

Timeline of the American Revolution



1763

February 10

The French and Indian War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Great Britain defeated the French and their North American Indian allies, gaining control of French Canada east of the Mississippi and Spanish Florida.

October 7

King George III issued the Proclamation of 1763, reserving lands west of the Appalachian Mountains for Indian tribes and prohibiting colonists from settling there.

1764

April 5

The Sugar Act tax was imposed by Britain as a means to generate revenue to pay for the defense and protection of the American colonies.

1765

March 22

British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which imposed a tax on legal papers and other printed goods as a means to pay for British troops in America. American colonists expressed dissatisfaction with this first direct tax on the colonies: the Sons of Liberty was formed to protest this legislation, and colonists created a Stamp Act Congress that prepared a resolution that King George III rescind the Stamp Act.

March 24

The Quartering Act was issued, requiring colonists to provide food and housing to British troops. This act quickly led to tension between the colonists and British troops.

1766

March 18

Parliament repealed the Stamp Act.

1767

June 29

The Townshend Acts imposed new duties on certain imported goods to the American colonies. These acts were met with resistance from the colonists and led to British occupation of Boston in 1768.

1768

October

Boston reinstated a boycott of British goods, which had been established earlier and relaxed with Parliament's tax repeals. Over the ensuing years many other colonies joined the boycott by passing non-importation resolutions.

1770

March 5

Five colonists were killed by British troops during a street fight between a mob of Boston citizens and British soldiers who were occupying the city. This event became known as the Boston Massacre.

April 12

Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts, except the duty on tea, and allowed the Quartering Act to expire.

1773

May 10

The Tea Act was imposed to collect an import tax on tea. This legislation gave the British East India Company a monopoly, as American merchants were bypassed and undersold.

December 16

The Boston Tea Party – protesters against the tea tax, some of them disguised as Mohawk Indians, boarded ships and dumped all of the cargos of tea into the harbor.

1774

March 31

The Intolerable Acts were issued to punish the Massachusetts colonists for the Boston Tea Party and to restore British authority and government in the colonies. Colonists viewed these acts a violation of their liberty, leading to further hostility between Britain and her American colonies.

**September 5 -
October 26**

The First Continental Congress was called in response to the Intolerable Acts. The first order of business was for all of the colonies to unify. A statement of American grievances was composed and sent to King George III. Representatives agreed to a resolution to boycott British goods beginning on December 1, 1774. A second meeting was to be scheduled in the spring if the King and Parliament did not respond favorably to the grievances.

1775

April 18

Paul Revere, an express rider in Boston, was dispatched to carry a message to Patriot leaders in Lexington, Massachusetts that the British were coming to arrest them. On his way there, Revere stopped at every house, informing the countryside that the British were on their way. William Dawes, another rider, was sent with the same warning that night but traveled a different route to Lexington. Both men, along with a third rider, Dr. Samuel Prescott, were arrested on their way to Concord, Massachusetts, later that same night.

April 19

Conflict turned to violence as battles broke out between Massachusetts militiamen and British army regulars, at sunrise in Lexington and later in Concord, over hidden military supplies. The Battles of Lexington and Concord began open warfare between the thirteen colonies and Great Britain.

May 10

Delegates of the Second Continental Congress began meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to govern the thirteen colonies. Important results over the following year were the creation of the Continental army, the election of George Washington as the army's commander-in-chief, authorization to print money, the initiation of foreign diplomacy and finally, following the failure of an olive branch petition to the king, a declaration of independence.

Mid-June

George Washington was commissioned as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army by the Second Continental Congress.

June 17

Colonial troops caused significant losses for the British army at the Battle of Bunker Hill, proving that inexperienced and untried soldiers could inflict significant damage on the enemy. It took the British regulars three attacks to remove the Continentals from Bunker Hill and claim victory.

July 3

Washington assumed command of the Continental Army.

1776

January

"Common Sense" by Thomas Paine was published. Paine used simple, straightforward language in his publication to challenge the authority of Britain and push for independence.

June 12

The Virginia Declaration of Rights, drafted by George Mason, was adopted by the Fifth Virginia Convention in Williamsburg, Virginia. This important document assured protection of individual rights and freedoms. Other monumental documents, such as the Bill of Rights, were influenced by this document.

