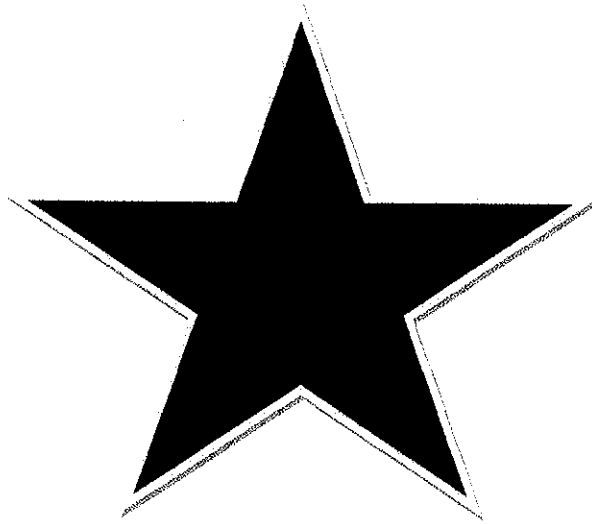


# **Military Kids Count**



By Tamarah Frank

Support given by  
VFW Post 2553, Redwood Falls, Minnesota

## About Me

My name is Tamarah Frank. I am currently in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Redwood Valley High School. I have felt the effects of my father being in the military throughout my life. When I was born he was in the National Guard. He would leave my family one weekend a month and would be gone for at least two weeks a year for training. In July 2003 he was gone more often supporting the Kosovo mission. I was told we were lucky because we still got to see our dad. I didn't feel lucky as he was gone a lot. This mission ended in November of 2004. My dad went back to his job and everything seemed more normal. Then in August 2005 he left for 22 months to serve in Iraq. This was the most difficult time for me. We went for long periods of time where we did not hear from our dad. When our dad would call we each got to talk to him for a few minutes. The radio, TV, and magazines all talked about soldiers dying in Iraq. We stopped watching TV. It was great to have my dad home in July 2007, but it was difficult to see the changes in my dad.

As a military kid, I feel good and bad about having a father in the military. On one hand I am proud of my father for serving in the military and on the other I don't think it is fair that our family's life is disrupted while everyone enjoys the freedoms for which he fought. On one hand I know I have skills a lot of kids do not possess because my dad was away so often, but on the other I wonder what it is like to be a kid who has no worries. These emotions are common in military kids. I found many things to help with these feelings that I would like to share with other military kids. In this booklet you will find the things I did while my dad was gone to keep in touch, to work through my thoughts, and the things others did for me and my family. I have also added some other ideas of my own.

Keep in mind that every family is unique and every deployment is unique. The community, school, caregiver, deployed parent, and child all share a unique role in the success of a positive outcome for the children of a military family. In working through each person's role I found each role crosses over into another.

If you are a military kid, I hope you will find the activity book fun, comforting, and informative. If you know military kids please read and do what you feel called to do. Please feel free to make copies and pass the activity pages onto a military kid. If you choose to do nothing, please pass this book onto someone who may benefit from the information.

Thank you,  
Tamarah

## What the community can do for military kids?

My definition of community is anyone outside the immediate family. It could be an extended family member, neighbor, church group, pastor, co-worker, day care provider, or school teacher.

Families often feel isolated, overwhelmed, and lonely. They feel that others do not understand what they are going through. This may be true, but you can still do your part to show support to kids and their parent who is left alone at home to care for the kids, and home. It doesn't need to cost a lot to show your support. Here are some ideas of what you can do:

- Write a letter or card expressing support
- Share phone numbers if you are willing to help out when needed
- Care packages (for troops, families, kids) collection, packaging, and delivery
- Babysitting
- Prepare meals or a treat
- Buy groceries
- Help with lawn mowing and yard work
- Help with snow removal
- Help with house cleaning
- Help with family events (birthday parties, graduations. . .)
- Invite military families to activities (picnic, fair, zoo. . .)
- Bring military kids fishing, boating, or other activities
- Help with car maintenance or cleaning
- Help with home repairs
- Help drive to medical, dental, or hair appointments
- Computer maintenance (help set up a web cam for communications with their soldier)

These are just some ideas. Think about what you are good at—how can your talent and resources be used to benefit a military family? Take a minute to brainstorm your talents and resources.

