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line of succession to the british throne full list

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

The Line of Succession to the British Throne: Full List and Historical Context

The British monarchy is one of the oldest and most iconic institutions in the world. While its ceremonial role has evolved dramatically over the centuries, the rules that determine who will sit on the throne remain a subject of fascination for historians, legal scholars, and the general public alike. Whether you're a history buff, a fan of the royal family, or simply curious about who could one day become the King or Queen of the United Kingdom, understanding the line of succession is essential.

This article provides a comprehensive, up to date list of the current line of succession, explains the legal framework that governs it, explores its historical evolution, and looks ahead to future possibilities. By the end, you'll have a clear picture of who sits where in the royal hierarchy and why.

1. Understanding the British Succession

1.1 The Historical Roots of Royal Succession

The concept of hereditary monarchy in Britain dates back to the early medieval period, when kings claimed divine right and legitimacy through bloodlines. Over time, the succession evolved from a loosely based system of elective monarchy to a more formalized hereditary principle. Key milestones include:

- The Norman Conquest (1066) – William the Conqueror established a new ruling class that would shape succession laws.
- Succession Acts of 1701 – These acts codified the rules for succession, ensuring a Protestant line of succession and excluding Catholics.
- The Act of Settlement (1701) – A pivotal statute that set the stage for the current succession rules.
- The Succession to the Crown Act (2013) – Modernized the succession by abolishing male preference and ending the disqualification of those who marry Catholics.

1.2 The Current Legal Framework

Today, the line of succession is governed by a combination of statute, common law, and royal prerogative. The main legal instruments are:

1. Act of Settlement (1701) – Requires that all heirs be Protestant and that the monarch be in communion with the Church of England.
2. Royal Marriages Act (1772) – Historically required heirs to obtain the sovereign's consent before marriage; largely repealed by the Succession to the Crown Act (2013).
3. Succession to the Crown Act (2013) – Introduced absolute primogeniture (gender neutrality) and removed the disqualification for marrying a Catholic.
4. Common Law Principles – Establishes that the firstborn legitimate child of the sovereign is first in line.

These laws collectively ensure that the succession remains a transparent, orderly process that reflects the monarchy's constitutional role.

2. The Current Line of Succession

Below is the full list of the first twenty five individuals in the line of succession as of **October /2024**. The list is organized by rank, with the sovereign at the top, followed by direct descendants, and then extended relatives.

1. King Charles /III (b. 1948) – Current reigning monarch.
2. Prince William, Prince of Wales (b. 1982) – Eldest son of King Charles /III.
3. Prince George of Wales (b. 2013) – Eldest son of Prince William.
4. Princess Charlotte of Wales (b. 2015) – Daughter of Prince William.
5. Prince Louis of Wales (b. 2018) – Youngest child of Prince William.
6. Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (b. 1984) – Younger son of King Charles /III.
7. Archie Mountbatten Windsor (b. 2019) – Son of Prince Harry.
8. Lilibet Mountbatten Windsor (b. 2021) – Daughter of Prince Harry.
9. Prince Andrew, Duke of York (b. 1960) – Younger brother of King Charles /III.
10. Princess Beatrice, Mrs. Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi (b. 1988) – Daughter of Prince Andrew.
11. Princess Eugenie, Mrs. Jack Brooksbank (b. 1990) – Daughter of Prince Andrew.
12. Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex (b. 1964) – Younger brother of King Charles /III.
13. James, Viscount Severn (b. 1997) – Son of Prince Edward.
14. Princess Alexandra, Countess of Wessex (b. 2001) – Daughter of Prince Edward.
15. Princess Anne, The Princess Royal (b. 1950) – Sister of King Charles /III.
16. Peter Phillips (b. 1977) – Son of Princess Anne.
17. Zara Tindall (née Phillips) (b. 1981) – Daughter of Princess Anne.
18. Princess Beatrice's children – James and Isla (born 2018, 2020).
19. Princess Eugenie's children – August and Eugenie (born 2020, 2021).
20. James, Viscount Severn's children – Two daughters (born 2024).
21. Princess Alexandra's children – Two daughters (born 2024).
22. Peter Phillips's children – Savannah and Isla (born 2018, 2021).
23. Zara Tindall's children – Mia and Lena (born 2019, 2021).
24. Prince Edward's grandchildren – Two children (born 2025).
25. Princess Anne's grandchildren – Two children (born 2025).
26. Prince William's future children – Expected births in 2026 and beyond.
27. Prince Harry's future children – Expected births in 2027 and beyond.
28. Prince Andrew's future children – None currently, but potential future heirs if new births occur.

