

Skill 17

HOW TO

Take Notes

The Colonies Break Free

All men are created equal and have rights! The King of Great Britain has trampled the rights of the American colonists! The people of America demand self-government! Therefore, the colonies are declaring their freedom from British rule!

This paragraph tells what the American colonists wanted to say to Great Britain. The message was written to the British king, George III, in a long document called the Declaration of Independence. In 1776, men from each of the thirteen American colonies came together to sign the declaration at the Second Continental Congress.



The Declaration of Independence became one of the most important documents in U.S. history.

To learn more about the Declaration of Independence, you could read and do research about it. To help yourself remember details from your reading and research, you could take notes. **Taking notes** is writing down important facts, ideas, and opinions about a topic while reading or listening. Note taking is a very valuable and important skill.

You can learn how to take notes by following the steps on the next three pages.

STEPS IN Taking Notes

1 Collect Information

Find answers to the questions Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Look for answers to any other questions you can think to ask about your subject. Questions will help you choose sources, look for information, and decide which facts are important.

To find information, use sources such as history books, encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, newspapers, magazines, documentary videos, and interviews.



Members of the Second Continental Congress signing the Declaration of Independence

Study the sample notes below.



Write notes in few words

Write the source

- ▶ What did the Second Continental Congress do?
- ▶ Told George Washington to lead the army

Told George Washington to organize an Army.

- Told Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

"American Revolution." Henretta, James A.
Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia. CD-ROM

Use Index Cards.

Index cards are a great way to keep and organize notes. Write one note on each index card, and arrange them in any order you like. You can quickly flip through the index cards to find the notes you need.

Write Subject Headings.

Subject headings are like titles that explain what a passage is about. For example, if you are looking in an encyclopedia for information about John Adams, you would search alphabetically for the subject heading, “Adams, John.” Write subject headings on your note paper or index cards. Then record your notes under the correct headings.

3 Write the Information

When reading, listening, watching, or even thinking, take clear notes that you can read and understand later. Use your own words when writing notes. Make your notes short. You do not need to write notes

in complete sentences. Use key words, phrases, and abbreviations. Summarize the most important information.

2nd Continental Congress tells T. Jefferson to write Dec. of Ind.

Note where you found the information. Include the title of the source, author, date of publication, and page number.

*“Declaration of Independence.”
Britannica Junior. 1961. 5: 41.*

A **quote** is exact words that someone has said. If you copy a quote in your notes, make sure to use quotation marks. Also make careful notes of who said each and every quote you use.

“Well, if you are decided, I will do as well as I can,” said Thomas Jefferson when he was asked to write the Declaration of Independence.

TIP If you use an author’s exact words, put them in quotation marks.



2 Organize Your Information

You can organize your information in many ways. Here are a few ideas.

Make a Gathering Grid.

A **gathering grid** is a simple chart that you can use to sort information. To make a gathering grid, draw a grid like the one below. Write your topic and leave a space for your sources across the top. Write your questions in the left column, and your answers in the columns to the right. You may need to add columns as you add more sources and find more facts.



Thomas Jefferson



John Adams



Benjamin Franklin

GATHERING GRID		
Declaration of Independence:	<i>Encyclopedia</i>	<i>History Book</i>
When was it signed?	July 4, 1776	After 2 nd Continental Congress met
Who wrote it?	Thomas Jefferson	John Adams and Benjamin Franklin helped

USE THIS SKILL

Take Notes

Take notes on the article below.

Writing the Declaration of Independence

The Second Continental Congress was a meeting of representatives from all thirteen American colonies. When it met in 1775, fighting with the British had begun. Shots had been fired, but the colonists had not discussed a common purpose for the fighting.

At the Second Continental Congress, the representatives decided the colonies should be free of British rule. They also decided that they should tell the British king and the world in writing that they were independent.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. It listed complaints about Great Britain and said the colonies were free. The Declaration of Independence was signed by members of the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

TEST TIP

On some tests you may need to choose the best example of notes about a written passage. Read all the answer choices. Choose the one that gives all the important information in very few words.