When you are communicating with the military family be clear about what you would like to offer them and ask if this is something they would accept. Sometimes, people really don't want the help. It is important to be respectful and honor their wishes. Sometimes, it is not needed at the time offered. If this is the case, ask if you could check back with them in a month or two. As time passes, things change and people realize they do need or would like help.

My community helped out in so many ways while my Dad was in Iraq. Most of the above list was done at some point during the deployment. Many friends organized ongoing babysitting, meals, and yard care. Some community members took me and my siblings camping, fishing, and horseback riding. The Lower Sioux Community was extremely generous to our family. A beautiful ceremony took place before my father left us. This was done so that he would have protection and help guide him on his journey. They also provided my mother with child care throughout the deployment. The local movie theatre owner gave my family and all the military families free admission to any movie showing for the entire 22 month deployment. Several churches hosted get-togethers. The church members' prayers were especially appreciated. My family received cards and letters from people showing their support. Many of these people we have never met. We have kept all these cards because they mean so much to us.

### What can a child's teacher or school do?

Because school is such a huge part of a child's life I would like to share some ideas on things teachers can do for military kids.

Teachers should be made aware of who has family members in the military. Parents should give school necessary information. As professionals, teachers should be prepared to handle situations regarding parent/child separation. Teachers should listen to their students. They should be prepared to answer students' questions about war in a sensitive manner. If they are not sure how to talk to students about this issue they should gather information from the school psychologist, counselor, or social worker before the need arises. There is also a great deal of information put out by the Department of Defense on issues surrounding military families that would be very useful.

Teachers should talk to the child's parents before the deployment. It may be a good idea to schedule a parent teacher meeting to gather information. Together they should develop a plan for how they will communicate. The teacher should be informed about the job the parent will be doing, where they will be, and what the teacher can do for the student and parent. In turn, what can the parents do for the teacher?

Teachers should be sensitive when having group discussion on war. Students come from different backgrounds and have preexisting opinions. This discussion can lead to hurt feelings or bring on negative emotions. If needed hold small group discussion or even support groups for those who have loved ones in the military.

Teachers could incorporate the military parent's experience into your daily learning:

- Write letters to service people-writing skills
- Make cards for Veterans-art project
- Read letter to class and find parent's location on globe-geography
- Read books about other American heroes-history

Teachers could help the child and parent stay in touch:

- Take pictures of the child's classroom for deployed parent
- Ask military parents to visit and/or speak to class

Upon returning invite the parents to a classroom "celebration" and have them eat lunch with the child and the class.

It is important to be available to listen to the child and parents when needed.

Teachers should remember that when the parent returns there is still a need for recognition of what the family went through. Children will have anxiety and fear future deployments.

Most teachers are aware that changes in behavior are a signal that the child is reacting to some need or that something may be wrong. The teacher's knowledge on child development may be extremely helpful to both the child and the parents. It is important to remember that each situation needs to be dealt with on an individual basis as no two families are alike.

### What can parents do for military kids?

The parent's role in the child's success before, during, and after a deployment is very important. It is important that things go on as usual. The parent should try to keep things as predictable as possible. There is an abundant amount of information for parents in books, on-line and through military resources. Parents just need to look for it.

Make the time of the deployment easier on the child by keeping communication open and positive. Communication with the deployed parent and the parent at home is essential. Kids should be allowed to write to the deployed parent as much and as often as they want. When the soldier calls home each child should get a chance to hear their parent's voice. Technology, such as a web cam or video recordings, can help keep families communication open and more frequent.

Families should keep the deployed parent part of the daily routine. For example, this can be done at bedtime by having pictures of the deployed parent throughout the house. Place a framed photo of the parent in the bathroom where the parent and child brush their teeth, or at the child's bedside. Children could watch a prerecorded video of the deployed parent reading a bedtime story or saying night prayers. This could also be done in the child's bedroom on audio tape. I slept with a special teddy bear my Dad gave me. It just takes some time and creativity to incorporate such coping ideas into your daily life.

