

Articles of Confederation

Before the Revolutionary War ended, the Continental Congress began writing the Article of Confederation as the foundation of a new national government. It was the first constitution of the United States. The Articles of Confederation were created in 1777 and went into effect on March 1, 1781.

At first, the Articles were written with a strong central (national) government in mind. Many states opposed this. They had finally won their independence, and didn't want to give it away to a controlling national government. This government created a very loose alliance (friendship) of 13 independent states. They set up a weak national government and gave individual states a lot of authority over their own affairs. The Articles said that any power that was not specifically given to Congress belonged to the states.

From the start, there were many weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. The **weaknesses** are listed below.

- Congress could not levy (pass) taxes, leaving the country unable to pay debts or soldiers.
- Congress could not regulate trade, allowing tariff (tax) disagreements to stop the trade between states. (slowed the economy)
- There wasn't a president to run things.
- There wasn't a judicial branch (court system) to settle disputes between states.
- Congress could make laws, but could not force states to follow them.
- Articles gave each state one vote, regardless of population.
- Congress could not raise an army without the states' permission,
- Each state had their own currency (money).

Even though the Articles of Confederation had many weaknesses it did have some **strengths**. 1.) It set up a republican form of government. 2.) Citizens could elect people to represent them. 3.) Created a system for admitting new states into the union (country). 4. Guided the U.S. through the American Revolution.

There were so many problems with the Articles of Confederation; the leaders of the states decided to meet to discuss the problems. They knew that changes needed to be made and the Articles of Confederation needed to be revised. In 1787, delegates (representatives) of the states came to Philadelphia to figure out how to solve all these problems.

1. What was the first constitution of the United States? _____

2. Why didn't the states want a strong national government? _____

3. What is an alliance? _____

4. List 2 weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. _____

5. List 2 strengths of the Articles of Confederation. _____

6. What happened in 1787? _____

Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government could not enforce laws. Why is this a problem? _____

Under the Article of Confederation, the national government could not pass tax laws. Why would this be a problem? _____

Why was it a problem that the national government did not have a national army or navy? _____
