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**The Mayflower Compact**

The Mayflower Compact, thought to be one of the forerunners of the [Constitution](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/constitution.htm), was signed on November 11, 1620, by 41 men aboard the *Mayflower*, the ship that had brought the [Pilgrims](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/pilgrims.htm) to America.

The ship had set sail from England with Virginia as its destination, but weather conditions forced the ship to land farther north, in what is now Provincetown Harbor, near Cape Cod. Because of this, and because they were no longer governed by the contract they had signed with the colony's investors, some aboard voiced their intention to abandon the group and set out on their own. Hearing such "mutinous speeches," as he called them, William Brewster organized the drafting of a document to describe a sort of self-government, under which the settlers would agree to live and work together for mutual survival.

The result was a framework for self-government, in which the settlers agreed to form a "body politic" that would name leaders by majority vote, in the same way that they had done in their church congregations in England and Holland.

The document itself was approved by a majority of the men aboard the ship, and 41 male passengers (including longtime Plymouth Colony Governor [William Bradford](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/williambradford.htm)) signed their names, agreeing to adhere to its outline. (More than 100 people were aboard the Mayflower, but not all were men or Pilgrims. Non-Pilgrims were referred to as "strangers.")

The signers professed their allegiance to the English King, James I. So the Mayflower Compact was not a blueprint for the [Declaration of Independence](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/declarationofindependence.htm). However, with its basis in the idea of a social contract associated with self-government ("just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony"), the Mayflower Compact was very much on the minds of English colonists settling in America in the years to come.

1. Why did they write the Mayflower Compact?

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2. What did signers agree to?

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3. What important idea came from the Mayflower Compact?

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| **The Mayflower Compact** In the name of God, Amen. We . . . the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James . . .   Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith, and honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the Northern parts of Virginia;   do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant, and combine ourselves together into a civil body politick,   for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid . . .    do enact . . . such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience   In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini 1620.  | **The Mayflower Compact**  Who is writing this compact?    Why did they undertake this voyage?      What action are they taking?      Why are they doing this?     What will they do now?       When did they agree to this compact?  |
| **Summary**  |  |