



## Section 2 – American Strengths and Weaknesses

*At the beginning of the war, American soldiers were poorly trained and poorly equipped. They lacked gunpowder, rifles, food, and clothing. Some men had only spears or axes for weapons.*

The Patriots were in a weak position when the **American Revolution** [the struggle of the colonies in North America to gain their independence from Great Britain.] began. They had a hastily organized, untrained army and a small navy. Their weaknesses were far more obvious than their strengths.

**American Weaknesses** The **Continental army** [the American army during the American Revolution.] was always short of men. General George Washington never had more than 20,000 troops at one time and place. Many soldiers enlisted for six months or a year. Just when they were learning how to fight, they would pick up their muskets and go home to take care of their farms and families.

Few Americans were trained for battle. Some were hunters and could shoot well enough from behind a tree. But when facing a mass of well-disciplined redcoats, they were likely to turn and run.

The army was plagued by shortages. Guns and gunpowder were so scarce that Benjamin Franklin suggested arming the troops with bows and arrows. Food shortages forced soldiers to beg for handouts. Uniforms were scarce as well. In winter, one could track shoeless soldiers by their bloody footprints in the snow.

Such shortages outraged Washington. But when he complained to the Second Continental Congress, nothing changed. Congress, the new nation's only government, lacked the power to raise money for supplies by taxing the colonies—now the new nation's states.

In desperation, Congress printed paper money to pay for the war. But the value of this money dropped so low that merchants demanded to be paid in gold instead. Like everything else, gold was scarce.

**American Strengths** Still, the Americans did have strengths. One was the patriotism of people like Joseph Martin, who willingly gave their lives to defend the ideal of a country based on liberty and **democracy**. Without them, the war would have been quickly lost.

The Americans also received help from overseas. Motivated by their old hatred of the English, the French secretly aided the Americans. During the first two years of the war, 90 percent of the Americans' gunpowder came from Europe, mostly from France. In addition, a Polish Jew named Haym Salomon, who immigrated to New York in 1775, helped to finance the war effort.

The Americans' other great strength was their commander. General Washington was more than an experienced military leader. He was also a man who inspired courage and confidence. In the dark days to come, it was Washington who would keep the ragtag Continental army together.

## Section 3 – British Strengths and Weaknesses



In contrast to the American colonies, Great Britain entered the war from a position of strength. Yet, despite both their real and their perceived advantages, the British forces encountered many problems.

**British Strengths** With a professional army of about 42,000 troops at the beginning of the war, British forces greatly outnumbered the Continental army. In addition, George III hired 30,000 mercenaries from Germany. These hired soldiers were known as Hessians (HEH-shenz) because they came from a part of Germany called Hesse-Cassel. The British were also able to recruit many Loyalists, African Americans, and American Indians to fight on their side.

British and Hessian troops were well trained in European military tactics. They excelled in large battles fought by a mass of troops on open ground. They also had far more experience firing artillery than Americans had.

The British forces were well supplied, as well. Unlike the pitifully equipped Continental army, they seldom lacked for food, uniforms, weapons, or ammunition.

*British soldiers were trained professionals. They were well equipped with plenty of ammunition, good muskets, adequate food, and uniforms.*

**British Weaknesses** Even so, the war presented Great Britain with huge problems. One was the distance between Great Britain and America. Sending troops and supplies across the Atlantic was slow and costly. News of battles arrived in England long after they had occurred, making it difficult for British leaders to plan a course of action.

A second problem was that King George and his ministers were never able to convince the British people that defeating the rebels was vital to the future of Great Britain. The longer the war dragged on, the less happy the British taxpayers became about paying its heavy costs.

A third problem was poor leadership. Lord George Germain, the man chosen to direct the British troops, had no real sense of how to defeat the rebels. How could he? He had never set foot in North America. Nor did it occur to him to go see for himself what his army was up against. If he had, Germain might have realized that this was not a war that could be won by conquering a city or two.

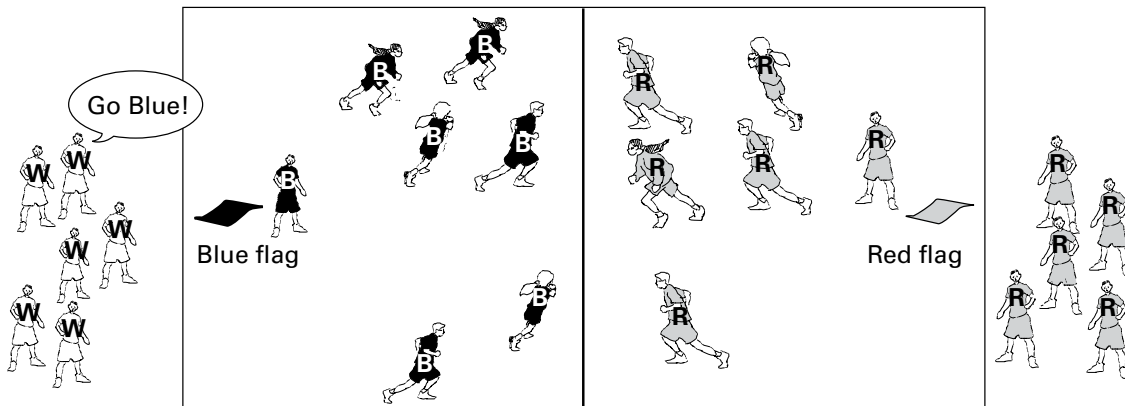
To end the revolution, Germain's forces would have to crush the Patriots' will to fight, state by state. Instead, Germain kept changing plans and generals, hoping that some combination of the two would bring him an easy victory.

