Veteran's Day has a way of making people pause. Even folks who do not usually decorate for holidays often feel pulled to mark the day with something visible, respectful, and lasting. A flag does that better than almost anything else. It moves in the wind, catches the eye from the street, and says plainly that service matters here.

I have always thought the best Veteran's Day displays are the ones with a little intention behind them. Not just a flag on a pole, but a choice. Maybe your father served in the Navy and crossed the Atlantic on a destroyer escort. Maybe your grandmother worked under Army command during wartime. Maybe your son is in the Air Force now, or your neighbor spent twenty years in the Marines. When you choose a branch flag, a historic banner, or Old Glory itself, you are saying something specific about memory, gratitude, and identity.

That is what makes this question worth asking: what branch will you honor on Veteran's Day? The answer can be personal, historical, or both.

The branches people most often honor, and why

When people ask, "What are the different branches of US Military," they are usually thinking of the six uniformed armed service branches recognized today. Each has its own history, role, culture, and flag traditions. If you want your display to feel informed rather than generic, it helps to know what each branch actually does.

Here are the modern branches of the U.S. Military:

- Army
- Marine Corps
- Navy
- Air Force
- Coast Guard
- Space Force

The Army is the oldest branch, with roots dating to the Continental Army established in 1775. Its central mission has long been land warfare, holding ground, supporting operations on land, and bringing Ultimate Flags Store sustained combat power where it is needed. If your family history includes infantry, artillery, engineers, cavalry, armor, or airborne service, an Army flag is often the natural choice.

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The Marine Corps was also formed in 1775. Marines are closely tied to naval operations, but their mission has always had a distinct edge: expeditionary warfare, rapid deployment, and the ability to fight from sea to shore. People who have served in the Marines usually carry a particularly strong branch identity, so when a household flies the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor flag, it often reflects deep family pride.

The Navy, likewise organized in 1775 in its earliest Revolutionary form and later reestablished under the Constitution, protects American interests at sea. It projects power globally, guards sea lanes, supports

amphibious operations, and carries strategic deterrence. If you come from a line of sailors, shipyard workers, naval aviators, or submariners, a Navy flag can carry an enormous amount of meaning.

The Air Force became a separate branch in 1947, although military aviation existed under the Army long before that. Its purpose is straightforward in one sense and incredibly complex in practice: control and use of air and space for military effect. Air superiority, strategic lift, reconnaissance, refueling, and precision strike all fall under that umbrella. Families with World War II Army Air Forces veterans sometimes choose either an Air Force flag or a historic aviation-themed display, depending on the era they want to honor.

The Coast Guard traces its origins to 1790, though it shifts between departments in peacetime and wartime. It handles maritime safety, law enforcement, search and rescue, and coastal security, while also serving as an armed force. Coast Guard veterans are sometimes overlooked in casual military conversations, but on Veteran's Day they deserve the same visible respect. In many waterfront towns, flying the Coast Guard flag feels especially fitting.

The Space Force, established in 2019, is the newest branch. Its mission centers on military operations in space, including satellite support, tracking, communications, and protecting the space-based systems modern defense depends on. For some families, especially those with younger service members, the Space Force flag represents the future of American military service.

If you are wondering, "What is the purpose of the different branches of US military," that is the short answer. Each branch exists because national defense is too broad for one service to do everything well. Land, sea, air, littoral operations, homeland maritime security, and space all demand specialized people, training, equipment, and traditions.

When were the various US branches started?

Dates matter more than people sometimes think. A flag display tied to an anniversary year, a campaign, or a family service era has a different weight to it. If you are building a Veteran's Day arrangement, it helps to know when the branch you are honoring actually began.

The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps all trace their official beginnings to 1775, during the American Revolution. The Coast Guard's predecessor, the Revenue Cutter Service, began in 1790. The Air Force became independent in 1947. The Space Force was created in 2019.

Those dates can guide the kind of display you build. If you are honoring a Revolutionary War ancestor, you would not pair that tribute with a Space Force flag and call it history. If you are recognizing a B-17 crewman from World War II, you may want to note that he likely served in the Army Air Forces rather than the post-1947 Air Force. Small distinctions like that show care, and veterans notice care.

What branches fought in the American Revolution?

This is where things get interesting, because the familiar modern branch structure did not exist in its current form. During the American Revolution, the Continental Army carried the main burden of land fighting. The Continental Navy served at sea on a much smaller scale than the later U.S. Navy, but it was real and significant. The Continental Marines also existed, mainly to support naval operations and shipboard security.

