

Sample Questions for Military Veterans

In the beginning:

What date did you sign up/get drafted for military service, which branch, and how old were you?
What made you decide to join the military and that branch (if not drafted)?
What did your family and friends think about you joining the service?
Where did you go to boot camp and for how long?
Describe what boot camp was like. (Work, exercises, discipline, food, living quarters, camaraderie)
What were some good boot camp experiences? Bad? Most difficult challenges?
What were your feelings about boot camp? Was it what you expected?
Did you learn anything about yourself or others during this time?

Service Locations and jobs assigned:

Where were you stationed, when, and for what time period? How did you get there?
Describe the area around the base (or ports): population and geography, weather, culture.
Describe the sleeping arrangements, food, facilities, security
Explain a little about the jobs you did there, including special training.
What did you like most about this place/port (or being on a ship) and the job(s)?
What didn't you like, what was most difficult or challenging?
What did you do during down times, leave days?
Did you interact with the locals? Any interesting experiences with them? Did you like the culture?
Did you receive letters or packages? Did you write letters? How was mail service? Were you homesick?
If in service at the time a war/US involvement ended, where were you when you heard the news?
If in service at a war/conflict's end, what was your and your unit's reactions? How soon after did you go home?
Was it difficult to adjust to civilian life again?
Were you awarded any medals? (Explain)
Did your military experience change you in any way? Life lessons? Lasting friendships?

Combat/War Zone Questions:

Do not push combat veterans or anyone with PTSD to tell stories they are not ready or willing to talk about. Start with the "safe" questions above and let the veteran lead from there. Questions about combat experiences depend on which war/conflict, branch of service and location.

How did you (and others) deal with fear, deaths?
Were you ever injured? If so, where, how, hospital sent to, recovery stories.
What did you think about the war/conflict you were in?
Did you feel the US presence was worthwhile, justified?

The Library of Congress collects certain audio and video interviews (external microphone preferred) and original journals and letters of war veterans as well as of civilian workers and volunteers who supported war efforts. To contributing an interview, please read the entire website before the interview occurs.

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/scope.html>

Other organizations collect veteran war stories and/or artifacts. Please contact them or carefully read instructions before interviewing or sending materials. <http://www.loc.gov/vets/relatedrepositories.html>