Suggestions for caregivers:

- Discuss information in age-appropriate terms
- Acknowledge the child's feelings
- Share your own feelings
- Show your child how you are coping with your own feelings
- Plan how to cope with your child
- Maintain routines
- Share chores when age appropriate
- Shield the child from financial worries
- Take advantage of resources
- Reach out to other families with deployed loved ones
- Address concerns about the chance of injury or death
- Talk openly about death and your faith
- Respond to recognized changes in behavior
- Take care of your own needs
- Maintain good communication with other adults in your child's life

Suggestions for deployed parent:

- Give your child something to hug (teddy bear, pillow case with your picture or handprint on it, or blanket)
- Make video and audio tapes
- Arrange for pizza or flowers to be sent to special events
- Send a postcard attack (one postcard each day for a week straight)
- Send home money for a specific special treat—ice cream, pop, candybar
- Call during meal and talk to the family over speaker phone
- Send package home a month before child's birthday to be opened on the day (even if you can't call on the day. Your child will know you are thinking of them.)

## What can the military child do to cope with the deployment?

It is important for the military child to find ways to cope with having a parent in the military. Sometimes the fears of a parent going to war are as difficult as the reality. Journaling these worries is the most effective way I found to work through these worries. Journaling can be done anywhere using words or pictures. It can be done on scratch paper, a journal book, a calendar, or just about anything. It helps to work through your thoughts and feelings without acting on them. Journaling was the most important coping tool for me, but I found lots of other ways to pass time and keep in contact with my Dad while he was away.

- Write letters
- Journal
- Create a back-and-fourth journal
- Make cards
- Countdown calendar
- Measure time-for example, fill a jar with number of items equal to the number of days the deployed parent will be gone and take one item out each day until the home coming
- Create your own book or cookbook
- Homecoming box-filled with pictures, and items to share with deployed parent when they return home
- Reading
- Scrapbook
- Play games with deployed parent through the mail or internet
- Write prayers, or poems
- Get involved in extracurricular activities

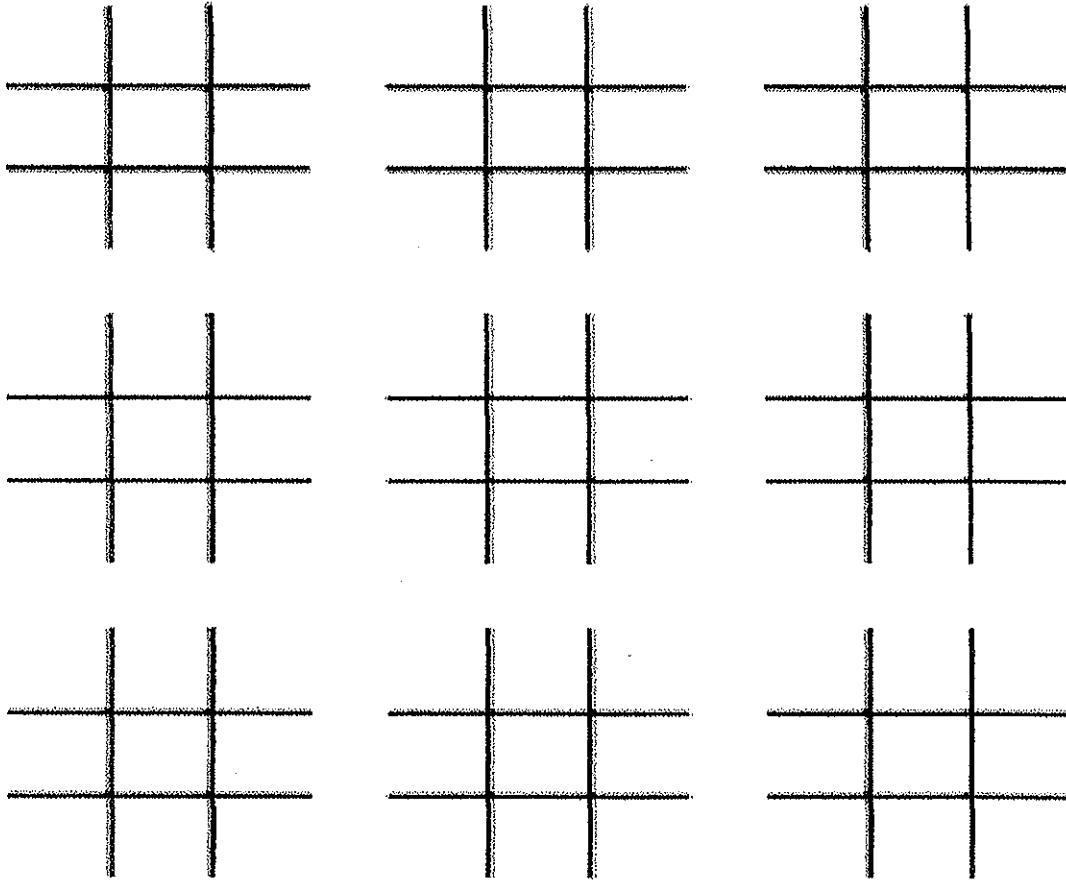
Whether someone you love is currently deployed or not the activities on the following pages will keep you busy for countless hours!



