Articles of Confederation were by the Continental Congress. The Articles were a plan for a national government.

In the Articles of Confederation, the national government had few powers because Americans feared a strong national government would lead to tyranny (trading one king for another).

The national government was run by a Confederation Congress (elected representatives). Each state had 1 vote in the Congress.

Powers of the National Government under the Articles included: *wage war* *make peace* *sign treaties* *coin money (issue money)*

The most important powers were left to the states. State governments had the power to: *set taxes* *enforce national laws* *control western lands (at first)*

Achievements of the Continental/Confederation Congress:
1. Governed during the Revolution
2. Treaty of Paris of 1783
3. Land Ordinance – 1785 (law)
4. North West Ordinance – 1787 (law)

Weaknesses/Problems: Articles of Confederation Congress had:
1. No power to enforce laws
2. No power to tax
3. No power to regulate (control) trade
4. To have the approval of all 13 states to change Articles
The Articles of Confederation, formally the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, was an agreement among the 13 founding states that established the United States of America as a confederation of sovereign states and served as its first constitution. Its drafting by the Continental Congress began in mid-1776, and an approved version was sent to the states for ratification in late 1777. The formal ratification by all 13 states was completed in early 1781. Even when not yet ratified, the Articles provided domestic and international legitimacy for the Continental Congress to direct the American Revolutionary War, conduct diplomacy with Europe and deal with territorial issues and Native American relations. Nevertheless, the weakness of the government created by the Articles became a matter of concern for key nationalists. On March 4, 1789, the Articles were replaced with the U.S. Constitution. The new Constitution provided for a much stronger national government with a chief executive (the president), courts, and taxing powers.

Accomplishments of the Confederation

Nevertheless, the Confederation Congress did take two actions with long lasting impact. The Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance created territorial government, set up protocols for the admission of new states, the division of land into useful units, and set aside land in each township for public use. This system represented a sharp break from imperial colonization, as in Europe, and provided the basis for the rest of American continental expansion through the 19th Century.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 established both the general practices of land surveying in the west and northwest and the land ownership provisions used throughout the later westward expansion beyond the Mississippi River. Frontier lands were surveyed into the now-familiar squares of land called the township (36 square miles), the section (one square mile), and the quarter section (160 acres). This system was carried forward to most of the States west of the Mississippi (excluding areas of Texas and California that had already been surveyed and divided up by the Spanish Empire). Then, when the Homestead Act was enacted in 1867, the quarter section became the basic unit of land that was granted to new settler-farmers.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 noted the agreement of the original states to give up northwestern land claims, organized the Northwest Territory and thus cleared the way for the entry of five new states, and part of a sixth to the Union. To be specific, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia gave up all of their claims to land north of the Ohio River and west of the (present) western border of Pennsylvania. Over several decades a number of new states were formed from this land: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and the part of Minnesota east of the Mississippi River. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 also made great advances in the abolition of slavery. New states admitted to the union in said territory would never be slave states.