

George Washington as a leader of the nation and the US first president

[Politics](#), [President](#)



There can be an argument made that George Washington is potentially the most influential person in the entire history of the United States. His name is all over our country's history and in many monuments and museums. No matter how many times Washington lost, he always came back and continued to fight until he eventually won. There are many reasons why he could be considered the most important figure in U. S. history. He led the U. S. against the British during the Revolutionary War and defeated them under insurmountable odds. His determination and bravery is the main reason why the U. S. survived during the terrible winter at Valley Forge. His fighting strategies slowly tore the British apart until the colonists defeated them and became the United States of America. He was there during key events like signing the Declaration of Independence, helping to create the first constitution at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and becoming the first president of the United States. George Washington was also a very smart and persuasive speaker. Many of the points he made are still prevalent in our society to this day. His persuasive speaking helped him to get a large backing from the colonists which helped spark the beginning of the resistance against the British and the American Revolution. His personality traits also helped to build him into a very good leader. He was brave, tactical, determined, and hardworking. Without George Washington, the United States of America may not exist and we would still be part of Great Britain. All of these reasons show why George Washington was one of the most influential characters in all of U. S. history.

George Washington began his military career as the adjutant for a group of militia in Virginia. His first job as an adjutant was to warn a group of French

troops coming up to the Ohio River that they were about to pass into Virginia territory in 1753. Washington came back with the message that the French wanted to take over the part of Virginia. The French didn't listen to Washington's message, so Washington went into the wilderness with only a small number of men in 1753 to push the Frenchmen back. On the way, Washington befriended a Native American chieftain in the area named Halfking. This was something that Washington did often, and it helped a lot because Halfking took them on hidden paths to the French fort. Washington returned to Governor Dewiddle of Virginia with a map of the areas that he and his army had traveled with Halfking. Washington had to face a lot of hardships during his trip including icy conditions, almost drowning in an icy river, and hostile Native Americans. Washington did such a good job that Dewiddle actually promoted him to lieutenant colonel. This was the first battle in Washington's career as a military general and it showed that he was on the road to becoming an expert strategist and a great war general. The message that the colonists got back from the French was alarming because they wanted to take part in Virginia. The governor trusted Washington enough to give him several hundred soldiers to command to keep the French out of Virginia. Throughout the war, Washington defined himself as an outstanding general and strategist that had the potential to do great things for the colonies.

Washington participated in the first battle of the colonial wars. The governor sent Washington to Fort Duquesne with another, more aggressive, message telling the French to leave. When the French said no, Washington brought up

a small militia of men and they were defeated by the larger French army. To combat this, Washington built Fort Necessity, which was a few miles away from the French base. As Fort Necessity was being built, the French attacked. The men at the fort had little food and supplies and were not well prepared for the attack. About one-third of the Virginians died that day and Washington had to surrender to the French. Washington thought the main reason why they lost was because of the contrasting fighting styles. The British had on bright red uniforms and marched in lines while they fought. The French and Native Americans fought in more of a guerilla-style of warfare, hiding in the wilderness and never coming out into the open. Washington would later use this tactic in the Revolutionary War against the British army.

Throughout the war, George Washington continued to get promoted. In the Battle of Monongahela, Washington tried to convince Major General Braddock that they should leave behind heavy equipment such as cannons so that they could travel faster as a unit. Braddock didn't agree because he thought they needed firepower to defeat the French. Washington was proven right when the French ambushed Braddock's army. When Braddock was wounded, Washington had to command the army. Two of his horses got shot, so he commanded the army on foot and eventually retreated with the army that he had left. After the battle, due to his level-headed command, focus, and bravery, he was promoted to Colonel. These battles helped to shape Washington's strategies and will to fight for years to come.

Washington began to serve on the House of Burgesses in 1765. Along with the colonists, he protested the high taxes on highly-priced English products that weren't even well-made. Washington also had a hate for the British because they had treated the colonists in past battles as well as in daily life. This led to Washington signing the Declaration of Independence and preparing for the war for independence with the British. Throughout this war, Washington and his men lost a lot of battles and went through many hardships. However, Washington's will to win independence pushed him and his army to continue to come back and fight and eventually win the war for independence.

The first battle that Washington truly participated in during the Revolutionary War was the Battle of Long Island. Britain's goal was to split the southern and northern colonies so supplies couldn't be transferred between them. This meant that the British were going to try to take New York Harbor. Washington made a big mistake and split his army into two, with half of his army staying and half of his army moving to Long Island. On August 22, 1776, the British began to bomb Long Island, and Washington and his 9,500 soldiers were stuck with nowhere to go. While this was going on, General William Howe and his 32,000 soldiers were landing in Long Island. Even though they were there, Howe wanted to wait till morning to attack the Americans, so Washington had a risky and desperate plan to escape. Washington was trying to get all 9,500 soldiers to row across the channel so they could get to safety and live to fight another day. They had only gotten about half of the soldiers across by morning, but fog fell over

Long Island until the last boat of soldiers had crossed the channel. American soldiers wrote in journals that it was by the “ Hand of God” that they all got across the channel safely and escaped from the British. Even though this first battle was a tough loss, but they were able to recover and move forward.

