



George Washington

Born: February 22, 1732 (Julian calendar), Westmoreland County, Virginia

Overview:

George Washington, born into a modest Virginia planter family, would become the indispensable figure of the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. Though not the most experienced military tactician of his time, Washington's strength lay in leadership, resilience, and moral authority—qualities that held the Continental Army and the cause of liberty together through some of the darkest days of the war.

Early Life and Military Background:

Washington's first military experience came in 1754, when he served as a

lieutenant colonel in the Virginia colonial militia. He led a failed expedition against French forces in the Ohio River Valley, sparking the Seven Years' War. Though the campaign was a disaster, it introduced him to the brutal realities of war. After resigning his commission, he returned to Virginia, became a successful planter, and later served in the House of Burgesses. He grew increasingly vocal in his opposition to British taxation and repression.

Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army:

In 1775, as the colonies moved toward open rebellion, Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army by the Second Continental Congress. He officially took command on July 3, 1775, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, riding before the assembled troops and drawing his sword in solemn commitment to the cause. Notably, he refused a salary for his service, accepting only reimbursement for expenses ([History.com](https://www.history.com)).

Though he lost more battles than he won, Washington never surrendered his army or his resolve. His tenacity proved decisive in critical moments. Victories at Trenton in 1776 and the final campaign at Yorktown in 1781 helped shift momentum in favor of the Americans.

Strategic and Intelligence Innovations:

Washington's leadership went beyond battlefield tactics. He revolutionized military logistics by securing critical supplies—such as weapons from Fort Ticonderoga—and deploying privateers to disrupt British supply lines. He also oversaw the Culper Spy Ring, established in

1778, which played a crucial role in exposing Benedict Arnold's treason and deceiving British forces ahead of Yorktown.

Legacy in the War and After:

Washington's leadership helped unify a loosely connected group of colonies into a functioning army and nation. His commitment attracted crucial French support and ultimately led to the surrender of British General Cornwallis in 1781.

After the war, Washington returned to private life at Mount Vernon but was called back to public service in 1787 to preside over the Constitutional Convention. His presence lent credibility to the proceedings, and the office of the presidency was shaped with him in mind.

First President of the United States:

In 1789, Washington was unanimously elected as the first President of the United States. As president, he focused on uniting the young nation, avoiding foreign entanglements, and establishing the authority of the new federal government. "I walk on untrodden ground," he once said, aware that his actions would set enduring precedents. He surrounded himself with strong advisors, including Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, and resisted calls for a third term, stepping down in 1797. He died in 1799 at Mount Vernon.

Fun Fact:

Washington lost more battles than he won during the Revolutionary War—but never gave up command. His steadfastness, not perfection, turned the tide of American history.

Citation:

"Washington takes command of Continental Army." *History.com*, A&E
Television Networks,

[https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/july-3/washington-takes-c
ommand-of-continental-army](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/july-3/washington-takes-command-of-continental-army).