

## The Life of Benjamin Franklin



Benjamin Franklin was born in Milk Street, Boston. His birthday is January 6, 1706. His father, Josiah Franklin, had seventeen children. Benjamin was the youngest. His schooling ended when he was just ten years old, only in fourth grade. At twelve he apprenticed to, or worked for, his brother James, a printer. He brother published a newspaper, the "New England Courant." Benjamin wrote for this newspaper. He even became the editor, who is in charge of making the writing of others' better. However, the brothers disagreed and quarreled. Benjamin's brother hit him and treated him cruelly, so Benjamin left this job.

He went first to New York, and then to Philadelphia, where he arrived in October, 1723. He soon found work in a print shop. Later, he set up a printing house of his own and published "The Pennsylvania Gazette" then "Poor Richard's Almanac". Poor Richard's Almanac published rich wisdom and advice for how to live well. For example, it published the quote, "Lost time is never found again." This quote suggests being careful in how we use our time, and not waste any.

At the same time, Franklin became more successful in politics, and helping people in his community. In this work, he had to be careful whenever he spoke. He took care to never offend anyone. He was so good at listening and communicating that he even helped fix international problems between the USA and other countries. For example, as France and England struggled to control the colonies, Franklin proposed peace treaties. These agreements made sure the French did not win control over North America. Since he chose his words so carefully, he succeeded in these ways. He also remained calm when others exploded during these discussions.

He proposed setting up a college, and worked hard to do this. He dedicated many hours to meeting with people who could help. He did not give up easily at anything he did. This school later became the still successful University of Pennsylvania. He even helped set up the postal service so we can send and receive mail today. Even more, he made inventions and discoveries that helped others. He invented swimming flippers made of wood so he could swim faster. He

learned much about electricity with his famous kite experiment. Homes often caught fire when lightning struck them. So he invented the lightning rod to catch and direct lightning so people's homes would not catch fire.

In 1757, he went to England to protest against how the British ruled the US colonies. For five years he remained there, teaching leaders in England about the problems of the colonies in the USA. In London, he opposed the proposed Stamp Act because it would harm the colonies back home. When he returned back to Philadelphia, he helped the Revolutionary War. He was then chosen to be a member of the Continental Congress. Known by all as honest, many people trusted him and voted for him to be their leader. In 1777 he was sent to France as commissioner for the United States. His work in France was so successful that when he returned home, he was considered as important as George Washington for fighting for and championing American independence. He died on April 17, 1790.

Adapted from: Elliot, C, Ed. (1909). THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, The Harvard Classics

### 6 of Ben Franklin's Virtues

Ben Franklin decided that he wanted to achieve as much as he possibly could in life. To do this, he realized that practicing certain good habits could help him. This is the list of habits he tried to practice daily.

1. Silence. Only speak when what you will say may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling (unimportant) conversation.
2. Commit. Resolve (promise and follow through) to do what you should; achieve without fail what you commit to do.
3. Industry. Waste no time; be always doing something useful; end all unnecessary actions.
4. Sincerity. Do not tell hurtful lies; think harmlessly and fairly. When you speak, speak kindly.
5. Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles (small problems, even if they seem big at the time), or at accidents common or unavoidable.
6. Humility. Imitate people who lived exemplary lives such as Socrates.

Possible Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOF00CI1xlc&t=90s> (2:30 – simplest overview)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAsZ3XXunaY> (2:02 – higher level facts & vocab)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SChcy3IGlg> (1:30 – even higher facts & vocab)

**Prompt: Benjamin Franklin accomplished so much in his lifetime. Describe how some of the virtues he worked to practice every day might have helped him with specific achievements he made.**