

# THOMAS JEFFERSON QUOTES

A Bill of Rights is what the people are entitled to against every government, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

A coward is much more exposed to quarrels than a man of spirit.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

A strong body makes the mind strong. As to the species of exercises, I advise the gun. While this gives moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprise and independence to the mind. Games played with the ball, and others of that nature, are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind. Let your gun therefore be your constant companion of your walks.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned - this is the sum of good government.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Advertisements contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Always take hold of things by the smooth handle.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

An association of men who will not quarrel with one another is a thing which has never yet existed, from the greatest confederacy of nations down to a town meeting or a vestry.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

An enemy generally says and believes what he wishes.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

An injured friend is the bitterest of foes.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

As our enemies have found we can reason like men, so now let us show them we can fight like men also.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Be polite to all, but intimate with few.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Bodily decay is gloomy in prospect, but of all human contemplations the most abhorrent is body without mind.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Books constitute capital. A library book lasts as long as a house, for hundreds of years. It is not, then, an article of mere consumption but fairly of capital, and often in the case of professional men, setting out in life, it is their only capital.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

But friendship is precious, not only in the shade, but in the sunshine of life, and thanks to a benevolent arrangement the greater part of life is sunshine.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Commerce with all nations, alliance with none, should be our motto.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Conquest is not in our principles. It is inconsistent with our government.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Delay is preferable to error.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time who never loses any. It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Difference of opinion is advantageous in religion. The several sects perform the office of a Censor - over each other.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Do not bite at the bait of pleasure, till you know there is no hook beneath it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Don't talk about what you have done or what you are going to do.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Errors of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Every citizen should be a soldier. This was the case with the Greeks and Romans, and must be that of every free state.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe depositories.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Experience demands that man is the only animal which devours his own kind, for I can apply no milder term to the general prey of the rich on the poor.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms of government those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

For a people who are free, and who mean to remain so, a well-organized and armed militia is their best security.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Force is the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Friendship is but another name for an alliance with the follies and the misfortunes of others. Our own share of miseries is sufficient: why enter then as volunteers into those of another?

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Happiness is not being pained in body or troubled in mind.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

He who knows best knows how little he knows.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

He who knows nothing is closer to the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

History, in general, only informs us of what bad government is.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

How much pain they have cost us, the evils which have never happened.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I abhor war and view it as the greatest scourge of mankind.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I am an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greek and Roman leave to us.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I am mortified to be told that, in the United States of America, the sale of a book can become a subject of inquiry, and of criminal inquiry too.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I believe that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I cannot live without books.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I do not take a single newspaper, nor read one a month, and I feel myself infinitely the happier for it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I find that he is happiest of whom the world says least, good or bad.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I have no ambition to govern men; it is a painful and thankless office.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I have no fear that the result of our experiment will be that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I have seen enough of one war never to wish to see another.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us, that the less we use our power the greater it will be.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial by strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinions of others.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I own that I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I think with the Romans, that the general of today should be a soldier tomorrow if necessary.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I was bold in the pursuit of knowledge, never fearing to follow truth and reason to whatever results they led, and bearding every authority which stood in their way.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than those attending too small a degree of it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

If God is just, I tremble for my country.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

If the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send one hundred and fifty lawyers, whose trade it is to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour?

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

If there is one principle more deeply rooted in the mind of every American, it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Ignorance is preferable to error, and he is less remote from the truth who believes nothing than he who believes what is wrong.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

In defense of our persons and properties under actual violation, we took up arms. When that violence shall be removed, when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, hostilities shall cease on our part also.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

In every country and every age, the priest had been hostile to Liberty.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

In truth, politeness is artificial good humor, it covers the natural want of it, and ends by rendering habitual a substitute nearly equivalent to the real virtue.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others: or their case may, by change of circumstances, become his own.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is always better to have no ideas than false ones; to believe nothing, than to believe what is wrong.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is in our lives and not our words that our religion must be read.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is more dangerous that even a guilty person should be punished without the forms of law than that he should escape.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is neither wealth nor splendor; but tranquility and occupation which give you happiness.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It is our duty still to endeavor to avoid war; but if it shall actually take place, no matter by whom brought on, we must defend ourselves. If our house be on fire, without inquiring whether it was fired from within or without, we must try to extinguish it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

