UK & Prime Ministers



Britain has become addicted to pressing the ‘new PM’ button

David Cameron — Conservative

2010–2016

Who?

Leader of the Conservatives; became PM after the 2010 election.



Major events / decisions

- 🤝 **2010:** Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition
- 💰 **Austerity:** spending cuts and deficit reduction
- 🏫 Education and welfare reforms
- 🏳️‍🌈 **2013:** Same-sex marriage
- 🏴 **2014:** Scottish independence referendum
- 🇪🇺 **2016: Brexit referendum**
- ❗ **23 June 2016:** UK votes to leave the EU
- 🚪 Cameron resigns.

Key idea:
Austerity + coalition + Scotland + Brexit

Cameron is particularly important because he **called the Brexit referendum but campaigned for Remain**. After the Leave victory, he resigned.

Did David Cameron strengthen or destabilise British democracy?

Theresa May — Conservative

2016–2019

Who?

Former Home Secretary; became PM after Cameron's resignation.



Major events / decisions

- 🇪🇺 **2017:** Article 50 triggered → formal Brexit process begins
- 🗳️ **2017:** Snap general election
- ❌ Conservatives lose their majority
- 🤝 Government relies on DUP support
- 🇷🇺 **2018:** Salisbury poisoning / Novichok crisis
- 🇪🇺 **2018:** EU Withdrawal Act
- ❌ Repeated parliamentary rejection of her Brexit deal
- 🌱 **2019:** UK commits to **net zero emissions by 2050**
- 🚪 Resigns in 2019.

Key idea:
Brexit deadlock

May's premiership is probably the clearest example of how Brexit transformed the relationship between **government, Parliament and party politics**.

Boris Johnson — Conservative

2019–2022

Who?

Former Mayor of London and prominent Brexit campaigner.



Major events / decisions

- 🗳️ **2019:** General election → Conservative majority of 80
- 🇪🇺 **31 January 2020:** UK formally leaves the EU
- 🤝 **December 2020:** UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement
- 🦠 **2020–22:** COVID-19 pandemic
- 🔒 Lockdowns and restrictions
- 💉 Mass vaccination programme
- 🇺🇦 **2022:** Strong British support for Ukraine following Russia's invasion
- 🏠 "Levelling Up" agenda
- 🚪 Resigns after a series of political scandals and loss of support.

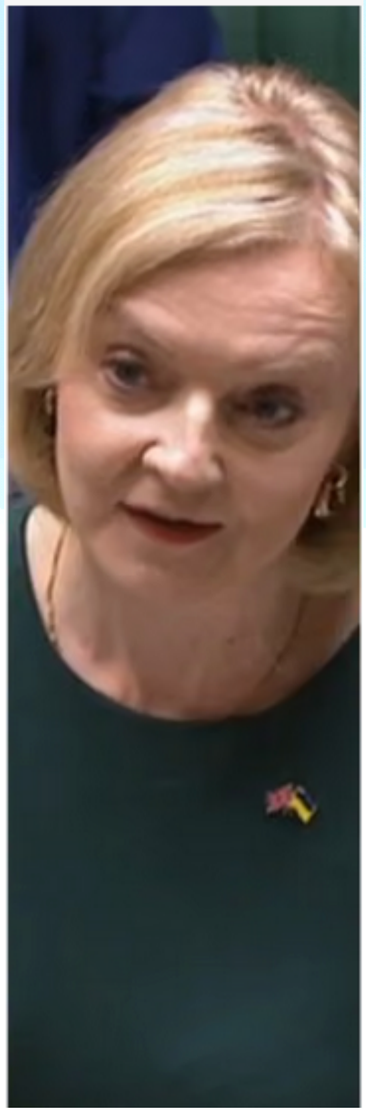
The UK formally left the EU under Johnson and his government subsequently managed the pandemic and negotiated the post-Brexit relationship with the EU.

Key idea:

"Get Brexit Done" + COVID + Ukraine

Liz Truss — Conservative

September–October 2022



Who?

Former Foreign Secretary; became PM after defeating Rishi Sunak in the Conservative leadership contest.

Major events / decisions

- 👑 **September 2022:** Queen Elizabeth II dies
- 💷 **September 2022:** "Mini-budget" announcing major tax cuts
- 📉 Financial-market turmoil
- 🔄 Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng dismissed
- 💷 Many policies reversed
- 🚪 **20 October 2022:** Truss announces resignation
- ⏱️ **49 days in office**

Her resignation statement explicitly acknowledged that she could not deliver the mandate on which she had been elected as Conservative leader.

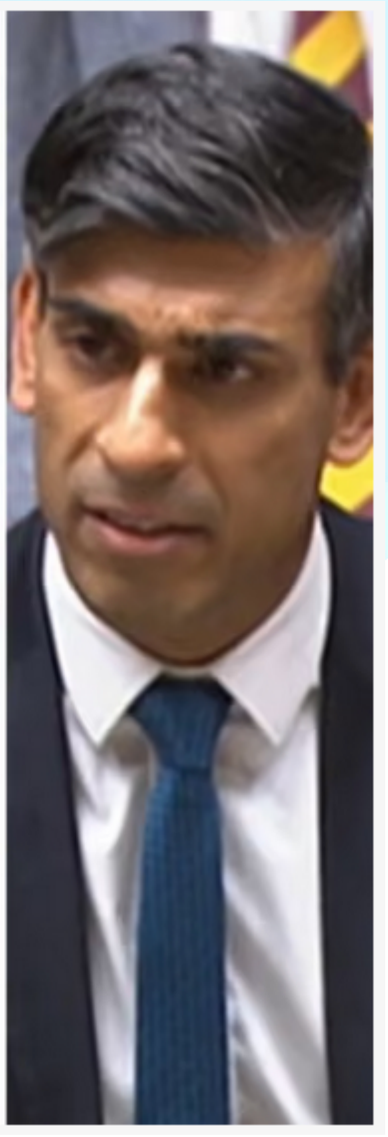
Key idea:

Economic instability + political instability

Rishi Sunak — Conservative

2022–2024

Who?
Former Chancellor; became PM after Truss.



Major events / decisions

- 💷 Attempt to restore economic stability after the Truss crisis
- 📉 Inflation reduction becomes central objective
- 🇬🇧 Post-Brexit policy
- 🇷🇼 Controversial **Rwanda migration policy**
- 🇺🇦 Continued support for Ukraine
- 🌱 Climate policy changes
- 🗳️ **2024:** Calls general election
- ❌ Conservatives lose heavily to Labour

Sunak was PM from 25 October 2022 until 5 July 2024.

Key idea:

Stability + inflation + immigration + Conservative decline

Keir Starmer — Labour

2024–20 July 2026

Who?

Former Director of Public Prosecutions and Labour leader since 2020.



Major events / decisions

- 🗳️ **4 July 2024:** Labour wins a large Commons majority
- 🔴 First Labour government since 2010
- 🏥 Focus on NHS waiting lists and public services
- 🏗️ Housing and infrastructure programme
- 📉 Economic growth and fiscal reform
- 🇪🇺 Attempt to improve UK–EU relations without reversing Brexit
- 🇺🇦 Strong support for Ukraine
- 🏛️ Constitutional / institutional reforms
- 🇬🇧 **2026:** political pressures lead to his departure

Starmer became PM on 5 July 2024 following Labour's election victory. **Important for your current course:** Starmer's government represents the first major change of governing party since 2010.

Key idea:

Labour returns + public services + economic reform + post-Brexit Britain