



## Memorial Day Freedom Picnic

A Day of Remembrance for those who died for us and our freedom. For many of us, it is also a reminder of Jesus, who died for us and our freedom from sin. A family picnic gives us a chance to enjoy time together on a day set aside to honor those who gave their lives for our freedom.

### Supplies

- Directions to a National Park ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov))
- Paper and pen, and Education Matters sheet
- Flowers (real or fake)
- Information on local parade or Memorial Service
- CD or iPod with Taps download (unless you're good with a bugle!)
- Frisbee
- Blanket or camping chairs
- Paper goods: Tablecloth, plates, cups, napkins
- Large cutting knife



### Food for Thought

- American Hero sandwiches...get from local deli or make your own (large French bread with turkey, ham, roast beef, cheese, and toppings, cut into long strips)
- Freedom Fries (potato chips)
- Quartered Pickles
- Carrot and Celery sticks with mini Hidden Valley Ranch dipping sauce (individual packets for easy transport & clean-up)
- Drake Apple and Cherry Mini Pies
- Jolly Ranchers and assorted Mini Hershey Bars
- Prepared iced tea

### Games

**Frisbee:** To improve those catch and release skills, check out [www.freestyledisc.org/docs/ThrowCatch.pdf](http://www.freestyledisc.org/docs/ThrowCatch.pdf).

**Freeze Tag:** This game varies from normal Tag in that once a player is tagged, he does not become "it;" rather, he is frozen and must stand in place without moving while It continues to tag and freeze the other players. Whoever is the last to be tagged is the winner. Another variation is that It wins only if he or she is able to tag all the other players. Freeze Tag often includes some mechanism for freeing frozen players and thus forcing It to re-tag them. One player who is not It and not frozen may tag frozen players to release them. In versions where frozen players are not allowed to move their feet, if two frozen players can extend their arms far enough to touch each other (without moving their feet), they may shout "electric shock!" and become unfrozen. In another variant, sometimes known as Stick in the Mud", Chinese Freeze Tag or Scarecrow Tag, players may be unfrozen when someone crawls between their legs. Such an action helps prevent It from winning, but puts the person crawling in a position where he can be easily tagged and frozen as well. Frozen players in playing Scarecrow Tag can also be unfrozen by a player running under either of the arms in variants of the game.

**I Spy:** Players take turns trying to guess which nearby object has been selected. Look around and silently select an object that can be seen by all the players. Say, "I spy with my little eye" and then give some description of the object, such as "something red," "something square," or "something small." Tell the other players to take turns trying to guess what the object is. Let the player who correctly guesses the selected item pick the next object, or have all players take turns in a set order (this may be best if you are playing with younger children who may not be so good at guessing. Offer extra clues if the players are completely stumped.

### Learning Lessons

- What is Memorial Day? History & recurrence.
- Ways to remember those who gave their lives.
- How to participate beyond the usual three-day weekend.
- Statistics--ages and gender of those who died.
- Create a graph of how many people died vs. the year they died.



## Pre-event Ideas

- Letters of Thanks to those who are currently serving in the military or those families who have recently lost a loved one. Click [www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil](http://www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil), then Thank the Troops or [www.OperationMilitarySupport.com](http://www.OperationMilitarySupport.com) to request a name.
- Donate to an organization such as [www.VFW.com](http://www.VFW.com) and teach your family the value of giving.
- Check local listings for parades and memorial services.
- Take the family to visit a cemetery in remembrance. Bring some flowers, check out stones that have flags, notice names & dates to figure out which war they died in. Log dates in a notepad to compute statistical information later.
- If you have a flag, set it at half-mast in the morning, and raise it after a moment of silence at 3:00 p.m.

## The Event

- If you're at a national park with monuments or Memorial Day activities, leave everything in the car for later and check them out.
- Get everyone involved in the games you've planned.
- Have lunch.
- During lunch, whip out your Education Matters sheet and talk about the history of Memorial Day. To make it memorable, use the facts to make a trivia game.
- The National Moment of Remembrance resolution was passed on Dec 2000 which asks that at 3 p.m. local time, for all Americans "To voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to 'Taps.'" If you are able, bring you CD player and have a copy of Taps ready for this moment. If not, have someone whistle it while the silence is observed.

## Education Matters: Memorial Day

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories of its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns claiming to be the birthplace. There is also evidence that organized women's groups in the South were decorating graves before the end of the Civil War: A hymn published in 1867, "Kneel Where Our Loves are Sleeping," by Nella L. Sweet, carried the dedication "To The Ladies of the South who are Decorating the Graves of the Confederate Dead." While Waterloo, N.Y., was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings, each of those towns honoring the war dead. Each contributed honorably to the growing movement that culminated in General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, giving his official proclamation in his [General Order No. 11](#) on May 5, 1868. Flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. By 1890 the day was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I, when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war. It is now celebrated in almost every state on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 to ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays, though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19 in Texas, April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

In 1915, inspired by the poem "[In Flanders Fields](#)," Moina Michael replied with her own poem:



*We cherish too, the Poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led,  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies.*

She then conceived the idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one, and sold poppies to her friends and co-workers with the money going to benefit servicemen in need. Later, a Madam Guerin from France was visiting the United States and learned of this new custom started by Ms. Michael; when she returned to France she made artificial red poppies to raise money for war orphaned children and widowed women. This tradition soon spread to other countries. In 1921, the Franco-American Children's League sold poppies nationally to benefit war orphans of France and Belgium. The League disbanded a year later and Madam Guerin approached the VFW for help. Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922, the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later their "[Buddy](#)" Poppy program was selling artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948, the US Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement by issuing [a red 3 cent postage stamp](#) with her likeness on it.

Traditional observance of Memorial Day has diminished over the years. The meaning and traditions have been forgotten, graves of the fallen are increasingly neglected, parades are few, and flag etiquette is often ignored. There are a few notable exceptions. Since the late 1950's on the Thursday before Memorial Day, the 1,200 soldiers of the Third US Infantry place small American flags at each of the more than 260,000 gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery. They then patrol 24 hours a day during the weekend to ensure that each flag remains standing. In 1951, the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts of St. Louis began placing flags on the 150,000 graves at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery as an annual Good Turn, a practice that continues to this day. More recently, beginning in 1998, on the Saturday before the observed day for Memorial Day, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts place a candle at each of approximately 15,300 grave sites of soldiers buried at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park on Marye's Heights (the [Luminaria Program](#)). And in 2004, Washington D.C. held its first Memorial Day parade in over 60 years.

To help re-educate and remind Americans of the true meaning of Memorial Day, the "[National Moment of Remembrance](#)" resolution was passed in 2000, which asks at 3 p.m. local time for all Americans "To voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a Moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to [Taps](#)." Set aside one day out of the year for the nation to remember, reflect, and honor those who have given their all in service to their country for our freedom.

### United States Wars:

- American Revolution 1763-1789
- War of 1812-1814
- Mexican-American War 1846-1848
- Civil War 1861-1865
- Spanish-American War 1898
- World War I 1914-1918
- World War II 1941-1945
- Korean War 1950 - 1953
- Vietnam War 1961-1973
- Desert Storm 1991
- Operation Enduring Freedom 2001
- Iraqi Freedom 2003