

Declaration of Independence in plain English

Taken from Ms. Redding

Part One: The Preamble (why this document was created):

There comes a time in History when the American People must break away from England, and become a separate nation, equal with other nations, like God planned all along. We care about what the rest of the world thinks, so we'll tell you why we were forced to declare independence.

Part Two: The Right of the People to Control Their Government

Everyone can see that the following things are true: All people are created with equal rights; God made them with rights that cannot be taken away; these include Life, Political Freedom, and Economic Freedom. To make sure we have these rights, people set up governments to protect these rights. Governments get their powers from the "O.K." of the people. If a government tries to take away people's rights, the people may change or get rid of that government and set up a new government. That government should be based on principles, and its power should be organized, so that it protects the safety and happiness of the people. We should be cautious before changing a government. If a government has been around for a long time, don't change it just because of some little thing (or because of something that might change back again in a few years). Because of this, History has shown that people will suffer as long as they can rather than get rid of a government that they're used to. But when a long list of bad things happen, and the leaders illegally seize power, and it looks like what they're after is a plan to put the people under an evil dictatorship, it is the right and duty of the people to get rid of that evil government and set up a new government that will protect their rights in the future (just like John Locke said we should).

The American Colonies have suffered patiently; but now we must change our old system of government. In the past King George has repeatedly hurt the colonies and illegally seized power. His plan all along has been to become a dictator over the colonies. To prove what we say, here is a list of what he's done.

Part Three: Tyrannical (harsh/cruel) Acts of the British King

- 1. He has refused to approve necessary colonial laws.**
- 2. He's forbidden the governors to approve necessary colonial laws and delayed the passing of other laws.**
- 3. In some districts he has refused to pass laws unless people gave up their democratic rights.**

- 4. He has called legislative bodies together hastily and in unusual places (so that they would give in to his demands).**
- 5. He has dissolved Legislatures for opposing him when he tried to take away our rights.**
- 6. After closing down our legislatures, he has refused to let us elect a new one and our colonies were left unprotected.**
- 7. He has tried to keep the colonies from growing by preventing immigration and land ownership by immigrants. (Proclamation of 1763)**
- 8. He has refused to let us have our own courts.**
- 9. He decided how long judges should serve and what they should be paid.**
- 10. He set up new offices and sent a bunch of new officers here and we'll have to pay them.**
- 11. He's kept armies here in peacetime without our consent.**
- 12. He's put us under military rule.**
- 13. He's tried to rule us by laws that are completely different from our own.**
- 14. Here's a list of what those laws have done: keeping troops in the colonies without our consent and making us house and feed them; (Quartering Act).**
- 15. His soldiers murdered us and weren't even punished. (Boston Massacre).**
- 16. He cut off trade through a naval blockade.**
- 17. He has taxed us without our consent.**
- 18. He took away our right to a trial by jury. (number 17 and 18 go against the Magna Carta)**
- 19. He made us go to England for a trial based on fake charges (Intolerable Acts).**
- 20. He did away with Canada's laws and enlarged Canada's boundaries. He might try to take away our laws too.**
- 21. He took away our charters and changed our form of Government.**
- 22. He took away our legislatures and says that he and Parliament have the power to make all laws for us.**
- 23. He has given up his right to govern us because he's waged war against us.**
- 24. He's attacked our coasts, burned our towns, and killed our people.**
- 25. He has hired armies of foreign soldiers (Hessians) to fight us and then he'll rule us like a tyrant.**

26. American citizens, taken prisoner at sea, have been forced to fight against us.
27. He's stirred up quarrels among us (patriots and loyalists) and tried to get the Indians to kill all Americans on the frontier.
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Part Four: Efforts of the Colonies (Americans) to Avoid Separation (with England)

When the King has done something wrong, we asked him to correct it and he only injures us more. A King who acts like a tyrant is not fit to rule us.

We've asked the people of Great Britain to speak out against what Parliament and the King have been doing to us. They haven't listened to us either. We'll just have to figure that if there's a war, they'll be our enemies. If there's peace, they'll be our friends.

Part Five: The Colonies (the new United States of America) Are Declared Free and Independent (of England)

We, the representatives of the United States, knowing that God is our judge, declare that these colonies are free and independent states that have officially broken our ties with "mom". As independent states we can wage war and agree to peace; we can make alliances with any nation we want and trade with any nation we want; we can set up our own economic system (*so, no more Navigation Acts and Mercantilism for us!*). In other words, we can each do what any other nation gets to do (*the "Thirteen Colonies" were now thirteen separate nations held together by an agreement called the Articles of Confederation. There was no central leader. Each state had it's own money and courts and laws. Obviously, that original system did not work, but that's the basis of our next project!*). We can depend on God's protection. In support of this declaration we pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.