Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**U.S. Department of Defense**

Veterans Day is a well-known American holiday, but there are also a few misconceptions about it — like how it’s spelled or whom exactly it celebrates. To clear some of that up, here are the important facts you should know.

* **History of Veterans Day**

Veterans Day, originally celebrated as Armistice Day, was first issued on November 11, 1919, by President Woodrow Wilson a year after the end of World War I. The purpose of Armistice Day was to honor the fallen soldiers of the Great War for their sacrifice and bravery. Seven years later, in 1926, Congress adopted a resolution requesting that President Calvin Coolidge issue annual proclamations on November 11, making Armistice Day a legal holiday.

In 1945, World War II veteran Raymond Weeks had the idea to expand Armistice Day to celebrate all veterans rather than just the ones who died in World War I. He led a delegation to General Dwight Eisenhower, who was all for the idea. Weeks then organized the first Veterans Day celebration in 1945 in Alabama and every year since, until he died in 1985. In 1982, he was honored by President Reagan with the Presidential Citizenship Medal. Weeks was also named the ‘Father of Veterans Day’ by Elizabeth Dole.

In 1954, Ed Rees, the U.S. Representative from Emporia, Kansas, presented a bill to establish the holiday to Congress. Eisenhower, who was then the president and also from Kansas, signed the bill into law on May 26, 1954, eight and a half years after Raymond Weeks held the first Veterans Day. After having been through both World War II and the Korean War, the 83rd U.S. Congress — at the urge of the veterans’ service organizations — amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word ‘Armistice’ and inserting the word ‘Veterans.’ With the approval of this legislation on June 1, 1954, November 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

The National Veterans Award was also created in 1954, first received by Congressman Rees for his support in making Veterans Day a federal holiday. Though the holiday is currently and was originally celebrated on November 11, the day was moved to the fourth Monday of October in 1971 due to the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. Finally, on September 20, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed a law that returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978.

* **Veterans Day does NOT have an apostrophe.**

A lot of people think it’s “Veteran’s Day” or “Veterans’ Day,” but they’re wrong. The holiday is not a day that “belongs” to one veteran or multiple veterans, which is what an apostrophe implies. It’s a day for honoring all [veterans](https://www.defense.gov/Search-Results/Tag/45871/veterans/) — so no apostrophe needed.

* **Veterans Day is NOT the Same as Memorial Day.**

A lot of Americans get this confused, and we’ll be honest — it can be a little annoying to all of the living veterans out there.

Memorial Day is a time to remember those who gave their lives for our country, particularly in battle or from wounds they suffered in battle. Veterans Day honors all of those who have served the country in war or peace — dead or alive — although it’s largely intended to thank living veterans for their sacrifices.

* **It was originally called Armistice Day, commemorating the end of World War I.**

World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, the fighting ended about seven months before that when the Allies and Germany put into effect an armistice on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

For that reason, Nov. 11, 1918, was largely considered the end of “the war to end all wars” and dubbed Armistice Day. In 1926, Congress officially recognized it as the end of the war, and in 1938, it became an official holiday, primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I.

But then World War II and the Korean War happened, so on June 1, 1954, at the urging of veterans service organizations, Congress amended the commemoration yet again by changing the word “armistice” to “veterans” so the day would honor American veterans of all wars.

For a while, Veterans Day’s date was changed, too, and it confused everybody.

Congress signed the Uniform Holiday Bill in 1968 to ensure that a few federal holidays — Veterans Day included — would be celebrated on a Monday. Officials hoped it would spur travel and other family activities over a long weekend, which would stimulate the economy.

* **For some inexplicable reason, the bill set Veterans Day commemorations for the fourth Monday of every October.**

On Oct. 25, 1971, the first Veterans Day under this new bill was held. We’re not sure why it took three years to implement, but not surprisingly, there was a lot of confusion about the change, and many states were unhappy, choosing to continue to recognize the day as they previously had — in November.

Within a few years, it became pretty apparent that most U.S. citizens wanted to celebrate Veterans Day on Nov. 11, since it was a matter of historic and patriotic significance. So on Sept. 20, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed another law (Public Law 94-97), which returned the annual observance to its original date starting in 1978**.**

* **Other countries celebrate it, too, in their own ways.**

World War I was a multinational effort, so it makes sense that our allies also wanted to celebrate their veterans on Nov. 11. The name of the day and the types of commemorations differ, however.

Canada and Australia both call Nov. 11 “Remembrance Day.” Canada’s observance is pretty similar to our own, except many of its citizens wear red poppy flowers to honor their war dead. In Australia, the day is more akin to our Memorial Day.

Great Britain calls it “Remembrance Day,” too, but observes it on the Sunday closest to Nov. 11 with parades, services and two minutes of silence in London to honor those who lost their lives in war.

**Questions:**

* Using evidence from the text, explain the importance of Veterans Day around the world.
* What are some ways you can personally express your gratitude for our Veterans?