

Sample Interview Questions for GOLD STAR Families

It is the interviewer's job to make the interviewee feel comfortable and to be a good listener. Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help the interviewer guide the Gold Star Family member through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the narrator see fit, and try to ask thoughtful follow-up questions on topics of conversation that might be of interest to historians and researchers. If your veteran is still living, use the [list of sample interview questions designed for the general public](#) (PDF, 121KB). If your veteran is deceased, but you are not a Gold Star family member, visit the Customized Guidance page for Volunteers/Interviewers to learn how to create a collection on their behalf.



Gold Star Family members are defined by legislation as a “parent, spouse, sibling or child of members of the Armed Forces who died as a result of their service during a period of war.” The following pages include suggested interview questions for Gold Star parents, spouses and siblings (age 18 or older).

Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000 to collect, preserve and make accessible the firsthand recollections of U.S. military veterans who served from World War I through more recent conflicts and peacekeeping missions, so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand what they saw, did and felt during their service.

Visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for answers to the most common questions about the Veterans History Project.

For more information visit loc.gov/vets, call (202) 707-4916, or email vohp@loc.gov

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GOLD STAR PARENT

Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organization affiliation (if any), the Gold Star parent's full name, the name of the service member they are there to talk about, the date and general location in which the interview is being conducted and the names of any other people present, such as a note taker or recording equipment operator. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers. State that the interview is being conducted for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Biographical Details

- Where were you born?
- Before your child, was anyone close to you in the military?
- When / where were your children born?
- What was their childhood like?
- Where did they attend school?
- What were their interests during childhood?
- What did your child want to be when they were growing up?

Early Days of Service

- Can you tell us about when your child went into the military? Was your child drafted, or did they volunteer?
- Which branch of the military did they enter?
- (If they volunteered) Why did they choose that branch?
- Did you support their decision to enter the military?
- Do you remember the weeks, days leading up to their departure? Did you do anything special before they left?
- Do you know where they went for training or what that was like?
- Did they share their overall attitude and experience of training with you?
- How did you communicate with your child during the training period?
- Did they talk about specific friendships they had formed?
 - Did you ever meet their friends?

Wartime Service

- After training, where did your child serve?
- How did you learn they were going to be deployed?
- What type of work were they performing?
- Do you know their unit's mission?
- What do you remember of their experience from the communication you received?

- What was the preferred method of communication (i.e. email, skype, phone, etc.)?
- What were the primary things that you discussed?
- How did you keep up with what was happening during the war?
- Can you share when and how you received the news of their passing, or that they were missing in action?
 - Do you remember what you were doing when you heard?

Reflections

- Did you have a funeral or memorial service?
- How did you cope with your loss initially?
 - And in time?
- How did your family members and friends cope?
- Was there community reaction to your loss?
- What was your greatest source of support?
- Did you join any organizations such as Gold Star Families?
- How do you mark anniversaries or important dates relating to your child?
- Are there specific traditions that you or your family has related to the anniversaries or important dates?
- Do you have any traditions around the loss of your child?
- When talking about them, are there particular memories or anecdotes you like to share?
- Do you share stories about them outside of the family? How do you do that?
- How do you recognize Memorial Day?
- What are ways that you ensure/share the legacy of your child?
 - What do you want others to know about your child?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations who will hear/view this interview?
- Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview?
- Do you have any original photographs, correspondence, or other legacy material that you'd like to include with your story?

GOLD STAR SPOUSE

Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organization affiliation (if any), the Gold Star spouse's full name, the name of the service member they are there to talk about, the date and general location in which the interview is being conducted and the names of any other people present, such as a note taker or recording equipment operator. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers. State that the interview is being conducted for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Biographical Details

- Where were you born?
- Did your relatives serve/served in the military?
- Did you serve in the military?
- How did you meet your spouse?
- When were you married?

Early Days of Service

- Was your spouse serving in the military when you met them?
- If not, can you tell us about when your spouse went into the military? Did they enlist or get drafted?
- Which branch of the military did they go into?
- (If they enlisted) Why did they choose that branch?
- (If they volunteered) Did you support their decision?
- (If they were drafted) How did you feel about it?
- Do you remember the weeks, days leading up to them leaving? Did you do anything special before they left?
- While they were training, how did you cope with their absence?
- Did they share their overall attitude and experience of training?
- How did you communicate with your spouse?

Wartime Service

- After training, did your spouse return home on leave?
- How did you feel when you heard news of their deployment?
- Did they discuss the type of work were they performing? Do you know their unit's mission?
- Did they have any close friends in the military?
- Did you get to know them, and if so how?
- Did your spouse share any pressures or stress?

- What pressures or stress did you feel? How did you cope with it?
- How did you hear news of their passing or that they were missing in action?

Reflections

- Did you have a funeral or memorial service?
- How did you cope with your loss initially?
 - And in time?
- How did family members and friends cope?
- Was there community reaction to your loss?
- What was your greatest source of support?
- Did you join any organizations such as Gold Star Families?
- How do you mark anniversaries or important dates relating to your spouse?
- Are there specific traditions that you or your family has related to the anniversaries or important dates?
- Is there anything special you and your family do to honor your spouse throughout the year?
 - How do you recognize Memorial Day?
- When talking about them, are there particular memories or anecdotes you like to share?
- Do you share stories about them outside of the family? How do you do that?
- What are ways that you ensure/share the legacy of your spouse?
 - What do you want others to know about them?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations who will hear/view this interview?
- Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview?
- Do you have any original photographs, correspondence, or other legacy material that you'd like to include with your story?

GOLD STAR SIBLING

Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organization affiliation (if any), the Gold Star sibling's full name, the name of the service member they are there to talk about, the date and general location in which the interview is being conducted and the names of any other people present, such as a note taker or recording equipment operator. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers. State that the interview is being conducted for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Biographical Details

- Where were you born?
- Who are/were your parents and what were their occupations?
- Who were your siblings? Names and gender? Age difference?
- What was your relationship with your siblings like growing up?
- Do any specific memories of your childhood with your siblings come to mind?
- Did you have older relatives who served in the military?
- If so, did they share their experiences?
- Which of your siblings serve/served in the military? Did you?

Early Days of Service

- Can you tell us about when your sibling went into the military? Were they drafted or did they enlist?
- Which branch of the military did they enter?
- (If they enlisted) Why did they choose that branch?
- (If they were drafted) How did they react to being called to serve?
- How did you feel about them entering the military? (If they volunteered) Did you support their decision?
- Do you remember the weeks, days leading up to them leaving? Did you do anything special before they left?
- While they were training, how did you cope with their absence?
- Did they share their overall attitude and experience of training?
- How did you and your family communicate with your sibling?

Wartime Service

- After training, did your sibling return home on leave?
- How did you feel when you heard news of their deployment?
- Did they discuss the type of work were they performing?
- Do you know their unit's mission?

- Did they mention any friendships or camaraderie?
 - Did you get to meet them?
- Did they share any pressures or stress?
- What pressures or stress did you feel? How did you cope with it?
- How did you hear news of their passing or that they were missing in action?

Reflections

- Did you have a funeral or memorial service?
- How did you cope with your loss?
- How did your family members and friends cope?
- What was your greatest source of support?
- Did you join any organizations such as Gold Star Families?
- Is there anything special you do to honor your sibling throughout the year?
- What do you want others to know about your sibling?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations who will hear/view this interview?
- Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview?
- Do you have any original photographs, correspondence, or other legacy material that you'd like to include with your story?