

# GET TO KNOW BEN FRANKLIN



## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Grades:** 4-6

**Objectives:** Benjamin Franklin was a runaway, a printer, a postmaster, an inventor, a scientist, a writer, and a politician. Through this timeline activity, students will place the events of Franklin's life in chronological order and begin understanding the complex and interesting a life he led.

**Sources:** National Park Service and the William Penn Foundation.



## Creating a Living Timeline of Benjamin Franklin's Life and Times

The following step may be done to help students understand the depth and breadth of Franklin's accomplishments.

**Before the step:** Print and cut out the timeline cards included in these plans. Important events in Franklin's life are listed on these 32 cards.

**Activity:** Start by asking the class to name a scientist, an inventor, a diplomat, a writer, a printer, a musician, and a leader. List all of the answers on the board. Then, challenge the students to name one person who did all of these things. Discuss all answers and if Benjamin Franklin was not mentioned, suggest his name to the class and discuss his candidacy.

Distribute one timeline card to each student. Students will assemble themselves in chronological order to create a living timeline. Call on individuals to share the important event on their cards. This may be done orally, by acting out the event or by illustrating it on a small poster.

**Note:** The teacher may use the cards with Franklin event dates for lower elementary, the cards with Franklin and world event dates for upper elementary. By creating this timeline, students will create a visual representation of the scope of Franklin's many accomplishments.

### Vocabulary

- Colony: a place where a group of people come to live that is under the control of their home country.
- Revolution: the overthrow of a government by force
- Parliament: a group of people who make the laws for a country.
- Postmaster: the person in charge of a post office.
- Assembly: a group of people gathered together to run a government
- Convention: a formal meeting or gathering where people discuss an issue of importance

1706

Benjamin Franklin is born  
in Boston

1718-1723

Franklin works as an  
apprentice in his brother  
James' workshop

1722

Writes his popular letters  
to the newspaper under  
the fake name "Silence  
Dogood"

1723

Franklin runs away to New  
York, then Philadelphia

1724-1726

Franklin works in London  
print shop

1727

Franklin founds the  
Junto, a club for  
learning, with his  
Philadelphia friends

1728

Franklin opens his own  
workshop with partner,  
Hugh Meredith

1729

Franklin starts publishing  
the *Pennsylvania Gazette*

1730

Franklin marries Deborah  
Read

1731

Franklin sets up the first  
American library where  
people can check out  
books

1731

Franklin's son William is  
born

1732

Franklin begins publishing  
*Poor Richard's Almanac*

1736

Franklin organizes  
Philadelphia's Union Fire  
Company

1736-1751

Franklin serves as clerk of  
the Pennsylvania  
Assembly, the colony's  
legislature

1737

Franklin becomes  
Postmaster of Philadelphia

1740

Franklin invents the  
Franklin stove also called  
the "Pennsylvania  
fireplace"

1743

Franklin's daughter Sally  
is born

1746

Franklin begins  
experimenting with  
electricity

1748

Franklin retires from  
printing

1751

Franklin helps found the  
Academy of Philadelphia  
(later University of  
Pennsylvania)

1751

Franklin helps found the  
Pennsylvania Hospital

1751

Franklin becomes a member  
of the Pennsylvania  
Assembly

1752

Franklin's famous kite  
experiment with electricity

1753

Franklin becomes  
Postmaster-General for the  
Northern Colonies  
(until 1774)

1757

Franklin represents the  
Pennsylvania Assembly in  
London  
(until 1762)

1762

Franklin publishes a  
description of his glass  
armonica

1764

Franklin defends Native  
Americans from a gang  
called the Paxton Boys

1766

Franklin speaks to the  
British parliament (that's  
part of England's  
government)

1771

Franklin starts to write  
his autobiography

1775

Franklin serves as a  
delegate to the  
Second Continental  
Congress

1776

Franklin serves on a  
committee to draft  
the Declaration of  
Independence

1777

Franklin negotiates for French support of the American Revolution

1782-1783

Franklin helps negotiate a peace treaty with England to end the Revolutionary War.

1785

Franklin is elected president of the Pennsylvania Council

1787

Franklin attends Constitutional Convention

1789

Franklin becomes president of Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society

1790

Franklin dies in Philadelphia on April 17

1754-1763

French and Indian War

1765

Under King George III, Parliament passes the Stamp Act

1770  
Boston Massacre

1773  
Boston Tea Party

1774  
Parliament passes the  
Intolerable Acts

1774  
Louis XVI becomes King of  
France

1775  
American Revolution  
begins

1783  
Treaty of Paris ends the  
American Revolution

1789  
French Revolution  
begins with the storming of  
the Bastille

1790  
Philadelphia becomes the  
U.S. Capital