**Causes of the American Revolution**

**The Colonial Mindset and Events That Led to Revolt**

The American Revolution began in 1775 as open conflict between the united [thirteen colonies](http://americanhistory.about.com/library/charts/blcolonial13.htm) and Great Britain. By the [Treaty of Paris](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/revolutionarywar/a/treaty_of_paris.htm) that ended the war in 1783, the colonies had won their independence. While no one event can be pointed to as the actual cause of the revolution, the war began as a disagreement over the way in which Great Britain treated the colonies versus the way the colonies felt they should be treated. Americans felt they deserved all the rights of Englishmen. The British, on the other hand, felt that the colonies were created to be used in the way that best suited the crown and parliament. This conflict is embodied in one of the rallying cries of the American Revolution: ***No Taxation Without Representation***.

**America's Independent Way of Thinking**

First, let's take a look at the mindset of the [founding fathers](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/revolutionarywar/tp/foundingfathers.htm).

* **Geographic Considerations** - The distance of the colonies from Great Britain created an independence that was hard to overcome. Those willing to colonize the new world generally had a strong independent streak desiring new opportunities and more freedom.
* **Colonial Legislatures** – The existence of colonial legislatures meant that the colonies were in many ways independent of the crown. The legislatures were allowed to levy taxes, muster troops, and pass laws. Over time, these powers became rights in the eyes of many colonists. When they were curtailed by the British, conflict ensued. The future leaders of the United States were born in these legislatures.
* **Salutary Neglect** - Even though the British believed in [mercantilism](http://712educators.about.com/cs/historyarlessons/l/blamrevmerc.htm), Prime Minister Robert Walpole espoused a view of "salutary neglect." This was a system whereby the actual enforcement of external trade relations was lax. He believed this enhanced freedom would stimulate commerce.
* **The Enlightenment** – Many of the revolutionary leaders had studied major writings of the Enlightenment including those of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the Baron de Montesquieu. From these writings, the founders gleaned the concepts of the [social contract](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/g/social_contract.htm), limited government, the consent of the governed, and [separation of powers](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/g/sep_of_powers.htm).

**Major Events That Led to the American Revolution**

The road to revolution built slowly over time. Many events fed the growing desire of the thirteen colonies for independence. Following are the major events that led to the Revolution.

* 1754-1763 - **French and Indian War**  
  This war between Britain and France ended with the victorious British deeply in debt and demanding more revenue from the colonies. With the defeat of the French, the colonies became less dependent on Britain for protection.
* 1763 - **Proclamation of 1763**  
  This prohibited settlement beyond the Appalachian Mountains. While Britain did not intend to harm the colonists, many colonists took offense at this order.
* 1764 - **Sugar Act**  
  This act raised revenue by increasing duties on sugar imported from the West Indies.
* 1764 - **Currency Act**  
  Parliament argued that colonial currency had caused a devaluation harmful to British trade. They banned American assemblies from issuing paper bills or bills of credit.
* 1764 - **Committees of Correspondence**  
  Organized by [Samuel Adams](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/biographiesaf/p/samuel_adams.htm), these helped spread propaganda and information through letters.
* 1765 - **Quartering Act**  
  Britain ordered that colonists were to house and feed British soldiers if necessary.
* 1765 - **Stamp Act**  
  This required tax stamps on many items and documents including playing cards, newspapers, and marriage licenses. Prime Minister George Grenville stated that this direct tax was intended for the colonies to pay for defense. Previous taxes imposed by Britain had been indirect, or hidden.
  + 1765 - **Stamp Act Congress**  
    In 1765, 27 delegates from nine colonies met in New York City and drew up a statement of rights and grievances thereby bringing colonies together in opposition to Britain.
  + 1765 - **Sons and Daughters of Liberty**  
    Colonists tried to fight back by imposing non-importation agreements. The Sons of Liberty often took the law into their own hands enforcing these 'agreements' by methods such as tar and feathering.
* 1767 - **Townshend Acts**  
  These taxes were imposed to help make the colonial officials independent of the colonists and included duties on glass, paper, and tea. Smugglers increased their activities to avoid the tax leading to more troops in Boston.
* 1770 - [**Boston Massacre**](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/revolutionarywar/a/boston_massacre.htm)  
  The colonists and British soldiers openly clashed in Boston. This event was used as an example of British cruelty despite questions about how it actually occurred.
* 1773 - **Tea Act**  
  To assist the failing British East India Company, the Company was given a monopoly to trade tea in America.
  + 1773 - **Boston Tea Party**  
    A group of colonists disguised as Indians dumped tea overboard from three ships in Boston Harbor.
* 1774 - **Intolerable Acts**  
  These were passed in response to the Boston Tea Party and placed restrictions on the colonists including outlawing town meetings and the closing of Boston Harbor.
* 1774 - **First Continental Congress**  
  In response to the Intolerable Acts, 12 of the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia from September-October, 1774. One of the main results of this was the creation of The Association calling for a boycott of British goods.
* 1775 - **Lexington and Concord**  
  In April, British troops were ordered to Lexington and Concord to seize stores of colonial gunpowder and to capture Samuel Adams and John Hancock. At Lexington, open conflict occurred and eight Americans were killed. At Concord, the British troops were forced to retreat with the loss of 70 men. This was the first instance of open warfare.
* 1775 - **Second Continental Congress**  
  All 13 colonies were represented at this meeting in Philadelphia beginning May. The colonists still hoped that their grievances would be met by King George III. [George Washington](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/georgewashington/a/geo_washington.htm) was named head of the Continental Army.
* 1775 - **Bunker Hill**  
  This major victory for the Colonists resulted in George III proclaiming the colonies in rebellion.

In the end, the American Revolution grew out of increasing restrictions placed upon the colonies by the British. One interesting side note: It is estimated that only one-third of the colonists were in favor of rebellion. One-third continued to side with the British. The last third were neutral concerning the rebellion and break from Great Britain.