

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Succession



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Rob: Hello, I'm Rob...

Stephen: And I'm Stephen.

Rob: And this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. Today we're talking about royalty and **succession**.

Stephen: Succession is the act of taking over the position of King or Queen – and there are certain rules about who can succeed.

Rob: Yes and for the British Royal Family these rules have just changed. We'll talk a bit more about that soon but as always I like to start the programme with a question. So Stephen, are you ready?

Stephen: I guess so!

Rob: This is a royal question! Can you tell me which King did the current British Queen, Queen Elizabeth the Second, succeed? Was it:

- a) King George the Fifth
- b) King George the Sixth
- c) King Edward the Eighth

Stephen: I think it's a George and I'm going to guess King George the Sixth

Rob: OK, well, we'll see if you're right at the end of the programme. Now let's get back to the subject of royalty and particularly succession. Many people are fascinated by royal families – their every move is analysed because people want to see if they are worthy of their title.

Stephen: And people closely watch the princes and princesses because they could one day be the next **monarch**.

Rob: A monarch is the person who rules the country – in other words the King or Queen. If the current ruling monarch dies or **abdicates**, their oldest son or daughter could be their successor.

Stephen: But in the UK, old succession laws meant that it was always the eldest son who would take over the throne, unless of course there is only a daughter, as is the case with the British Queen.

Rob: So men were always preferred over women in succession simply because of their gender. And many people felt these restrictions were **outdated** and out of touch with the modern world. But they've recently been updated. Let's hear about these changes from the BBC's Duncan Kennedy. Listen to what would happen if the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge – William and Kate – were to have a girl first...

Duncan Kennedy, BBC

Changes to the monarchy as big as this need approval from all 16 realms where the Queen is head of state and now, at the bi-annual meeting of the Commonwealth, agreement has been reached. David Cameron said the changes would end male dominance and that the order of succession to the throne would now depend on the order of birth. Mr Cameron said if the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, William and Kate, were to have a girl first, she would one day become Queen. The Prime Minister said the rule banning future monarchs from marrying Catholics would also be scrapped.

Rob: So Duncan Kennedy says these are big changes to the British monarchy. They needed **approval**, or agreement, from the 16 countries where the Queen is head of state.

Stephen: Well approval was given and the order of succession to the throne is now simply down to the order of birth. British Prime Minister, David Cameron, says it would end male **dominance**.

Rob: So this means in the future, if William and Kate have a baby girl first, she would one day be Queen.

Stephen: Rob, there was another change to the rules about the monarchy that Duncan Kennedy mentioned?

Rob: Yes, it was to a controversial law that banned future monarchs from marrying Catholics. Previously, if they did, they would be **ruled out** of succession.

Stephen: But they were allowed to marry people from other religions though?

Rob: That's right. It seems strange but it's all to do with the history of the country and an attempt by Parliament to prevent a Catholic monarch. Anyway, the ban on marrying Catholics has now been lifted and Duncan Kennedy can tell us more on this **historic** change of law...

Duncan Kennedy, BBC

It's understood the Queen has given the reforms her full backing. Mr Cameron said it was an historic moment for the monarchy as the changes would sweep aside what he called out-dated rules that don't make sense anymore. The changes have to be formally approved by all the nations involved with Britain taking the lead in bringing forward legislation.

Stephen: So he calls these changes **reforms** – and the Queen has given these reforms her full backing.

Rob: That's good because David Cameron said the old rules don't make sense anymore! He calls it an historic moment for the monarchy.

Stephen: By historic, he means they are important and likely to be seen as important at some point in the future.

Rob: I'm sure they will be. The changes aim to give the British Royal Family a modern outlook and perhaps it was inevitable after the huge international attention that William and Kate have attracted.

Stephen: So in other words, their popularity around the world has helped these changes happen more quickly.

Rob: And putting the changes in place – or **implementing** them - will overturn 300 years of tradition, custom and law. Maybe it will help secure the future of the monarchy for centuries to come. Anyway, it's time to return to today's question.

Stephen: I thought you'd forgotten!

Rob: Of course not. I asked you, which King did the current British Queen, Queen Elizabeth the Second, succeed. Was it:

- a) King George the Fifth
- b) King George the Sixth
- c) King Edward the Eighth

Stephen: And I said King George the Sixth.

Rob: You are right. The answer is King George the Sixth. He was succeeded by his eldest daughter Elizabeth when he died in 1952. Queen Elizabeth the Second has been on the throne ever since – that's almost 60 years. OK Stephen, would you mind reminding us of some of the vocabulary that we've heard today?

Stephen: Sure. We've had...

succession

monarch

abdicates

outdated

approval

dominance

ruled out

historic

reforms

implementing

Rob: Thanks Stephen. Well we hope you've enjoyed today's programme, and you'll join us again soon for another 6 Minute English.

Both: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

succession	act or process of following in order or sequence
monarch	a king or queen who reigns over a country
abdicates	gives up a position of being a king or a queen
outdated	no longer useful or relevant
approval	a positive opinion of someone or something
dominance	preference of something or someone over other similar things or persons
ruled out	prevented from happening or from being possible
historic	important in history
reforms	changes and improvements to the law, social system or institution
implementing	carrying out a plan, system or law

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