### Timeline: Declaration of Independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>1765</td>
<td>In March, Britain passes the Stamp Act, which places a tax on printed paper goods. Colonists, frustrated with growing British taxation, protest against &quot;taxation without representation.&quot; Amid colonial unrest, Britain repeals the Stamp Act in March the following year, but will continue to impose other taxes.</td>
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<td>1773</td>
<td>On December 16, a group of colonial activists disguised as Indians boards several merchant ships in Boston Harbor, dumping all 342 barrels of tea overboard. The incident, which becomes known as the &quot;Boston Tea Party,&quot; is carried out in protest over an unpopular Tea Tax imposed by the British government.</td>
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<td>1774</td>
<td>The British Parliament, in response to escalating acts of defiance in the Massachusetts Colony, passes a series of laws in March called the Coercive Acts. Denounced as the &quot;Intolerable Acts&quot; by colonialists, the Coercive Acts consist of several measures designed to punish Massachusetts and intimidate its neighboring colonies. General Thomas Gage, commander of all British forces in the American colonies, arrives in Boston with four military regiments on May 13 and replaces Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Boston becomes a British-occupied city. The First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia on September 5. The congress consists of 56 delegates representing every colony except Georgia. Lasting until October 26, the session holds discussions and debates on how to confront the British problem.</td>
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<td>1775</td>
<td>When British forces ride through the town of Lexington, Massachusetts, and confront a band of militiamen, a shot rings out and triggers a bloody fight, leaving eight Americans dead. The Redcoats are met with further colonial resistance in Concord and during their march back to Boston. In the end, the Battle of Lexington and Concord—the first battle of the</td>
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Revolutionary War—results in roughly 90 Americans being wounded or killed, and about 250 British casualties.

The Second Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia on May 10. Over weeks of debate, war and peace factions agree to form a continental army but also to pursue peaceful reconciliation with Britain. Also on May 10, Ethan Allen and colonial forces capture Fort Ticonderoga in the first American offensive of the war.

General George Washington is unanimously selected on June 15 to lead the newly formed Continental Army.

On June 17, the first major confrontation of the war takes place outside Boston in the Battle of Bunker Hill. American forces are eventually routed, but they strike an unexpected and devastating blow against the British army; some 1,000 British troops are killed or wounded.

On July 5, Congress adopts the Olive Branch Petition, a direct appeal to King George III for his support in restoring peace between Britain and its colonies. The next day, Congress also adopts the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking up Arms, which rejects independence but explains the need for defending the colonies against the British with military force.

King George refuses to receive the Olive Branch Petition, and on August 23 he officially declares the colonies to be in an open state of rebellion.

On December 22, King George III issues the Prohibitory Act, which effectively shuts down all trade and commerce with the colonies and officially strips the Americans of the protection of the king.

On January 9, Thomas Paine anonymously publishes *Common Sense*, a tract that attacks King George III and persuasively argues in support of colonial independence from Britain. The pamphlet sells 150,000 copies in its first three months.
On May 10, the Continental Congress instructs each of the 13 colonies to begin the process of forming new provincial governments.

Richard Henry Lee, a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress, submits a formal resolution on June 7 calling for colonial independence from Britain. A committee is composed to draft a declaration of independence based on the Lee Resolution.

Congress votes to adopt the Lee Resolution on July 2, formally breaking all political ties with the British Empire.

The Declaration of Independence is officially adopted by Congress on July 4.

1781  On October 19, the British are defeated during the Siege of Yorktown; their defeat marks the unofficial end of the Revolutionary War.

1783  The signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3 officially ends the Revolutionary War.

Citation Information

MLA  Chicago Manual of Style