

On July 4th, 1776, the United States declared its independence. 250 years later, the country is still marking that moment with flags, fireworks, and celebration. This year's

Fourth of July is a particularly significant milestone: a semiquincentennial, or anniversary that only comes once every 250 years.

In these activities, you'll explore American history, culture, and identity through music, cooking, hands-on crafts, and more. Let's dig in!

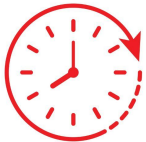


This packet includes...

- "Independence Day" Reading Activity
- "The American Flag" Reading Activity
- "Design an American-Inspired Flag" Activity
- "State Research Spotlight" Activity
- "Firework Craft" Creative Activity
- "Summer Recipes" Cooking Activity
- "Songs of America" Activity
- "Stars, Stripes, and Signs" Activity

Explore More

Spark more Fourth of July fun and reflection with these extensions!



A real time capsule will be sealed on the U.S.'s 250th Independence Day and opened in 2276. If you were curator, what would you include to represent America in 2026? Make a list and discuss your ideas with a family member or your friends.



Independence Day is a great time to celebrate the people who make our communities special or safe. Think about someone in your community whose contributions often go unrecognized, and find a way to acknowledge them: a card, a small gift, or a conversation.



Research how the Fourth of July has been celebrated differently throughout American history, from early cannon salutes to modern fireworks or drone shows. How has the holiday evolved, and what does that tell us about how Americans see themselves and what they value?



How Did Independence Day Begin?



Long before the United States existed, **Native Americans inhabited this land** in hundreds of nations, each with their own languages, governments, and ways of life.



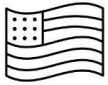
Over time, **people arrived from many parts of the world:** Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond. Some immigrated by choice in search of new opportunities. Others were forcibly brought by slave traders as enslaved people, with no choice at all.



In the 1600s and 1700s, **Great Britain established colonies**, settlements it owned and controlled, along the eastern coast of North America. As British rule grew more restrictive, **some colonists began pushing back**, arguing that they deserved a say in their own government.



On July 4th, 1776, colonial leaders formally declared their independence by publishing the Declaration of Independence. This was a document announcing a new self-governing nation: the United States of America.



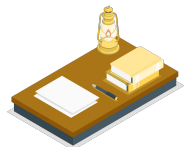
Today, the U.S.A. celebrates that moment every year on Independence Day.

Fun Facts About the Fourth



Americans eat over 150 million hot dogs on July Fourth! And it's not all about the meat — favorite sides include potato salad, corn on the cob, and watermelon.

The Declaration of Independence was written on a “laptop”! Thomas Jefferson's portable lap desk, a slanted writing surface designed to rest on the knees, is now on display at the Smithsonian.



Independence Day was almost July 2nd! That's the day the Continental Congress actually voted for independence. John Adams was so certain July 2nd would become the national holiday that he wrote home predicting it. He was off by two days.

Dig Deeper: With an adult's permission, use the internet to research these topics.

How is the U.S. celebrating its 250th anniversary? Find out what events are taking place around the country. If you were in charge of adding an event, what would it be?

How have traditions changed over time? Pick an activity such as fireworks, barbecues, or parades and find out when that tradition started and how it's changed.

Do other countries have independence days? Find out what years they gained independence, what countries they became free from, and how people celebrate.



Directions: Read about the American flag below. Then, plan and design your own flag on the following pages!

History of the American Flag

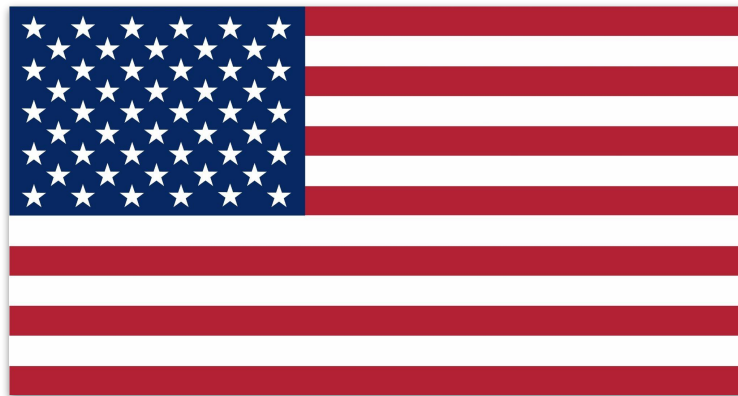
When the United States declared independence in 1776, its flag looked very different from the one we see today. The original design had just 13 stars and 13 stripes, which stood for each of the 13 original colonies.



The origin of the flag's design remains unknown, but many historians believe a seamstress from Philadelphia named Betsy Ross helped to sew the very first one. On June 14, 1777, Congress made the flag official, and we now celebrate that day as Flag Day.