June 29	Virginia became the first state to adopt its own constitution. The document declared independence from British rule and set the framework for a separation of power between the legislative side, the Virginia General Assembly and the executive side, the governor.
July 4	The Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, was adopted by the Continental Congress. The Declaration listed American grievances against King George III and announced independence from British rule.
August 27	The British were victorious in the Battle of Long Island, one of the largest engagements of the American Revolution. Outflanked by the British and realizing the cause was lost, Washington evacuated his entire army and was forced to retreat across New Jersey.
November 20	Fort Lee in New Jersey was captured by Cornwallis with no opposition from Continental forces. Evacuated in a hurry by American troops, a good store of cannon, ammunition and supplies were left to the British.
December 26	Following his famous Christmas day crossing of the icy Delaware River, Washington caught the enemy off guard and led the Continental Army to victory over Hessian troops stationed at Trenton, New Jersey.
1777 <hr/>	
January 3	George Washington's army defeated Cornwallis' troops at the Battle of Princeton. Victory at Trenton and Princeton greatly increased the morale of the Continental Army.
September 11	The defeat of American troops at the Battle of Brandywine left Philadelphia vulnerable to British occupation. By the end of the month, the British captured the city.
October 4	With the conquest of Philadelphia, British troops split between occupation of the city and nearby Germantown. Washington attempted, but failed to dislodge the British at the Battle of Germantown.
October 17	The Americans were victorious at Saratoga, New York. After being driven from his position, British General Burgoyne is surrounded and forced to surrender his army. The victory at Saratoga was a turning point in the war, as the Continental Army proved that they were capable of success in the war and led the French to join the war as an American ally.
November 15	The Articles of Confederation were adopted by the Continental Congress, establishing the United States of America as a confederation of self-governing states. The Articles established only a federal legislative body, Congress, and gave it very little power to finance or enforce its resolves.
December 19	Washington withdrew his army to a highly defensible position at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for the winter. Damp conditions and inadequate supplies caused illness and disease to run rampant through the camp. Baron Friedrich von Steuben, a Prussian, arrived that winter and began rigorous training of the troops.
1778 <hr/>	
February 6	France declared war on Great Britain in a treaty signed with America. This treaty recognized the United States of America as an independent country. France sent naval support, troops and badly needed supplies to aid the Americans.
March 7	British General William Howe was replaced by General Henry Clinton as commander-in-chief of the British army in North America.
1779 <hr/>	
June 21	Spain, an ally of France, declared war on Great Britain. With increasing threat of attack by French and Spanish armies, King George III was forced to defend British territory at home and abroad.

1780

- May 12** After a month-long siege, the city of Charleston, South Carolina, was forced to surrender to British General Clinton. This was a devastating defeat for the American force, with thousands of soldiers taken prisoner after the engagement.
- August 16** The British, led by General Charles Cornwallis, soundly defeated the Americans in the Battle of Camden. General Horatio Gates, who had led American troops to victory at Saratoga, lost over 2,000 men, several cannon and supplies. Gates retreated to Charlotte, North Carolina, and was soon replaced as the commander of the southern army. This victory served to strengthen the British hold on South Carolina.
- October 7** Patriot militiamen defeated the Loyalist militia by surrounding and trapping them at the crest of King's Mountain, North Carolina. The Battle of King's Mountain was decided after about an hour of fighting, when the Loyalist commander, Patrick Ferguson, was shot and killed. Loyalist troops soon surrendered. This victory served to improve Patriot morale, which was low following earlier defeats in Charleston and Camden. Following the Loyalist defeat at King's Mountain, British General Cornwallis retreated back to South Carolina.
- December 22** After being placed in charge by Washington, Nathanael Greene assumed command of the army in the south.

1781

- January 17** American forces under Daniel Morgan defeated British troops at Cowpens, South Carolina. Morgan's efficient use of militia along with Continental soldiers worked exactly as planned, drawing Lieutenant Banastre Tarleton head-on into the strongest forces. This British defeat set in motion a chain of events that would lead to loss of the war.
- March 15** The British defeated the Continental Army at Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina. However, with the victory came significant casualties. General Cornwallis left North Carolina and marched north to await reinforcements. Nathanael Greene's army, on the other hand, was left mostly intact and traveled south to attack British positions in South Carolina.
- September 5-8** The French and British navies engaged in the Battle of the Capes near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Eventually, the British navy left the area, heading to New York to repair and regroup. This left the French fleet in control of the Chesapeake Bay with no entry for British reinforcements.
- October 19** Cornwallis, surrounded by American and French troops at Yorktown, Virginia, and with no reinforcements in sight, surrendered.

1782

- March 20** Lord North resigned as Britain's Prime Minister. Lord North's government led Britain's responses to growing tensions in the American colonies and the subsequent war.
- November 30** Britain and America signed the Articles of Peace. This preliminary treaty ended the American Revolution and granted the United States of America land east of the Mississippi River.

1783

- September 3** The Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the war between Britain and the Americans and their allies. Britain signed separate treaties with France and Spain.
- December 23** Washington resigned as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.

1787

- September 17** The U.S. Constitution was approved by the majority of delegates to the Constitutional Convention. Meant to replace the Articles of Confederation, it was forwarded to the states for ratification.

1789

February 6

First meeting of the United States Congress.

April 30

George Washington was inaugurated as the first president of the United States.



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