

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS ORGANIZER

TITLE  ALL CAPS hyperlinked	<u>DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE</u>
HEADLINE  What is the document about?	The United States Declaration of Independence is the pronouncement and founding document adopted by the Second Continental Congress meeting at Independence Hall, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 4, 1776 declaring Independence from Britain.
AUTHOR(S)  Who?	The Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 . We now credit Thomas Jefferson with the Declaration's authorship, but that was not the case on that momentous day, nor for a significant time afterwards. The document was drafted by a committee made up of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston. Jefferson, recognized for his ability with words, wrote the first draft; then it was edited by the others, and then edited again by the whole Congress. Fifty-six members of Congress signed it (one of them as late as November).
YEAR  When?	1776
Intent  Why was it written?	The document announced the separation of 13 North American British colonies from Great Britain. It was the last of a series of steps that led the colonies to final separation from Great Britain. At the time that the American Revolution began in April 1775 most colonists were not seeking independence. The Declaration of Independence included these three major ideas: 1-People have certain Inalienable Rights including Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness. 2-All Men are created equal. 3-Individuals have a civic duty to defend these rights for themselves and others.
ARGUMENT  What claim does the document make?	Tyranny is bad. Equality is good. Rights are good. If you are living under tyranny you have a duty to overthrow it.
So What?  What is the impact of this document?	The Declaration of Independence states the principles on which our government, and our identity as Americans, are based. Unlike the other founding documents, the Declaration of Independence is not legally binding, but it is powerful. Abraham Lincoln called it "a rebuke and a stumbling-block to tyranny and oppression." It continues to inspire people around the world to fight for freedom and equality.
REMEMBER  Write a mnemonic to help you remember it	Do you want: Equality? Certain Inalienable Rights?

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	Liberty? America? Rights? Enough already! Overthrow the Brits!
QUOTE  Write an important Quote from it	<i>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.</i>
CONNECT  How does it connect to the U.S. Constitution?	The Declaration of Independence, which officially broke all political ties between the American colonies and Great Britain, set forth the ideas and principles behind a just and fair government. These principles would become organized into rules for a system of government in the Constitution which outlined how this government would function. Later documents from the Federalist Papers through the Letter From Birmingham Jail would echo the cries for freedom and liberty first proposed in the Declaration of independence. The Declaration of Independence is the wellspring from which all subsequent American political expression flows. It's hard to imagine any of the units of American government with the Declaration of Independence. It is the bedrock ideal upon which all other American political principles stand. The propositions of liberty and rights is a thread that flows throughout all units of American government and politics.