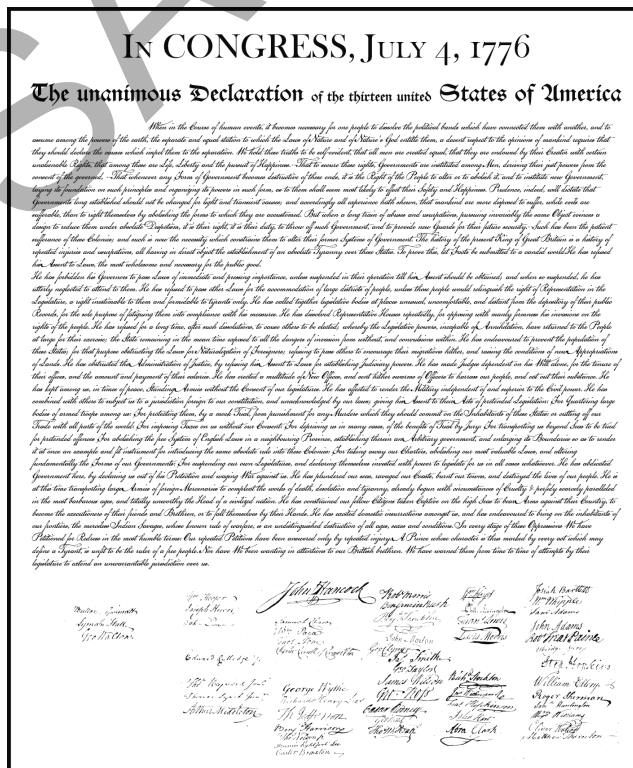


# Introduction

The Declaration of Independence was written by a committee of five people: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, although Thomas Jefferson did most of the writing. It was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. Just a few days later, on July 8, 1776, the Liberty Bell was rung when the Declaration was read to the public for the first time.

The Declaration of Independence begins by telling the world that there were reasons for the colonies declaring their independence and that this document would explain the reasons. It goes on to explain what the framers of the Declaration believed were basic rights that people should have. The Declaration then tells what the colonies felt the King of Britain did that made him more like a tyrant than a fair and just ruler. The document finally explains that an effort has been made to settle the problems peacefully, but these efforts have been ignored and the only course left to the colonies is to declare independence.

You'll notice some of the spelling is different than what you're used to today. Like most things, language changes over time. You may also notice references to people groups that may seem offensive. Keep in mind that just as language changes, so does what is considered acceptable or offensive to say also changes.



In Congress, July 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration  
of the thirteen united  
States of America,

When in the Course of human  
events, it becomes necessary  
for one people to dissolve the  
political bands which have  
connected them with another,  
and to assume among the  
powers of the earth, the  
separate and equal station to  
which the Laws of Nature and  
of Nature's God entitle them,  
a decent respect to the  
opinions of mankind requires

that they should declare the  
causes which impel them to the  
separation.



We hold these truths to be  
self-evident, that all men are  
created equal, that they are  
endowed by their Creator with  
certain unalienable Rights, that  
among these are Life, Liberty  
and the pursuit of Happiness—  
That to secure these rights,  
Governments are instituted  
among Men, deriving their just  
powers from the consent of

the governed,—That whenever  
any Form of Government  
becomes destructive of these  
ends, it is the Right of the  
People to alter or to abolish it,  
and to institute new  
Government, laying its  
foundation on such principles  
and organizing its powers in  
such form, as to them shall  
seem most likely to effect  
their Safety and Happiness.  
Prudence, indeed, will dictate  
that Governments long  
established should not be  
changed for light and

transient causes; and  
accordingly all experience hath  
shewn, that mankind are more  
disposed to suffer, while evils  
are sufferable, than to right  
themselves by abolishing the  
forms to which they are  
accustomed. But when a long  
train of abuses and  
usurpations, pursuing invariably  
the same Object evinces a  
design to reduce them under  
absolute Despotism, it is their  
right, it is their duty, to throw  
off such Government, and to  
provide new Guards for their

future security.—Such has  
been the patient sufferance  
of these Colonies; and such is  
now the necessity which  
constrains them to alter their  
former Systems of  
Government. The history of the  
present King of Great Britain  
is a history of repeated  
injuries and usurpations, all  
having in direct object the  
establishment of an absolute  
Tyranny over these States. To  
prove this, let Facts be  
submitted to a candid world.

