



Take a Veteran to School Day™

A New Generation of Veterans

Post-9/11 veterans have a unique distinction in U.S. military history. They are the first generation of veterans to have served during sustained combat operations as an all-volunteer force (AVF). Unlike their parents and grandparents—who may have been drafted into military service in a time of conflict—post-9/11 veterans made an informed, individual choice to join the military and possibly risk their lives to defend our country.

This new generation of veterans is also the first to simultaneously serve in two separate wars—the longest lasting military conflict in American history. Combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have lasted longer than in any previous American conflict, yet only 1% of the U.S. adult population have served in these conflicts. As a result, many post-9/11 veterans have served extended or multiple tours overseas.

Contrary to popular belief, the distinction and the increased burden on post-9/11 veterans has not left them broken and desperate for support. Quite the opposite. Post-9/11 veterans have endured any number of challenges under extenuating circumstances. The result is a stronger, more experienced group of veterans who return home looking for the next challenge. And, it's up to the American public to offer that challenge.

Americans recognize the service and sacrifice made by veterans of the recent conflicts. The civilian response to this generation of veterans has been positive, and post-9/11 veterans often hear "Thank you for your service." However, when they return home, the public owes them more than a thank you. The public must elicit the problem-solving skills and leadership abilities that veterans have cultivated by empowering them to continue serving and using their skills to succeed at home. When veterans are held to higher expectations, they rise to the occasion and become crucial assets in their communities.

Not only do we have a new generation of veterans, but also a new generation of leaders. Veterans are more likely to volunteer in their communities, and are more likely than their civilian counterparts to be employed. Additionally, tens of thousands of young veterans are going back to school under the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other programs. More often than not, post-9/11 veterans return home with the desire to continue serving their communities. So, in addition to the "Thank you," ask a veteran what is next in his or her life. You might be surprised or amazed as you listen to their stories and aspirations. Here are some ideas to help get you started:

Thank a Vet

Visit us online at History.com/thank-a-vet to join our Twitter campaign and find great videos related to Veteran's Day.





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Questions to Ask **Post-9/11 Veterans**

1. What were your reasons for joining the military?
2. What have you gained from your military service?
3. What are your future goals and aspirations, and how has your military service prepared you to reach them?
4. How do you feel the general public has responded to your service?
5. Do you feel that people appreciate military service?
6. Do you feel that people understand the value of a veteran?
7. In what ways can people recognize your service?
8. Is it more meaningful to be told "thank you" or to be given opportunities in which you can use your military skills in civilian life?
9. What are some of your unique experiences as a post-9/11 veteran and how does your military service help you to address opportunities and challenges in your life?
10. How has technology affected your experience in the military?
11. Do you think new technology has affected how Americans perceive the post-9/11 conflicts?