**American Revolution**

**Articles of Confederation**  
  
**What were the Articles of Confederation?**  
  
The Articles of Confederation served as the first constitution of the United States. This document officially established the government of the union of the thirteen states.

**Why did the colonies write the Articles of Confederation?**  
  
The colonies knew they needed some form of official government that united the thirteen colonies. They wanted to have written down rules that all the states agreed to. The Articles allowed the Congress to do things like raise an army, be able to create laws, and print money.  
  
**Who wrote the document?**

The Articles of Confederation was first prepared by a committee of thirteen men from the Second Continental Congress. The chairman of the committee and primary author of the first draft was John Dickinson.

**When was the document ratified by the colonies?**  
  
In order for the Articles to be official, they had to be ratified (approved) by all thirteen states. The Congress sent the articles to the states to be ratified near the end of 1777. Virginia was the first state to ratify on December 16, 1777. The last state was Maryland on February 2, 1781.  
  
**The Thirteen Articles**  
  
There were thirteen articles within the document. Here is a short summary of each article:

1. Established the name of the union as "The United States of America."  
2. The state governments still had their own powers that were not listed in the Articles.  
3. Refers to the union as a "league of friendship" where the states will help to protect each other from attacks.  
4. People can travel freely between states, but criminals shall be sent back to the state where they committed the crime for trial.  
5. Establishes the Congress of the Confederation where each state gets one vote and can send a delegation with between 2 and 7 members.  
6. The central government is responsible for foreign relations including trade agreements and declaring war. States must maintain a militia, but may not have a standing army.  
7. States may assign military ranks of colonel and below.  
8. Money to pay for the central government will be raised by each of the state legislatures.  
9. Gives power to the Congress in regards to foreign affairs like war, peace, and treaties with foreign governments. Congress will act as the court in disputes between states. Congress shall establish official weights and measures.  
10. Established a group called the Committee of the States which could act for Congress when Congress was not in session.  
11. Stated that Canada could join the union if it wanted.  
12. Stated that the new union would agree to pay for earlier war debts.  
13. Declared that the Articles were "perpetual" or "never ending" and could only be changed if Congress and all the states agreed.

**Results**  
  
The Articles of Confederation worked well for the newly formed country during the period of the American Revolution, but it had many flaws. Some of the flaws included:

* No power to raise money through taxes
* No way to enforce the laws passed by Congress
* No national court system
* Each state only had one vote in Congress despite the size of the state

As a result, in 1788, the Articles were replaced with the current [United States Constitution](https://www.ducksters.com/history/us_constitution.php).  
  
**Interesting Facts about the Articles of Confederation**

* The formal name for the document is the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union."
* The reason some of the states, like Maryland, took so long to ratify the Articles was because they were involved in border disputes with other states.
* Ben Franklin introduced an early version of the Articles of Confederation in 1775. In his version the union was called the "United Colonies of North America."
* John Dickinson was nicknamed the "Penman of the Revolution" for his early revolutionary work *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. He also wrote the *Olive Branch Petition* and a famous Revolutionary War song called *The Liberty Song*.