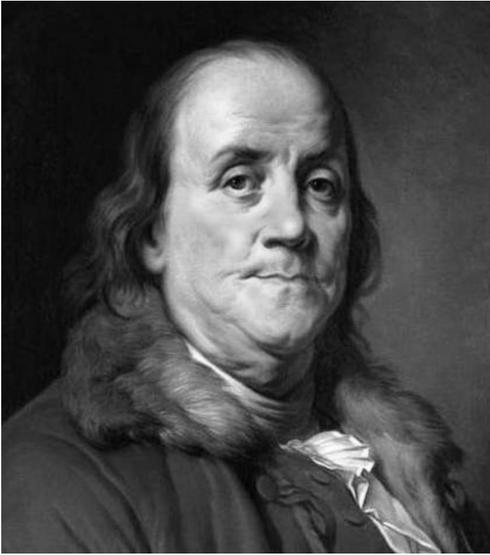


Benjamin Franklin, Jack of All Trades



Have you ever heard someone called a “jack of all trades?” This phrase refers to someone who can do many things well. It is also a perfect description for the American Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. He was a printer, author, inventor, scientist, and a diplomat. During a large part of the 1700s, Franklin was known as the most famous American in all the world!

Born in Massachusetts in 1706, Franklin grew up in a large Boston family. By the time he was twelve, Benjamin became an apprentice to his brother James, who was a printer. Along with a love of printing newspapers, he also enjoyed reading and writing very much. At one point, he was secretly publishing letters in the Boston newspaper using the pen name of “Mrs. Silence Dogood.” People enjoyed these letters so much that they became the talk of the town! When he was seventeen, Benjamin decided to move from Boston to the city of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. There he hoped to make a life of his own while starting a printing business. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, Benjamin would meet his future wife Deborah and make some important friends in the colony of Pennsylvania.

To learn as much as he could about the printing business, Franklin traveled to England for a time. When he returned to Philadelphia, Benjamin created a newspaper called the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. This paper became extremely successful and it led to other popular papers like the one named *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which contained stories, proverbs, and advice. By that time, everyone in the colonies knew the name of Benjamin Franklin. These publications, and other businesses in which he invested, made him a very wealthy and famous man!

Benjamin Franklin also had other interests besides printing. He loved science and inventing! Throughout the years, Franklin was credited with many scientific ideas. Among his most well-known were those that dealt with electricity. He discovered some new facts about this force through his famous “kite” experiment. This led to his widely-used invention, the lightning rod. More of his inventions include bifocals, the glass harmonica, the Franklin stove, the first public library, and the first fire department. Franklin's contribution to our society was simply immense!

Because of his great success, Benjamin Franklin was able to retire early from the printing business. He would become a “gentleman” who loved leisure and spending money. Along with this, Franklin soon became involved with government in the colonies. He became part of the Philadelphia City Council and then the Pennsylvania Assembly.

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As Franklin was growing older, the American colonies were experiencing a great deal of trouble. The British government began passing laws that burdened the colonists with higher taxes. They were also upset that they were not allowed to vote in elections for Parliament. The Americans were headed for a revolution and Benjamin Franklin found himself in the middle of the whole thing!

Franklin was elected to represent Pennsylvania in the Continental Congress. This group of men was charged with deciding on what actions should be taken against the British government. It was during this time that he helped Thomas Jefferson write the famous *Declaration of Independence*.

Once the Revolutionary War started, Franklin was sent to France to be a diplomat. His job was to persuade the French king to help America during the war. The people of France absolutely LOVED him. He dressed plainly and was known for wearing a fur hat. The French enjoyed getting to know this famous American, and Benjamin liked socializing and dining with important people. Through his intelligent words and warm personality, the French king agreed to use his army and navy to support the Americans in the war. This became a huge advantage and helped the United States prevail against Britain! It was in France that Franklin helped negotiate and then sign the famous document that officially ended the Revolutionary War. This was called the *Treaty of Paris*.

When he eventually returned home to Philadelphia, Franklin was called upon to be the governor of Pennsylvania and to help create the *United States Constitution*. Mr. Franklin was very old at this point but still very important to his country. Not long after this, Franklin died peacefully at the age of eighty four.

Benjamin Franklin will always be known as a great American. This printer, author, inventor, scientist, and diplomat has definitely left a mark on the world. We should all be very grateful for his contribution to our society. Americans, without a doubt, can say that this Founding Father truly was a "jack of all trades!"

