

Sample Interview Questions

It is the interviewer's job to make the interviewee feel comfortable and to be a good listener. Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help the interviewer guide the veteran through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the veteran see fit, and focus on asking thoughtful follow-up questions on topics of conversation that might be of interest to historians and researchers.



If you are planning to interview a Gold Star parent, spouse or sibling, use the list of [sample interview questions designed for Gold Star Families](#) (PDF, 143KB).

Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organization affiliation (if any), the veteran's full name, the date and general location in which the interview is being conducted and the names of any other people present, such as a note taker or recording equipment operator. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers. State that the interview is being conducted for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Biographical Details

- Where were you born?
- Who are/were your parents and what are/were their occupations?
- Who are/were your siblings? Names and genders? Which, if any, serve/served in the military?
- What were your parents' or siblings' feelings about you joining the service?
- What primary and secondary schools or college did you attend?
- What kinds of jobs did you hold prior to entering the military?

Early Days of Service

- Can you tell us about when you went into the military? Were you drafted, or did you volunteer?
- (If volunteered) Why did you join?
- What or who did you leave behind (family, child, pet) when you left to serve?
- In which branch did you enter?
- (If volunteered) Why did you choose that branch?
- How did you get to your initial point of entry?
- What type of training or schooling did you have? (Advance Course Warrant Officer Basic, Warrant Officer Advance, Warrant Officer Senior Course, "Boot-strap" Command and General Staff College or equivalent, War College or equivalent (getting a degree—either Bachelors, Masters or PhD).
- What is your most vivid memory of your time training or in school? What was the best part? What was the worst part?

- Does any particular instructor stand out in your mind? If yes, why?
- What was your first assignment after basic training?
- Did you receive any specialized training? If so, what?
- Do you recall your instructors? If so, what were they like?
- Did you qualify with equipment (vehicles, aircraft, radios, weapons, etc.)?
 - (If Yes) What was training with that equipment like?
- What was the hardest part of training?
- Did you receive any promotions? Could you tell me about them?
- What was the hardest part of the military life-style for you to adapt to? Why do you think it was?
- What was the easiest part of the military life-style for you to adapt to? Why do you think it was?

Wartime Service

- Where did you serve?
- What are your recollections of that experience?
- Were you in a combat, combat support, or combat service support role? Or did the war zone make that designation irrelevant?
- (If combat/ wartime) How did your combat (wartime) experience change you?
- What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?
- How did you stay in touch with family and friends?
- What did you do for recreation or when you were off duty?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events?
- Was there something you did for “good luck?”
- What was the best part of your service experience?

End of Service

- Do you recall the day service ended? Where were you when your service ended?
- Did you return home? Where were you?
- How were you received by your family and community?
- How did you readjust to civilian life? Did you work or go back to school?
- Did the G.I. Bill support your education?
- How did service change you?
- Did you continue any friendships after service? For how long?
- How did service affect the way you relate to others?
- Did you join a veteran organization?
- Do you attend reunions?

Reflections

- How did your military service experiences affect your life?
- What are some life lessons you learned from your military service?

- How has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations who will view/hear this interview?

Conclusion

Thank the veteran for sharing their recollections of military service, and let them know you have few more questions before ending the recording.

- Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?
- Is there anything you've always wanted to share about your service or veteran experience that you never have?
- What would you like people to know or remember from your story?
- Is there anything else we should talk about that we haven't covered?
- What do you wish more people knew about veterans?

Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000 to collect, preserve and make accessible the firsthand recollections of U.S. military veterans who served from World War I through more recent conflicts and peacekeeping missions, so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand what they saw, did and felt during their service.

Visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for answers to the most common questions about the Veterans History Project.

For more information, visit loc.gov/vets/, call (202) 707-4916, or email <mailto:vohp@loc.gov>

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