So when someone asks, "What branches fought in the American Revolution," the best answer is the early forms of the Army, Navy, and Marines. Militias also played a major role, though militia units were not the same as regular national service branches. If your family traces service back to the Revolution, a display could include the current branch flag that reflects that lineage, alongside a historic American flag from the

era, such as the Betsy Ross style that many people associate with the period. Historians will point out that not every famous early flag was universally used exactly as later legend suggests, and that is fair. Still, historic flags from the era can serve as respectful symbols of the nation's founding struggle.



That gets to an important point about Veteran's Day displays: precision matters, but symbolism matters too. You do not need to turn your front porch into a museum exhibit. You do want to avoid careless mashups that flatten all history into one vague patriotic blur.

What branches fought in the American Civil War?

The Civil War presents another case where modern labels only partly fit. There was, of course, a U.S. Army and a U.S. Navy. Marines also served, though in much smaller numbers than the Army and Navy. Cavalry, infantry, artillery, engineers, and naval forces all played important roles. On the Confederate side there were corresponding land and naval forces under a different government.

If you are asking, "What branches fought in the American Civil War," the answer is primarily Army and Navy structures, with Marines present in a limited way. Air power did not exist as a military branch then. The Coast Guard as we know it was not operating in that modern role, although predecessor revenue services existed in the broader federal framework.

For families whose ancestors served in the Civil War, branch identity may be less central than regimental or state identity. In that case, a U.S. Flag paired with a carefully chosen historic flag or a framed unit reference may be a better tribute than a modern branch flag alone. A little research goes a long way. I have seen beautiful displays that started with one old tintype, one service record, and one flag chosen with care.

Do Cavalry Regiments still exist?

They do, though not in the horseback image many people first picture.

The question "Do Cavalry Regiments still exist?" comes up often because cavalry has such a strong place in American military memory. In the U.S. Army, cavalry lineage absolutely continues. Modern cavalry units mostly serve in armored, reconnaissance, surveillance, and security roles. Instead of sabers and horses, they use vehicles, advanced sensors, and modern communications. The mission changed with technology, but the lineage remained.

That matters for Veteran's Day because some families still identify strongly with cavalry service. A veteran may have served in a unit that carries cavalry traditions, insignia, or honors from much earlier eras. If you know your relative belonged to a cavalry regiment or squadron, honoring that service through an Army flag can be especially meaningful. In some cases, adding a yellow accent ribbon or framed unit crest near the display helps signal the cavalry connection without overcomplicating the setup.

You do want to use restraint. A tasteful flag display usually says more than a pile of random memorabilia crowded onto a porch bench.

What flags are flown on naval ships?

This is one of those subjects where people outside the sea services often underestimate the detail involved. Naval vessels can display several different flags depending on status, location, and ceremony. If you are

asking, “What flags are flown on Naval ships,” the answer includes the national ensign, commissioning pennants, jack flags, and sometimes signal flags or special-purpose flags.

The national ensign, the U.S. Flag, is the principal flag of the ship. U.S. Navy vessels also fly a commissioning pennant when in active commissioned service. Traditionally, when moored or anchored, a jack is flown at the bow and the ensign at the stern. At sea, the ensign is the main national flag displayed. On ceremonial occasions, ships may be dressed overall with signal flags for celebration.

Historic practice around jacks has evolved over time. Some Americans know the First Navy Jack, often recognized by its striped field and rattlesnake motif, because it has had periods of authorized use in the modern Navy. But it is not a catchall symbol for every naval display in every era. If you want to honor a Navy veteran on Veteran’s Day, the safest and most universally appropriate choice is the current U.S. Flag with a Navy branch flag, or the U.S. Flag alone if you prefer a simpler display.

For a porch, dock, or yard display, there is no need to recreate full naval protocol. What matters is that you use the U.S. Flag respectfully and avoid novelty flags that trade historical depth for flashy graphics.

Why flying a historic flag honors heritage and history

There is a difference between decoration and commemoration. A branch flag can honor a living memory, a particular veteran, a career, or a current generation of service. A historic American flag often reaches further back. It honors lineage, sacrifice over time, and the continuity of the country itself.

That is why flying a historic flag honors heritage and history when it is done thoughtfully. It can connect a household’s present to an ancestor’s past. It can remind children that the nation was not handed to us fully formed. It had to be defended, argued over, rebuilt, and preserved generation after generation.