As the nation expanded, stars were added to the flag to represent each new state. The 50th and final star was added in 1960 when Hawaii officially became a state. The 13 stripes are still there to honor the original 13 colonies.

Blue stands for justice.

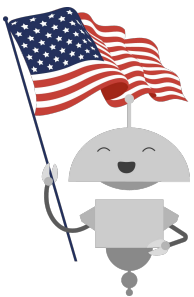


Red stands for bravery.

White stands for honesty.

How To Fly the Flag

The American flag is a powerful symbol, so the U.S. Flag Code outlines rules for people who choose to fly it.



- The flag should never touch the ground.
- The stars should always be in the top left corner.
- The flag should be taken down at sunset or have a light on it throughout the night.
- On rainy days, the flag should be taken inside so it does not get damaged.
- When the flag gets too worn out to fly, it should be taken down. Then, it should be carefully burned or dropped off at a special flag collection site.



Directions: You’ve just learned about how the American flag represents important values using colors and symbols. Now, it’s your turn to design a flag inspired by American values! Follow the steps below to decide which values, colors, and symbols will be represented in your flag’s design.

Step 1: Circle three American values that are the most important to you. You can come up with your own, if you’d like.

- freedom
- bravery
- community
- opportunity
- unity
- happiness

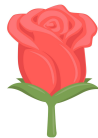
Step 2: Fill in the table below using the values you chose in Step 1.

Value 1:	Value 2:	Value 3:
Explain why each value matters to you.		
Choose a color to represent each value on your flag.		

Step 3: Pick one American symbol to add to your flag. You may also choose your own.



Bald eagle
The national bird



Rose
The national flower



The Liberty Bell



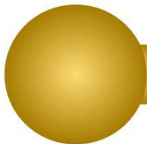
Scales of justice



The Statue of Liberty's torch



Directions: Design your flag below! Use all three colors and the symbol(s) you chose. Feel free to add patterns, shapes, or other creative details.





Directions: You are about to become a magazine writer! In this project, you will research one of the 50 United States and use what you learn to create your very own state magazine cover.



Here is how to complete this project:

1. Choose any state in the United States that interests you. It does not have to be the state where you live.
2. Ask a trusted adult to help you search online or visit your local library to find accurate and reliable information.
3. Use your research to answer the questions on this and the following page. Once you have completed your research pages, use what you learned to design your very own state magazine cover!

The state I chose to research: _____

History

When did this state join the Union? What number state was it? _____

What was this state known for when it first became a state? _____

Geography

What region of the United States is this state located in? _____

What are some major physical features of this state, such as rivers, mountains, or lakes?



Symbols



What is the state bird? _____ What is the state flower? _____

What is the state nickname? _____

Choose one symbol above and explain why it was chosen to represent the state.

Economy

What is the most important crop or product this state produces? _____

Is this state known more for farming, manufacturing, technology, or tourism? _____

How does the geography of this state affect the jobs or products found there? _____

Culture

What traditions or celebrations is this state known for? _____

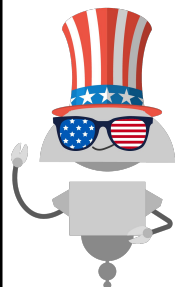
Name one famous person from this state and explain why they are important to history or society. _____

What makes this state unique compared to other states in the country? _____



Directions: Now, it's time to get creative. Use everything you learned about your state to design a magazine cover that truly represents it. Use the space below or grab a blank sheet of paper if you need more room!

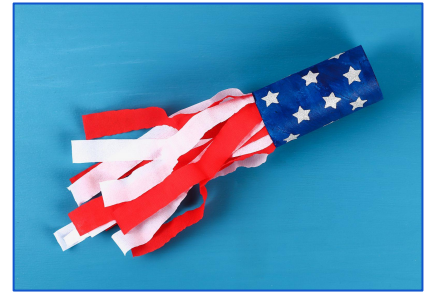
1. Write the state's name as the magazine headline at the top of the cover.
2. Illustrate the cover with your own unique interpretation of what makes the state stand out. Think about landmarks, notable people, culture, or anything that tells the state's story in a way only you can!
3. Add a cover line. A cover line is a short, catchy phrase that would make someone want to read more.
4. This is your chance to show what you know and express your creativity. Make it bold, make it beautiful, and make it yours!