Note: The list continues beyond the twenty five individuals mentioned above, but these are the most immediate and relevant heirs. The order can shift with new births, deaths, or changes in marital status.

3. The Rules That Govern the Line of Succession

3.1 Descent and Legitimacy

Succession is primarily based on descent from the monarch. The firstborn legitimate child of the sovereign is first in line. Legitimacy means the child must be born within a lawful marriage. Children born out of wedlock are excluded from the line.

3.2 Gender Neutrality

Prior to 2013, male heirs were given precedence over their older sisters. The Succession to the Crown Act 2013 removed this preference, making the order strictly by birth order regardless of gender. This change modernized the monarchy and aligned it with contemporary values.

3.3 Religion

The monarch must be a member of the Church of England. Historically, this meant that Catholics were barred from the throne. The 2013 act removed the automatic disqualification for marrying a Catholic, but the sovereign must still be Protestant.

3.4 Marriage and Royal Consent

Until 2013, the Royal Marriages Act 1772 required heirs to obtain the sovereign's consent to marry. The 2013 act repealed most of these requirements, allowing heirs to marry freely without jeopardizing their place in the succession.

3.5 The Role of the Parliament

While the line of succession is largely hereditary, Parliament has the authority to alter succession laws. Any significant change would require a bill and the assent of the sovereign, ensuring that the monarchy remains a constitutional institution.

4. Key Figures in the Current Line

4.1 Prince William, Prince of Wales

As the heir apparent, Prince William is poised to become the next king. Born in 1982, he has been groomed for the role from a young age, completing his education at the University of St Andrews and serving in the Royal Air Force. His marriage to Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, produced three children, placing them high in the succession order.

4.2 Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex

Prince Harry's decision to step back from senior royal duties in 2020 did not affect his place in the line of succession. He remains third after his brother, William. His children, Archie and Lilibet, are currently seventh and eighth in line.

4.3 Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex

Prince Edward, the youngest brother of King Charles III, holds a unique position. While he is not in the immediate line, his descendants (James and Princess Alexandra) are included, ensuring the continuity of the royal family's legacy.

4.4 Princess Anne, The Princess Royal

Princess Anne, known for her sporting prowess and humanitarian work, has two children, Peter Phillips and Zara Tindall. Their children further extend the line, showcasing the monarchy's deep family roots.

5. How the Line of Succession Is Determined

Understanding the mechanics of succession can demystify the process. Here's a step by step breakdown:

1. Identify the Sovereign – The reigning monarch is the starting point.
2. Apply the Act of Settlement – Ensure the heir is Protestant and in communion with the Church of England.
3. Determine Birth Order – Order descendants by their date of birth, with gender neutrality as of 2013.
4. Check Legitimacy – Confirm that each heir was born within a lawful marriage.
5. Exclude Disqualified Individuals – Those who marry a Catholic (before 2013) or are otherwise disqualified by law are removed from the line.
6. Re rank if Necessary – With each new birth, the list is updated, moving all subsequent heirs one step down.

These steps ensure that the succession remains clear, predictable, and legally sound.

6. Historical Evolution of the Succession

6.1 The Act of Settlement (1701)

Drafted during the reign of William III and Mary II, the Act of Settlement was designed to secure a Protestant succession after the tumultuous reigns of James II and Charles II. It established that the monarch must be a Protestant and that the succession would pass to the nearest Protestant relative of the sovereign.

6.2 The Royal Marriages Act (1772)

Introduced by King George III, this act required heirs to obtain the sovereign’s consent before marrying. It was intended to prevent unsuitable alliances that could jeopardize the monarchy’s stability.

6.3 The Succession to the Crown Act (2013)

Modernizing the monarchy, the 2013 act introduced absolute primogeniture, abolished the disqualification for marrying Catholics, and repealed most of the Royal Marriages Act. It reflected contemporary values of equality and religious freedom.

6.4 Future Reforms

While no major reforms are currently on the horizon, the monarchy remains a living institution. Potential future changes could include adjustments to the rules around gender, religious affiliation, or the role of the monarch

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