I have seen this work especially well in families where military service spans several wars. One home might fly the current U.S. Flag every day, add a Marine Corps flag for a Vietnam veteran on Veteran’s Day, and display a Revolutionary era historic flag during the week of Independence Day because the family traces service that far back. That is not clutter. That is storytelling.

Still, not every historic flag is automatically appropriate. Some symbols have layered or contested meanings depending on era and use. If you are choosing a historic flag, it is worth reading enough to understand what it represented and how people are likely to interpret it today. A respectful display should invite remembrance, not confusion.

Teaching future generations honor, legacy, and history

One of the best reasons to put care into a Veteran’s Day flag display has nothing to do with the neighbors. It has to do with children.

Teaching future generations honor, legacy, and history rarely happens through lectures alone. It happens in ordinary moments. A child asks why the red flag with the eagle is next to the American flag. A teenager wants to know whether great-grandpa was in the Army or the Marines. Someone notices that the old black-and-white portrait in the hallway matches the branch flag outside. A conversation starts, and memory stays alive one more generation.

That is how family history survives. Not because every descendant becomes a historian, but because the symbols remain visible enough to spark curiosity.

If you want your display to open that door, keep it simple and specific. Put out one branch flag, one U.S. Flag, and maybe one small weatherproof plaque or framed note near the entry inside the house. “In honor of Sgt. James Carter, U.S. Army, Korea.” That does more for memory than a dozen generic patriotic slogans.

Children also notice consistency. If the flag only comes out on one holiday, it can feel performative. If they see the U.S. Flag treated with care all year, lowered properly when worn, lit at night if flown after dark, and raised again with purpose, they absorb something valuable about stewardship and respect.

Will you fly Old Glory year round?

That question deserves a real answer, not just a sentimental one.

Will you fly Old Glory Year Round? Many people do, and when they do it well, it becomes part of the home’s character. The U.S. Flag can certainly be flown year round. If it is displayed 24 hours a day, it should be properly illuminated during darkness. It should also be in good condition. A faded, frayed flag left twisting on a bent pole does not communicate honor. It communicates neglect.

There is no rule saying you must fly the branch flag year round too. In practice, many households reserve branch flags for Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, branch birthdays, retirement celebrations, and family military milestones. Old Glory is the constant. The branch flag is the personal note.

If you are unsure how to set up a display that looks respectful rather than overdone, keep these basics in mind:

- Let the U.S. Flag be the visual anchor
- Add one branch flag that reflects a real family or community connection
- Choose durable, weather-appropriate materials
- Keep the flag clean, untangled, and correctly mounted
- Replace worn flags promptly

That short checklist solves most display problems before they start. It also keeps the focus where it belongs, on service rather than ornament.

Matching the flag to the story you want to tell

The best Veteran’s Day flag ideas are rarely the most elaborate. They are the ones that fit the story.

If you are honoring a World War II sailor, a Navy flag alongside the U.S. Flag makes immediate sense. If you are recognizing several family members who served in different branches, the better move may be to fly the U.S. Flag outside and place branch flags or framed service emblems together indoors. That avoids turning a small front yard into a flag forest.

If your goal is broader remembrance rather than one branch-specific tribute, a historic American flag can be a strong choice. It can honor those who fought in the American Revolution, those who carried the nation through the American Civil War, and those who served in every era after. Used thoughtfully, it says that military service belongs to a longer national story.

There are also community-centered displays that work especially well. A church, veterans hall, school entrance, or town green can feature one large U.S. Flag with a rotating branch emphasis each year. One year the program may recognize the Army, another year the Coast Guard, another year women who served

across branches. That kind of rotation teaches people, especially younger people, that “the military” is not one indistinct block. It is made up of different services, each with its own purpose and sacrifice.

Choosing the branch you will proudly honor

So, what branch will you honor on Veteran’s Day?

If you have a direct family tie, start there. Honor the branch that shaped your family’s life. If there is no family connection, honor a veteran in your community. Ask permission if the display names them directly. People are often deeply moved by that gesture.



If you are drawn more to the nation’s longer military story, choose Old Glory and add a historic flag that reflects the era you want to remember. If your interest is educational, use the display as a reason to learn and teach. Find out when the various US Branches started. Learn what flags are flown on Naval ships. Ask whether cavalry regiments still exist and what they do now. Read about what branches fought in the American Revolution and what branches fought in the American Civil War. Those questions enrich the act of flying the flag.

A good flag display does not need to shout. It needs to mean something.

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On Veteran’s Day, that is enough. Maybe more than enough. The right flag, chosen with knowledge and flown with care, can say thank you in a language every generation understands.