It takes time to persuade men to do even what is for their own good.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Leave all the afternoon for exercise and recreation, which are as necessary as reading. I will rather say more necessary because health is worth more than learning.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Leave no authority existing not responsible to the people.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Merchants have no country. The mere spot they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gains.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Money, not morality, is the principle commerce of civilized nations.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

My only fear is that I may live too long. This would be a subject of dread to me.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)



My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

My theory has always been, that if we are to dream, the flatteries of hope are as cheap, and pleasanter, than the gloom of despair.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Never spend your money before you have earned it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

No duty the Executive had to perform was so trying as to put the right man in the right place.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

No freeman shall be debarred the use of arms.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

No government ought to be without censors; and where the press is free no one ever will.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

No man will ever carry out of the Presidency the reputation which carried him into it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

None but an armed nation can dispense with a standing army. To keep ours armed and disciplined is therefore at all times important.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Nothing is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

One loves to possess arms, though they hope never to have occasion for them.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

One man with courage is a majority.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

One travels more usefully when alone, because he reflects more.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Only aim to do your duty, and mankind will give you credit where you fail.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Our country is now taking so steady a course as to show by what road it will pass to destruction, to wit: by consolidation of power first, and then corruption, its necessary consequence.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Our greatest happiness does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed us, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Peace and abstinence from European interferences are our objects, and so will continue while the present order of things in America remain uninterrupted.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Peace and friendship with all mankind is our wisest policy, and I wish we may be permitted to pursue it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Politics is such a torment that I advise everyone I love not to mix with it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Power is not alluring to pure minds.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Resort is had to ridicule only when reason is against us.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add 'within the limits of the law' because law is often but the tyrant's will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

So confident am I in the intentions, as well as wisdom, of the government, that I shall always be satisfied that what is not done, either cannot, or ought not to be done.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Speeches that are measured by the hour will die with the hour.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Taste cannot be controlled by law.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

That government is the strongest of which every man feels himself a part.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The advertisement is the most truthful part of a newspaper.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The boisterous sea of liberty is never without a wave.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The constitutions of most of our States assert that all power is inherent in the people; that... it is their right and duty to be at all times armed.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The Creator has not thought proper to mark those in the forehead who are of stuff to make good generals. We are first, therefore, to seek them blindfold, and then let them learn the trade at the expense of great losses.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The earth belongs to the living, not to the dead.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The glow of one warm thought is to me worth more than money.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The good opinion of mankind, like the lever of Archimedes, with the given fulcrum, moves the world.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The moment a person forms a theory, his imagination sees in every object only the traits which favor that theory.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The most successful war seldom pays for its losses.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The natural cause of the human mind is certainly from credulity to skepticism.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The republican is the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The second office in the government is honorable and easy; the first is but a splendid misery.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions that I wish it to be always kept alive.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The spirit of this country is totally adverse to a large military force.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The way to silence religious disputes is to take no notice of them.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

The world is indebted for all triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

There is not a sprig of grass that shoots uninteresting to me.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

There is not a truth existing which I fear... or would wish unknown to the whole world.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Timid men prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous sea of liberty.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

To penetrate and dissipate these clouds of darkness, the general mind must be strengthened by education.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Truth is certainly a branch of morality and a very important one to society.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Walking is the best possible exercise. Habituate yourself to walk very fast.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

War is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong; and multiplies, instead of indemnifying losses.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

We are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a featherbed.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

We did not raise armies for glory or for conquest.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

We may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

We never repent of having eaten too little.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

When a man assumes a public trust he should consider himself a public property.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

When angry count to ten before you speak. If very angry, count to one hundred.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

When the people fear the government, there is tyranny. When the government fears the people, there is liberty.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Whenever a man has cast a longing eye on offices, a rottenness begins in his conduct.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Whenever you do a thing, act as if all the world were watching.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Wisdom I know is social. She seeks her fellows. But Beauty is jealous, and illy bears the presence of a rival.

[Thomas Jefferson](#)

Thomas Jefferson (13 April 1743 – 4 July 1826) was author of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1777), founder of the University of Virginia (1819), the third president of the United States (1801–1809), a political philosopher, editor of Jefferson's Bible (1819), and one of the most influential founders of the United States. See also: United States Declaration of Independence (1776). Notes on the State of Virginia (1781–1785).