



CELEBRATING AMERICA'S FREEDOMS

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

Activities for Veterans Day



Visit <http://www.va.gov/vetsday/> on the Internet for additional Veterans Day information for teachers and students

Veterans Day is an excellent occasion for schools and local communities to produce a variety of meaningful cooperative programs. Participation by veterans organizations and other patriotic groups can enhance many of the activities suggested in this guide.

1. Veterans Day Ceremony

Depending on the facilities available, an indoor assembly program can provide a most meaningful tribute to Veterans Day. The scope of such a program may be large enough to permit invitations to the community at large. This ceremony outline represents a typical one-hour program.

Prelude and Posting of Colors — As the audience enters to be seated, a school or community musical organization may offer several appropriate selections. A procession and posting of the Nation's colors (the American Flag) is always a stirring event. Local veterans service organizations often participate in such programs with their impressive array of military banners and American flags.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Singing of the National Anthem — The program chairperson, school principal or student body president should invite the audience to stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance and singing of the National Anthem.

Introductory Remarks — Brief introductory remarks set the tone for the program. The following remarks may be used or, if desired, the President's Veterans Day Proclamation, which the White House posts on the Internet shortly before Veterans Day at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>, may be read.

When Francis Scott Key wrote the "Star Spangled Banner" almost 200 years ago, he called America, "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Those words are as true today as they were then.

Throughout this Nation's history, America's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coastguardsmen have bravely answered the call to defend our freedom, to aid our friends and allies, and to turn back aggressors.

We can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to the more than 650,000 American servicemembers who died in battle or the 1.4 million who were wounded. We can, however, recognize and thank the 25 million veterans still living today.

These words are inscribed on the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C.:

"Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met."

Those words apply equally to many of our World War I, World War II, Vietnam War and Gulf War veterans as well. They apply to today's active duty servicemembers — tomorrow's veterans — who are helping to maintain peace throughout the world.

Today, it is our privilege to say "thank you" to all of America's veterans, to let them know that we appreciate them for their service and honor them for their sacrifices.

The price of freedom is high. We cannot afford to forget those willing to pay it.

Today, we celebrate America's veterans for keeping this Nation "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Special Musical Selection — A band or choral group should offer one of the more impressive patriotic selections available.

Introduction of Guests — Dignitaries selected as special guests may include local government officials, school alumni with distinguished military service, veterans from the community who represent different periods of service, and faculty members who are veterans.

Principal Speaker — Your principal speaker should be invited far enough in advance to allow adequate preparation for your program.

Student Essay or Reading — In school programs, student body participation may be increased by including in the program various presentations by individual pupils. Selected essays from school-wide competition may be offered by the student author. A reading of a well-known patriotic address by an American president or famous military hero by a talented student can be effective. There are a number of published musicals/narratives which could add greatly to your program.

Moment of Silence, Taps — While Veterans Day is primarily a tribute to America's living veterans, and should be observed more as a celebration than as a somber remembrance, it is always appropriate to include a moment of respect for those who gave their lives for their country. The signing of the World War I Armistice took place in a railway coach near the battle zone in France. The bugles sounded "cease firing" and the hostilities ended, marking a most significant moment in world history. Although 11 a.m. remains a traditional hour for this type of tribute, a moment of silence is appropriate at any point in the program. This may be followed by a rendition of "Taps."

Closing — The Master of Ceremonies announces "Retire the Colors." Accompanied by appropriate music, such as a John Philip Sousa march, the colors are paraded out of the assembly area, concluding the ceremony.

2. Flag-Raising Ceremony Weather permitting, outdoor flag-raising ceremonies permit group participation in an event that is often performed without notice. Such a ceremony, although brief, should include the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of the National Anthem. A special guest may be invited to participate.

3. Musical Programs Veterans Day offers an excellent opportunity for school or community musical organizations to display their talents. A midday concert at the school or at a central location in the community may be especially dedicated to Veterans Day. An innovative program might include selections known to have been popular during America's wars.

4. Poster Contest The creative talents of students can be encouraged through participation in a school-wide Veterans Day poster contest. Winners should be appropriately recognized and awarded certificates. Local newspapers should be invited to photograph the winning entries.

5. School Newspaper Activities Veterans Day stories can be featured in school publications. Publish a roster of faculty members who are veterans. Describe Veterans Day activities being held in classrooms throughout the school.

6. Library Activities School or community libraries can prepare lists of recommended reading material suitable for Veterans Day. An appropriate display of book jackets or a special shelf of selected publications can be used to call attention to the project.

7. Patriotic Groups Local veterans, historical or other patriotic organizations may enliven Veterans Day programs by providing period-uniformed flag bearers, fife and

drum corps, and other marching and musical units. These organizations may also provide speakers with unique military experiences to share.

8. The Department of Veterans Affairs Local VA facilities — medical centers, regional benefits offices and national cemeteries — can serve as sources of information and speakers for Veterans Day programs. They can also provide contact with local veterans service organizations and arrange visits, tours and other special programs for students. To contact your local VA facilities, look under Department of Veterans Affairs in the Federal Government listings in the local telephone directory.

9. Classroom Activities Veterans Day themes can be included in writing assignments. First-person accounts of military service of a relative or friend can help develop narrative skills. Assign students to investigate the various benefits offered to veterans by government agencies. Write about veterans who are receiving educational benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Describe various veterans memorials which may be located nearby.

The colorful and varied uniforms worn by members of the armed forces throughout our history offer students of all ages ideal subjects to draw and paint. Elementary-school children enjoy opportunities to create and exhibit costume items. Making colored construction paper hats representing various military eras is a modest and effective way of interesting pupils in Veterans Day subjects. Ask students to research and list all their known relatives who served in the Armed Forces. Since nearly 30 percent of the United States population are veterans, their dependents and survivors, most students should be able to contribute something.