal tour visits to the homes of the nobility.
Puritan	An extreme Protestant.
Queen Regnant	A queen ruling in her own right rather than because she is married to a king.
Regent	A person who governs on behalf of another who is incapable of ruling due to age, ability, illness or location.
Recoinage	To stabilise the currency, old debased coins were melted down and new coins issued.

Reformation	A movement for the reform of abuses in the Roman Catholic Church which ended up splitting the Church with the establishment of separate Protestant churches.
Regent	A person who governs on behalf of another who is incapable of ruling due to age, ability, illness or location.
Regicide	The deliberate killing of a monarch.
Renaissance	An intellectual and cultural movement originating in Italy in the Middle Ages, heavily influenced by the Ancient Greeks and Romans.
Sceptre	An ornamental wand held in the hand of a ruling monarch at the coronation as a sign of their power and godliness.
Suitor	A man who pursues a relationship with a particular woman, with a view to marriage.
Small Pox	An often-fatal viral disease, the symptoms of which included blisters and fever.
Suitor	A man who pursues a relationship with a particular woman, with a view to marriage.
Traitor	Somebody guilty of treason.
Treason	A crime involving disloyalty to your country, monarch or government.
Uniformity	All being the same.
Yeoman	A farmer who owned his own small estate.
Key people	
Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley	A member of the Lincolnshire Gentry. Made secretary of State in 1558. Wanted to avoid war and unite the nation through moderate policies. Given the title Lord Burghley in 1571 and made Lord Treasurer the following year due to his loyalty and his skills at managing Parliament. Died in 1598 and was replaced as Elizabeth's chief minister by his son, Robert.
Sir Francis Walsingham	Norfolk gentry. Puritan. Fiercely loyal to Elizabeth. Served as ambassador in Paris in the early 1570s. Appointed to the Privy Council in 1573, became secretary of state with special responsibility for foreign affairs. Knighted in 1577. Frequently clashed with Cecil. An ally of Dudley. In charge of Elizabeth's secret service (spy network) and was a very effective spy master who uncovered a number of plots against Elizabeth. Died in 1590.
Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester	Younger brother of the disgraced Duke of Northumberland who had been executed at the beginning of Bloody Mary's reign. Spent some of Mary's reign imprisoned in the Tower of London: like Elizabeth. Rumours of a romance between him and Elizabeth. A member of the Court and was personally responsible for Elizabeth's safety as he was Master of the Horse. Became a Privy Councillor in 1562. Frequently argued with Cecil about the succession, foreign policy and religion. Given the title Earl of Leicester in 1564. Died in 1588.
Sir Christopher Hatton	Northamptonshire Gentry. Studied Law at Oxford University. He became a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and the Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard after Elizabeth was impressed with his dancing at Court. Helped Elizabeth organise Elizabeth's famous progresses. He was a Protestant who hated Puritans and sympathised with Catholics. Helped Elizabeth control the MPs and secure their support. Became Lord Chancellor in 1587, in charge of judges and law Courts. Died in 1591.
Edward VI	Protestant King of England from the age of 9, January 1547-July 1553, son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour (third wife)
Mary I	Queen of England, July 1553 – November 1558, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Restored the Tudor Dynasty after Lady Jane Grey, The Protestant 9 day Queen of England and great-granddaughter of Henry VII was proclaimed queen following the death of Edward VI.