

INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONY

A family-friendly explanation & celebration of America's Independence Day

We hope this Independence Day finds you, your family, and your friends in good health and that you are enjoying another happy occasion together! We all love the barbecues, the parties, and the fireworks that traditionally accompany this occasion... but, if that's all the 4th of July is about, the day loses its meaning, and we lose a vital connection to our past.

Welcome to our Independence Day Ceremony!

This brief ceremony is designed to remind us how fortunate we are to be Americans, on our nation's birthday. We have modeled our celebration after the Jewish Passover, probably the best-known commemoration of a historical event in the world—it has kept the memory of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt alive for over 3,000 years. As Americans, we need to reconnect to our Founding Fathers and rediscover the meaning behind our country's creation. And, we need to do it every year—to help us remember. Without memory, life—whether of an individual or a nation—is meaningless.

In keeping with PragerU's longtime philosophy—that profound concepts can be taught in just five minutes—we have created this ceremony to teach children to celebrate the birth of our exceptional country and reinforce the ideals our Founding Fathers honored for our United States of America.

MATERIALS & INGREDIENTS NEEDED:

- Sweet iced tea
- Salty pretzels
- Strawberries, blueberries & whipped cream (but any goodies colored red, white, and blue will do)
- A small bell (the ringer on your cell phone can work in a pinch)
- An American coin (the bigger, the better... a half dollar is ideal, but a quarter will do)
- A printed (unsigned) Declaration of Independence
- Lyrics to "God Bless America" for all your guests



CEREMONY BEGINS:

Gather everyone around a table.

HOST SPEAKS:

Today, we take a few minutes to remember why we celebrate Independence Day and remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be Americans. Before America was a nation, it was a dream—a dream shared by many people over many generations. In 1620, the Pilgrims fled Europe and ventured toward the New World, so they could be free to practice their religion as they saw fit. Through the centuries, more and more people came to this New World, where it wasn't your past that was important; it was your future.

As more and more people came, they started to see themselves not as Europeans, but as Americans. The land was open and spacious. The opportunities were limitless. By 1776, a century and a half after the first Pilgrims landed, the citizens were ready to break away from the Old World of Europe and create a new nation. On July 4, 1776, they did just that. They pronounced themselves free from the tyranny of the King of England. We know this pronouncement as The Declaration of Independence. This dream of independence didn't become real by accident. The American dream became real because good people took action and were prepared to die for the least realized of all human dreams—liberty.

HOST INVITES CHILDREN TO READ AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Q: Why do we celebrate Independence Day on the 4th of July?

A: Because July 4, 1776, is the birthday of America—the day we signed the Declaration of Independence and chose to become the United States of America, a free and independent nation.

Q: Why is America different from all other countries?

A: In 1776, countries were based on nationality, religion, ethnicity, and geography. But America was created based on a set of ideas. That is still true today.

Q: What are those ideas, and what makes them so special?

A: Three ideas summarize what America is all about. You can see them engraved on every American coin. They are "Liberty," "In God We Trust," and "E Pluribus Unum."



HOST PASSES AROUND AN AMERICAN COIN AND SELECTS READERS.

READER #1: “Liberty” means that we are free from government oppression, not subject to the edicts of a king, dictator, or tyrannical ruler. We are a self-governed people, free to make our own choices, pursue our dreams, and go as far in life as hard work and good fortune will take us.

READER #2: “In God We Trust” means that, in America, we believe that our rights and liberties have been granted to us by our Creator and therefore, they cannot be taken away by human beings.

READER #3: “E Pluribus Unum” is a Latin phrase that means “From Many, One.” Unlike other countries, America has been composed of people of every religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, and national origin. Out of many people, we become one people—Americans.

HOST:

We have gathered items to symbolize the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War that followed. That war won our freedom.

HOST HOLDS UP EACH SYMBOLIC ITEM AND EXPLAINS:

We drink sweet iced tea to remember the Boston Tea Party, when patriots dumped British tea into the ocean rather than pay unfair taxes to King George. (all take a sip)

We eat a pretzel to remember the salty tears and suffering of the soldiers during the harsh winter at Valley Forge. (all take a bite)

We ring a small bell to remember when the great Liberty Bell, now in Philadelphia, rang to proclaim the surrender of the King’s armies. (if you don’t have a small bell, use your cell phone ringer)

We eat strawberries and blueberries dipped in whipped cream to celebrate our American pride, symbolized by the colors of the American flag. (any red, white, and blue goodies will do)

We celebrate America’s uniqueness, but we do not deny that America has always been imperfect. There are no perfect individuals, so there can hardly be a perfect country. Our national history has its share of shame. The greatest of these is the shame of slavery that existed at our founding, as it existed in every country in the world at that time. But let it never be forgotten that we fought a terrible Civil War in which hundreds of thousands of Americans died—and the reason for that war was to fight slavery. Let it also be remembered that America has fought in more wars for the freedom of others than any



nation in the history of the world.

America's history is one that we can all be proud of—proud to remember, proud to celebrate, proud to carry into the future. So, let us now close with one more ritual: Signing our names to the Declaration of Independence. It may be a replica of the one our Founders signed, but the words and sentiments are eternal.

EVERYONE PRESENT SIGNS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

HOST DISTRIBUTES THE WORDS TO "GOD BLESS AMERICA" TO GUESTS.

HOST:

Everyone, sing with me.

*God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home
God bless America, my home sweet home!*

HOST:

Happy Birthday, America. Happy Independence Day. Let's eat!

