



American War of Independence

Complete guide: context, comparison, battles, 1778 treaty, France's role

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Introduction

The American War of Independence (1775-1783) pitted thirteen British colonies against the Crown, leading to the Declaration of July 4, 1776 and the 1783 Treaty of Paris.

Context and spark

Colonial taxes, the Boston Tea Party (1773), and Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775) turned political crisis into open war.

France's role

Financial aid, arms, trainers, land forces (Rochambeau), and the navy (de Grasse). The February 6, 1778 alliance turned the war global.

1778 alliance treaties

Two treaties signed in Paris: amity and commerce, plus a defensive military alliance. Official recognition of U.S. independence.

Franco-American legacy

Commemorations at Yorktown, cultural ties, the Statue of Liberty (1886), and Enlightenment ideas shared across the Atlantic.

Americans / British / French comparison

Criterion	Americans	British	French
Command	George Washington	Howe, Clinton, Cornwallis	Rochambeau, de Grasse
Peak strength	~20,000 Continentals + militia	~40,000+ regulars	~6,000 land + fleet
Navy	Emerging force	Leading global navy	Decisive at Chesapeake (1781)
Strategic goal	Independence	Restore royal authority	Weaken Great Britain
Decisive contribution	Home ground, mobilization	Discipline, cities	Money, fleet, Yorktown

Major battles (color = winner)

Battle	Date	Winner	Summary
Bunker Hill	June 17, 1775	Great Britain	Costly British victory
Trenton	Dec. 26, 1776	United States	American surprise attack
Saratoga	Oct. 1777	United States	Burgoyne surrenders
Chesapeake	Sept. 5, 1781	France	de Grasse blocks Graves
Yorktown	Oct. 19, 1781	U.S. + France	Cornwallis surrenders
Guilford Courthouse	Mar. 15, 1781	Pyrrhic GB win	Cornwallis weakened
Monmouth	June 28, 1778	Draw	Continental Army holds

Official sources

NPS American Revolution : <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/americanrevolution/index.htm>
National Archives, Declaration : <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/declaration-of-independence>
National Archives, Treaty 1778 : <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-alliance-with-france>
Library of Congress : <https://www.loc.gov/collections/continental-congress-and-constitutional-convention/>
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