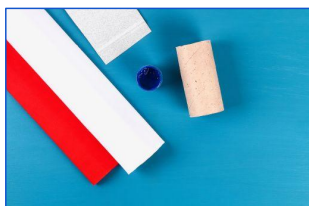
What You Will Need:

- Toilet paper roll
- Paint and paintbrush
- Tissue paper in various colors, such as red, white, and blue
- Scissors
- Glue
- Decorations such as stickers, glitter, sequins, gems, or buttons
- Markers or crayons



Directions:

1. Paint the outside of your toilet paper roll any color you'd like and let it dry completely.
2. While you wait, cut your tissue paper into long strips. Try to cut an equal number of strips in each color!
3. Once your roll is dry, decorate the outside of the roll however you like! You can draw on it or add stickers, glitter, sequins, buttons, or anything that makes it sparkle and shine.
4. Place glue around the inside edge of your toilet paper roll.
5. Press your tissue paper strips into the glue one at a time, working your way around the inside of the roll. Add more glue as you go if you need it!
6. Your firework is complete! Display it proudly and celebrate America's 250th birthday in style!





This summer, why not whip up some cool treats to share with family and friends? These recipes are delicious, simple, and easy to scale for bigger or smaller batches. **Remember to check with an adult before you start cooking.**



Caprese Skewers

This handheld take on a classic Italian salad makes for a refreshing side dish that's easy to share.

Ingredients

- 1 pint of cherry tomatoes
- 12 mozzarella balls (look for the size called "ciliegine")
- 1 bunch of fresh basil leaves
- Olive oil
- Salt (optional)
- Balsamic vinegar (optional)
- 12 skewers

Directions:

1. Wash the cherry tomatoes and basil and drain the mozzarella balls.
2. Thread the ingredients onto each skewer, placing basil leaves between the tomatoes and the mozzarella. Fold the basil leaves in half if they are large.
3. You can put as many ingredients onto each skewer as you like. One tomato, one basil leaf, and one cheese ball will make a small, tasty snack.
4. Place the skewers on a plate or bowl and drizzle about a tablespoon of olive oil over them.
5. Sprinkle them with salt or a dash of balsamic vinegar if you'd like. Then, eat and enjoy!



Frozen Yogurt Bark

This sweet treat has some red, white, and blue patriotic flair.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of vanilla Greek yogurt
- ½ cup of sliced strawberries
- ⅓ cup of blueberries
- ⅓ cup of raspberries
- ¼ cup of granola
- Baking sheet
- Parchment or wax paper

Directions:

1. Take a rimmed baking sheet and line it with parchment paper or wax paper. The paper should stick out an inch or two over the sides.
2. Spread the yogurt in a thin, even layer in the baking sheet. Aim to create a ¼-inch-thick layer.
3. Sprinkle the fruit and granola evenly over the top. For extra fun, try making an American flag design by using the berries to create stars and stripes.
4. Place the baking sheet into the freezer for about three hours, or until it's frozen solid.
5. Lift the parchment paper out of the pan. Cut the frozen yogurt bark into pieces and enjoy!



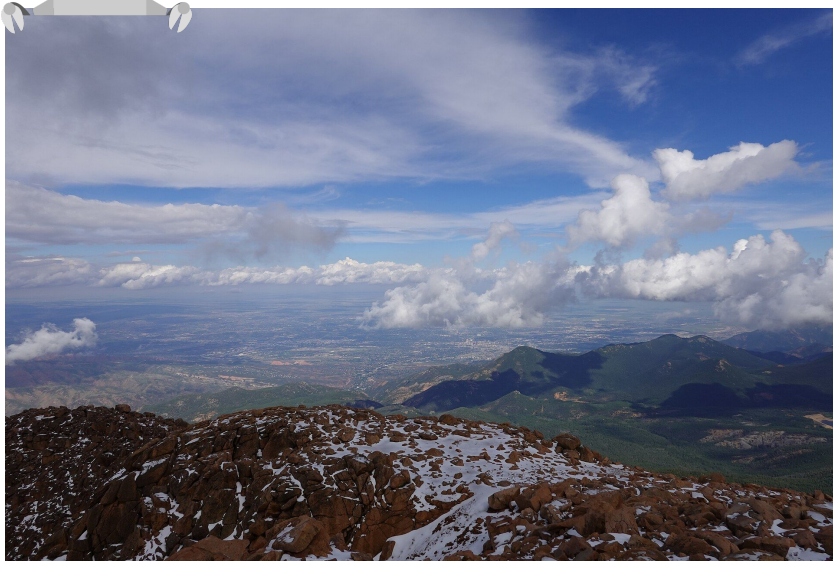
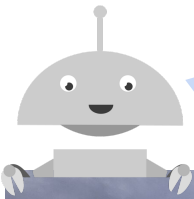
Americans have long used songs to celebrate their country and its history. Read the fun facts below, then scan the QR code to listen to the first verse of “America the Beautiful,” performed by the United States Navy Band, while you follow along with the lyrics!