The first couple of years of the war were very tough for the colonists, with the British winning almost every battle and the colonists having to retreat or surrender. A huge threat to the end of the war for independence was the colonial soldiers’ morale. Washington knew that this could end the war very quickly, so he devised a plan to where the colonial soldiers could defeat the British in a battle and give them morale as well as confidence in the war effort. Washington knew that the British had hired German soldiers called Hessians to help defeat the colonists. They had set up their fort in Trenton, New Jersey. Washington’s plan was to launch a surprise invasion of the fort on the day after Christmas while they were sleeping after their Christmas celebrations. On Christmas night, Washington and his soldiers marched over 40 miles to Trenton and attacked the Hessians. The Hessians tried to fight back, but the surprise attack from the Americans was too much for them. The Americans won the battle convincingly, capturing about 900 Hessians. This battle gave the American soldiers a boost in morale, confidence, and determination to continue the war and keep fighting for independence from the British. It also made people who had left the army re-enlist and join in on the war effort. This victory was a huge step towards America’s journey for independence.

After this high point came one of the lowest points in the entire Revolutionary War for the American soldiers, which was the winter at Valley Forge. At first, all they had at Valley Forge were tents, so Washington ordered his soldiers to build cabins so that the winter was a little bit more manageable. The soldiers were losing a lot of morale being in the cold, but Washington kept the soldiers focused on staying alive and getting through the winter so the battle can continue. Even at the darkest points during the winter when they barely had any food, water, and supplies. Washington continued to not give up and push his soldiers to survive and get through the winter. His encouragement got his soldiers through the winter and they continued to fight the war for independence.

After the Americans won a few more battles during the next few years of the war, the French decided to join the revolution and help the colonists. The colonial army also saw a massive increase in recruits because of those few victories as well. The last major battle of the Revolutionary War was one that Washington had a large part in. In the Battle of Yorktown, General Cornwallis of the British army made the mistake of putting himself and 8000 British soldiers in a terrible position. French General Marquis de Lafayette noticed that the British army could be surrounded and taken over relatively easily based on Cornwallis' position. Washington's army headed to join Lafayette's army and they worked together to attack the British army. When Cornwallis and his army tried to retreat with the British navy, they found that the British navy had actually been defeated by the French navy. This is when General

Cornwallis surrendered to the Americans and the war for independence had ended.

After the Revolutionary War was over, Washington decided that he was going to return to public service, even though he wanted to live in peace up at his home in Mount Vernon. The first major public service position Washington held after the war was being the president of the Constitutional Convention. In 1789, the first president of the United States was elected. Every state voted for the two candidates they wanted to be elected, and George Washington was on every states' ballot. This made George Washington the very first president of the United States and John Adams the vice president since he had the second-most votes. Washington knew that his presidency was going to be a very important one since he knew that every decision that he made would be looked at and used by other presidents for many years to come. This fact made Washington's administration one that had a lot of caution, precision, and judgment before they made any important decisions. They were aware that their decisions carried a lot of prevalence for the future of the United States of America. Washington wanted to stay away from political parties and he made sure of this by touring the Northern states and the Southern states. Washington also showed this by giving both political parties an even footing in his cabinet. He leaned on one person in his cabinet more than the others, and that was Alexander Hamilton. Washington took more of his nationalist view of having a Bank of the United States and favored a stronger federal government. Jefferson thought that the states should have more power than the federal

government, so Washington spent his presidency trying to keep peace within his cabinet between the differing views of Hamilton and Jefferson. When it came to foreign affairs, Washington also took Hamilton's view and said that the United States needs to stay neutral to keep the country's national identity and stay out of foreign affairs. Jefferson departed in 1793, and they left one good term which was something that Washington thought was very important.

Washington continued to encourage national power with the stopping of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 with federal troops. This act was important because it showed that people could not mess with the federal government and people needed to follow the rules of the Constitution in the country.

Washington's neutral approach to foreign policy also helped the United States massively with Jay's Treaty in August 1795. This treaty let the United States trade with Great Britain only a decade after the Revolutionary War. This helped the United States begin to grow economically as a country.

Washington had done a good job in his two terms as the first president of the United States and many people wanted him to serve a third term as president. However, Washington declined and his decision influenced the decision about presidents only being able to serve two terms in the future.

Washington's created a Farewell Address that set precedents for the future of the United States and the direction that he thought that the country should be headed after his presidency and for many years to come. Washington talked about how the North and South were under the same laws and were there to help each other. He talked about how the South benefitted from the

North economically, and the North benefited from the South economically to unify the country and make sure the country was together before he left office. Washington also emphasized staying out of foreign affairs when he said, “ The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.” Another thing that Washington emphasized in his Farewell Address was to not have political parties. This is shown when he said, “ There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged.” These two points are ones that have been thought about for many generations and still hold prevalence to this day.

Throughout his presidency and his military career, George Washington made an impact that has lasted for centuries in the United States and the entire world. He faced many hardships and challenges throughout his time as a military leader and political leader that shaped how he acted and how our country works to this day. From the Colonial Wars and the Revolutionary War to Washington’s two terms as the first president of the United States, along with his determination, bravery, confidence, and leadership helped the United States win these wars and eventually become the great nation that it

is today. The main points that he made in his Inaugural Address about not getting involved in foreign affairs and not having political parties still hold prevalence today because we are running into problems with both of these points as a country. Overall, George Washington helped shape the country and will continue to impact the way it is today and how it will be for many generations to come.