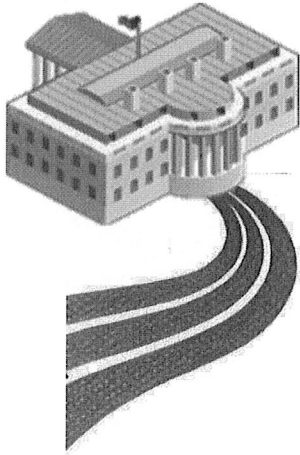


# George Washington

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

George Washington is known as the "father of our country." He was born in Virginia on February 22, 1732. Most people know Washington was the first president of the United States. But before he became involved in government, Washington had a successful military career. During the Revolutionary War, Washington led the American colonists to victory against the British. He became a military hero, and citizens of the new United States respected and admired him.



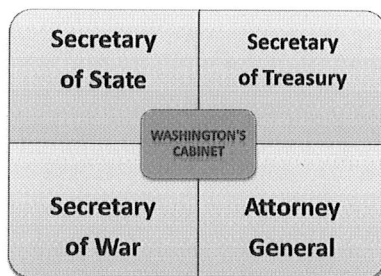
## Road to the White House

Washington was one of the Founding Fathers who helped decide what the government of the new United States would be like. He was in charge of the Constitutional Convention, a meeting to decide what the new United States Constitution should say. It was a lively meeting with lots of disagreement, but Washington led the meeting without getting involved in the debates.

One important issue was who should lead the United States. Some people were nervous about putting only one person in the executive office because they feared that person might become too powerful. But many also assumed that Washington would become the first president, and that helped ease their fears. When the Constitution was finished, and Washington was unanimously elected president. They even offered to call him "Your Highness," but he refused.

## Setting up the Executive Office

When Washington became President, nobody had ever been president before. Basic presidential powers were written in the Constitution, but many issues came up that the Constitution did not address. For example, the Constitution requires the president to give Congress information "from time to time" about how the country is doing, but doesn't say how the president should deliver this information. Washington decided that once a year he would talk to Congress by giving a "State of the Union" speech.



The Constitution also says the president may ask the heads of government departments to give their opinion on different subjects, but does not say how closely the president should work with the department heads. Washington decided to make them his group of advisors. He met with them regularly to discuss what was going on in each department. The decisions Washington made about how to handle these situations created **precedents**, or examples that were followed by presidents in the future. Presidents today still give a State of the Union speech and work closely with the heads of government departments.

## The Executive

Washington knew that he would set the example for all the U.S. presidents that came after him. For this reason, he made sure to base his actions on the democratic ideals our country was founded on. Even though he held a great deal of power and influence, Washington worked hard to limit his power. This brought great respect and admiration to both Washington and the Office of the President of the United States.



# George Washington

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Setting the Precedent

Washington wanted to form an executive branch that reflected republican and democratic ideals. Match the precedents that Washington established with the democratic principle that it represents.

It is devoutly wished on my part, that these precedents may be fixed on true principles."  
— George Washington

Gave State of the Union address in person.

Consulted with a Cabinet of advisors

Title shall be "President" instead of "Your Highness"

Stepped down after two terms in office.

Limit the power of any one person in office

Reject the fancy ways of royalty

Interact with other branches of government

Share the decision-making with others

**All the President's Men.** Washington knew he wasn't going to be able to do the job of the President alone. Good thing each member of his cabinet specialized in the duties of their individual office. Read the responsibilities of the different executive departments below. Use the word bank to help you label the responsibility with the correct cabinet title.

Treasury    War    State    Attorney

Secretary of \_\_\_\_\_:  
Handles the relationships between the United States and other countries.

Secretary of \_\_\_\_\_:  
Creates and recommends new approaches to dealing with the economy.

Secretary of \_\_\_\_\_:  
Provides strategies needed to protect and defend the United States.

\_\_\_\_\_ General:  
Enforces Federal law by preventing and controlling crime.

**The Reluctant President.** It seemed like everyone was happy to have Washington as the executive except for Washington himself. Yet he took the job anyway. Knowing what you know about Washington's past, what do you think he meant by this quote: "the office chooses the man" ?