

Name: _____

COMPARING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

When the Revolutionary War began, many people thought that the colonists had little chance of defeating the British. A close look at the strengths and weaknesses of both sides makes it easy to see why the odds were against the patriots.

For each of the areas of comparison below, decide whether the colonists or British are strong or weak in that particular category. If they are strong give them 3 or 2 points. If they are weak in that area give them 1 or 0 points. For example, Great Britain had a much larger population than the Thirteen Colonies, which means that the British are capable of supporting a larger army, so it would be reasonable to give 3 points to the British and just 1 to the colonists for population.

After you have awarded points to the colonists and the British in all twelve areas of comparison, look again at those areas and decide which three you think might have the greatest effect on the outcome of the war. For example, the "size of the navy" might be more important than "uniforms and awards". For the three areas that you have decided are most important, multiply the points for each side by 3.

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.

Comparison	Score	Colonists	Score	British
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 England; England had recently been involved in a war with France
3. Size of the navy		No regular navy; many privateers		Largest and best navy in the world
4. Familiarity with the land		Fighting on home ground		Fighting in unfamiliar territory
5. Organization of the army		Generally, troops in one colony would not fight under officers from other colonies; men from different sections did not mingle; the "militia", made up of local citizens, usually refused to leave their own colony		Highly-organized; soldiers fought wherever they were needed
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; no ability 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		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 no shortages; controlled travel along seacoast
10. Reason for fighting		Fighting to protect homes and families, and for freedom to govern themselves		British soldiers had no particular interest in the war; England itself was not threatened.
11. Amount of wealth		Very little money; no 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
Total Score				

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