**Sections 2 and 3**

- List at least two strengths and two weaknesses of each side at the start of the war for independence.

<p><b>American Strengths</b></p>	<p><b>British Strengths</b></p>
<p><b>American Weaknesses</b></p>	<p><b>British Weaknesses</b></p>

- Complete the sentences for the map of Round 1 of Capture the Flag.



The Blue team is smaller. It has not warmed up. It hasn't played Capture the Flag as much as the Red team, just like

The Red team is larger. It has warmed up. It has played the game more than the Blue team, just like

The Blue captain has experience playing Capture the Flag, just like

The White team cheers for the Blue team, just like

Half the Red team starts the game far from the field, just like

### **Comparing Strengths and Weaknesses**

When the Revolutionary War began, many people in America and Europe thought the colonists had little chance of defeating the British. A close look at the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides makes it obvious why the odds were against the patriots.

For each of the areas of comparison on these pages, decide whether the colonists and British are strong or weak in that particular category. For a strong rating, give the colonists or British 3 or 2 points. Give 1 or 0 points for a weak rating. For example, in the first area of comparison, Great Britain has a much larger population than the Thirteen Colonies. This means the British are capable of putting a larger army on the battlefield. It would be reasonable to give 3 points to the British, and just 1 to the colonists.

Award points to the colonists and British in all twelve areas of comparison. Then, look again at the twelve areas and decide which three might have the greatest effect on the outcome of the war. For example, the "size of the navy" (number 3) would be much more important than "uniforms and awards" (number 8). For the three areas that you have decided are of greatest importance, change the scoring by multiplying the points for each side by 3. Therefore, if you gave the British 3 points for "size of the navy" and the colonists 1 point, the numbers would be changed to 9 points for the British and 3 for the colonists.

After changing the points in the three most important categories, add up the points for both sides. Your totals should show which side had the advantage at the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

<b><u>Area of Comparison</u></b>	<b><u>Colonists</u></b>	<b><u>British</u></b>
(1) population	_____ 2,750,000	_____ 12,000,000
(2) support of the people	_____ 1/3 of the people were Loyalists; many others were against the war	_____ the war was unpopular in Great Britain; the British had recently been involved in a war with France
(3) size of the navy	_____ no regular navy; many privateers	_____ best navy in the world
(4) familiarity with the land	_____ fighting on home ground	_____ fighting in unfamiliar territory
(5) organization of the army	_____ as a general rule, troops in one colony would not fight under officers from another colony; men from different sections did not mingle; the militia, made up of local citizens, usually refused to leave their own colony to fight elsewhere	_____ highly-organized; soldiers fought wherever they were needed

<b><u>Area of Comparison</u></b>	<b><u>Colonists</u></b>	<b><u>British</u></b>
(6) officers and soldiers	_____ many arguments between officers from different areas; for the most part, officers were poorly trained; soldiers often refused to obey orders, and freely criticized their commanders	_____ highly-disciplined army; soldiers respected their well-trained officers; orders were readily obeyed
(7) term of military duty	_____ normal term of service was one year; Congress did not have the power to draft men; the small regular army was more dependable than the militia, where desertions were high	_____ soldiers were drafted, and could be counted on for a lengthy term of duty
(8) uniforms and awards	_____ the average soldier wore ordinary clothes instead of a uniform; no awards or decorations for outstanding soldiers	_____ red uniforms were worn by all; awards and decorations given to outstanding soldiers
(9) weapons, supplies, and transportation	_____ shortage of food, clothing, tents, blankets, medical supplies, arms, and ammunition; depended on land transportation because sea routes were threatened by British navy	_____ had everything which colonists lacked; controlled travel along seacoast
(10) reason for fighting	_____ fighting to protect homes, families, and freedom to govern themselves	_____ British soldiers had no particular interest in the war; Britain itself was not threatened
(11) amount of wealth	_____ very little money; Congress did not have the power to tax; the wealthiest colonists were Loyalists	_____ richest country in the world
(12) amount of manufacturing	_____ very little manufacturing	_____ produced more manufactured goods than any other country in the world
	_____ <b>Total Points</b>	_____ <b>Total Points</b>