



GENERALS & PRESIDENTS



By THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

General Knowledge

Many of our presidents served in the military. Although not a presidential requirement, military experience – especially distinguished service – has been key to election day success.

The presidency demands inspiring leadership and decisive action. It's no surprise that of the 26 presidents who served in the military, twelve were generals.

Presidents have been lauded and derided for their actions on the battlefield. Some even became national heroes at war's end. But, which presidents have achieved the rank of general?

The Revolution



George Washington
1
2
GW
1789-1797

George Washington served as general and commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. After the war, Washington relinquished his power by resigning his commission. But retirement didn't last long.

In 1789 Washington was called to the highest office in the land with a unanimous electoral vote.

War of 1812



Andrew Jackson
7
2
Aja
1829-1837

Andrew Jackson gained national fame as a hero in the War of 1812. In the winter of 1814-15, Major General Jackson planned and led an outright triumph against the British at the Battle of New Orleans.

Known by Americans as the "Hero of New Orleans" Jackson's wartime experience paved the way for his entry into the White House 14 years later.



William Henry Harrison
9
1
Whh
1841

Harrison was best known for leading troops during the War of 1812. His defeat of the Shawnee at the Battle of Tippecanoe gave rise to the general's famous campaign slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." And, the Battle of the Thames spawned the presidential legend known as "Tecumseh's Curse" when Tecumseh was killed by Harrison's troops in the confrontation.

Mexican-American War



Zachary Taylor
12
1
Zt
1849-1850

Taylor fought in nearly every American conflict until he became president. He was a major in the War of 1812, a colonel in the Black Hawk War, and a brigadier general in the Seminole War.

It was his success as a general in the Mexican-American War that made him a national hero and set the stage for his unlikely presidential victory.



Franklin Pierce
14
1
Fp
1853-1857

Pierce quickly rose through the Army's ranks. He joined the army as a private in 1846, and – due in part to his connections with President Polk – became a brigadier general by mid-1847.

Brigadier General Pierce didn't see much success in the Mexican-American war. Nevertheless, he could now add brigadier general to his political résumé.

Six Star General?

★★★★★

In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, President Ford promoted George Washington to "General of the Armies of the United States" - officially out-ranking all past and present officers in the U.S. Army.

Civil War



Andrew Johnson
17
VP
Ajo
1865-1869

According to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Johnson was a "Brigadier General, U.S. Army (Volunteers), 1862-1865."

In 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson as military governor of Tennessee, with the rank of brigadier general. He held the position throughout the Civil War until he was elected vice president in 1864.



Ulysses S. Grant
18
2
Usg
1869-1877

Ulysses S. Grant was the Union Army's greatest military hero. His nicknames say it all: "Unconditional Surrender Grant;" "The Hero of Appomattox." His leadership as a Union general during the Civil War launched his political career.

Like other general-presidents before him, Grant knew little of politics when he was elected president in 1868.



Rutherford B. Hayes
19
1
Rbh
1877-1881

After the Civil War, military service (for the Union) was almost a prerequisite to become president.

During the Civil War, Hayes rose to the rank of major general - wounded a total of five times.

Hayes's military record helped to get him elected as a representative in Congress, as Ohio's governor, and as U.S. president.



James A. Garfield
20
1
Jag
1881

When the Civil War erupted Garfield joined the Ohio militia. He fought bravely in battles such as Shiloh and Chickamauga.

At the age of thirty, Garfield became a major general. After the war, Garfield was elected to nine straight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1880 the war hero won the presidential election as a dark horse candidate.



Chester A. Arthur
21
VP
Caa
1881-1885

During the Civil War, Arthur served as Quartermaster General of New York. By 1863 Arthur hadn't fired a shot on the battlefield, and he retired from the Army.

By 1880 Arthur found himself in the presidential race as Garfield's vice presidential candidate. Following Garfield's assassination, Arthur succeeded to the presidency.



Benjamin Harrison
23
1
Bh
1889-1893

Descended from William H. Harrison, Benjamin Harrison carried his family name into both the military and political worlds.

During the Civil War, Harrison rose to brigadier general. After his service, Harrison entered politics. He won a Senate seat in 1880. Then in 1888, he defeated incumbent president Grover Cleveland, despite losing the popular vote.



Dwight D. Eisenhower
34
2
Dde
1953-1961

Dwight D. Eisenhower was one of America's greatest military commanders. Like Taylor and Grant, Eisenhower was a career military man who had never held political office before becoming president.

Seizing upon his national popularity as a WWII hero, the Republican Party nominated Ike for president in 1952. The general won in a landslide.

World War II