Fun Facts About “America the Beautiful”

- ★ “America the Beautiful” began as a poem written in 1893 by Katharine Lee Bates, an English professor who was inspired by the sweeping view from the top of Pikes Peak in Colorado after a cross-country train trip.
- ★ The poem was later set to music and has been performed by countless artists. Ray Charles’ 1972 recording is widely considered one of the most celebrated versions ever, showing how a patriotic song can take on new meaning depending on who sings it and when.
- ★ Many Americans have argued that “America the Beautiful” should replace “The Star-Spangled Banner” as the national anthem — the debate has been going on for over 100 years!

As you listen to the music and read the lyrics, imagine taking a ride through these scenic views, just as Katharine Lee Bates did!



“Colorado Springs” by Khoshhat, CC BY-SA 4.0,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1-_Colorado_Springs.jpg

“America The Beautiful,” Verse 1

O beautiful for spacious skies,
 For amber waves of grain,
 For purple mountain majesties
 Above the fruited plain!
 America! America!
 God shed His grace on thee,
 And crown thy good with brotherhood
 From sea to shining sea!



Now that you've listened to the song and read the lyrics, answer the questions below!

1. This first verse describes America by talking about nature such as the sky, fields, and mountains. Why do you think the songwriter chose to write about the land rather than the people or government? How does that make the song feel?

2. Pick one line you really like and write it below. How does that line create the feeling you talked about in Question 1?

Directions: Now, it's your turn! Use the prompts to help you fill in each line and write your own verse about America!

O beautiful for

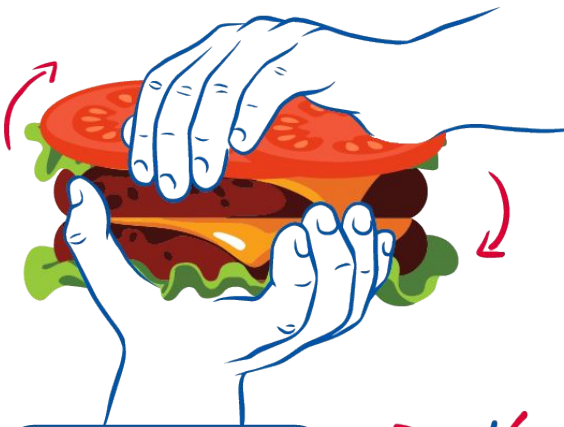
(What do you see there?)

For _____
(What else?)

For _____!
(Where is it?)

America! America!

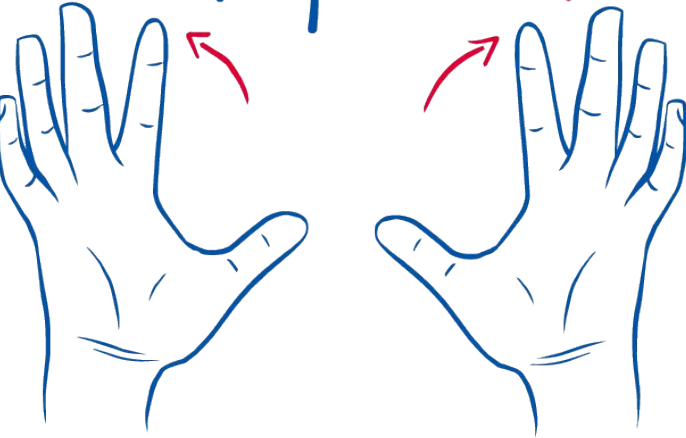
(How does it make you feel? What do you hope for?)



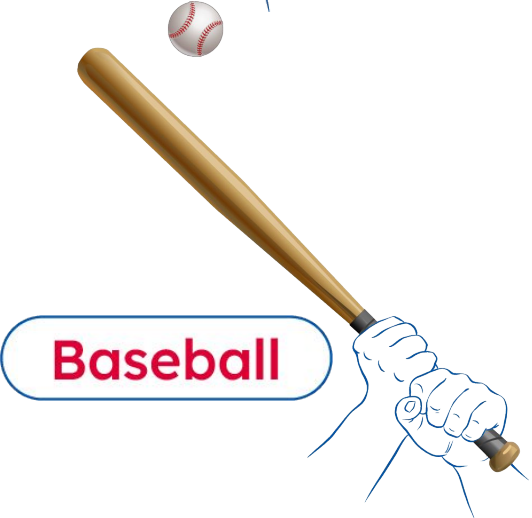
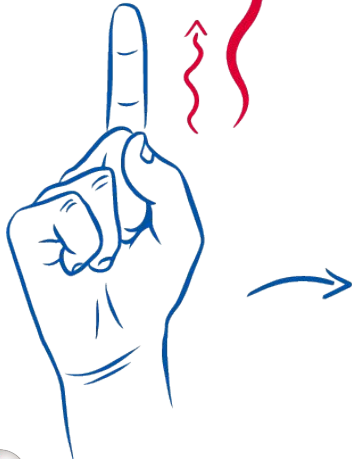
Hamburger



Flag



Fireworks



Baseball



Family