Tamarah Frank 2010



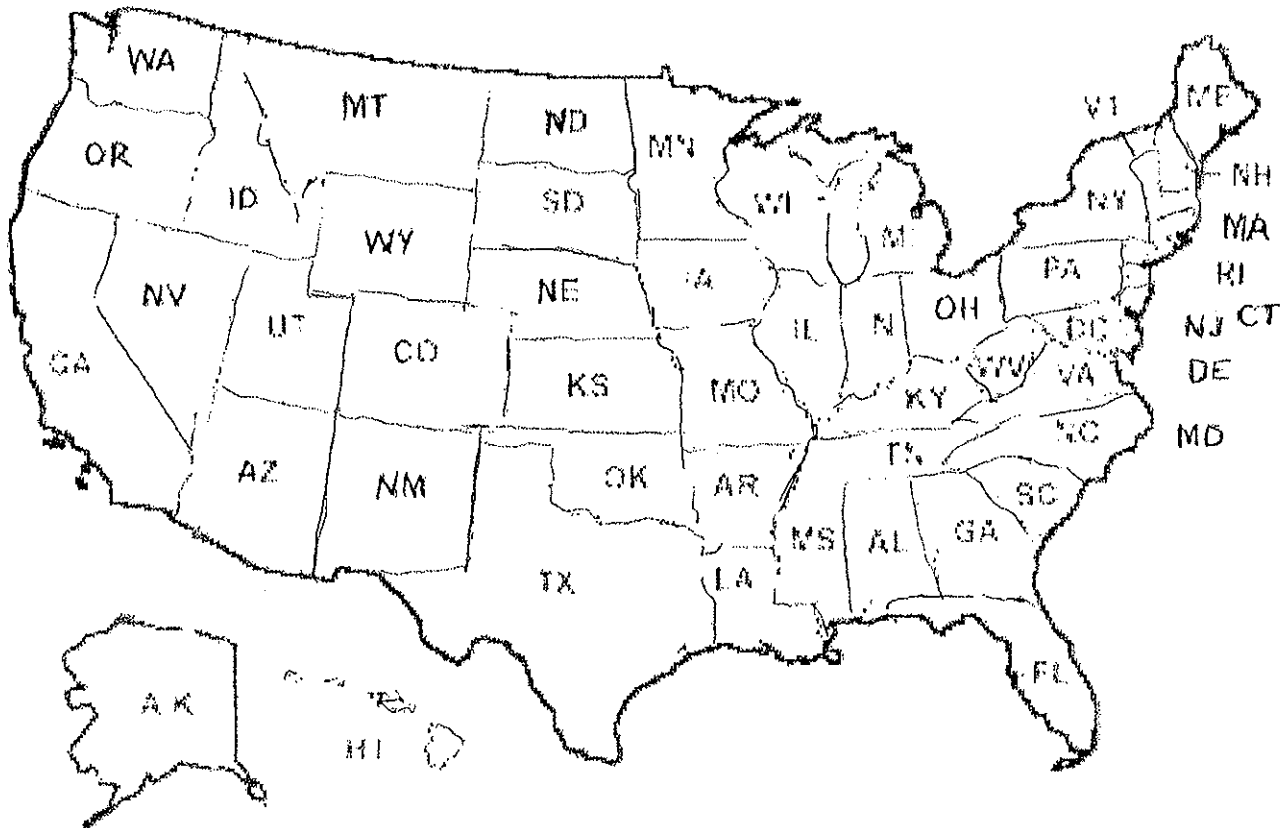
# Tic-Tac-Toe

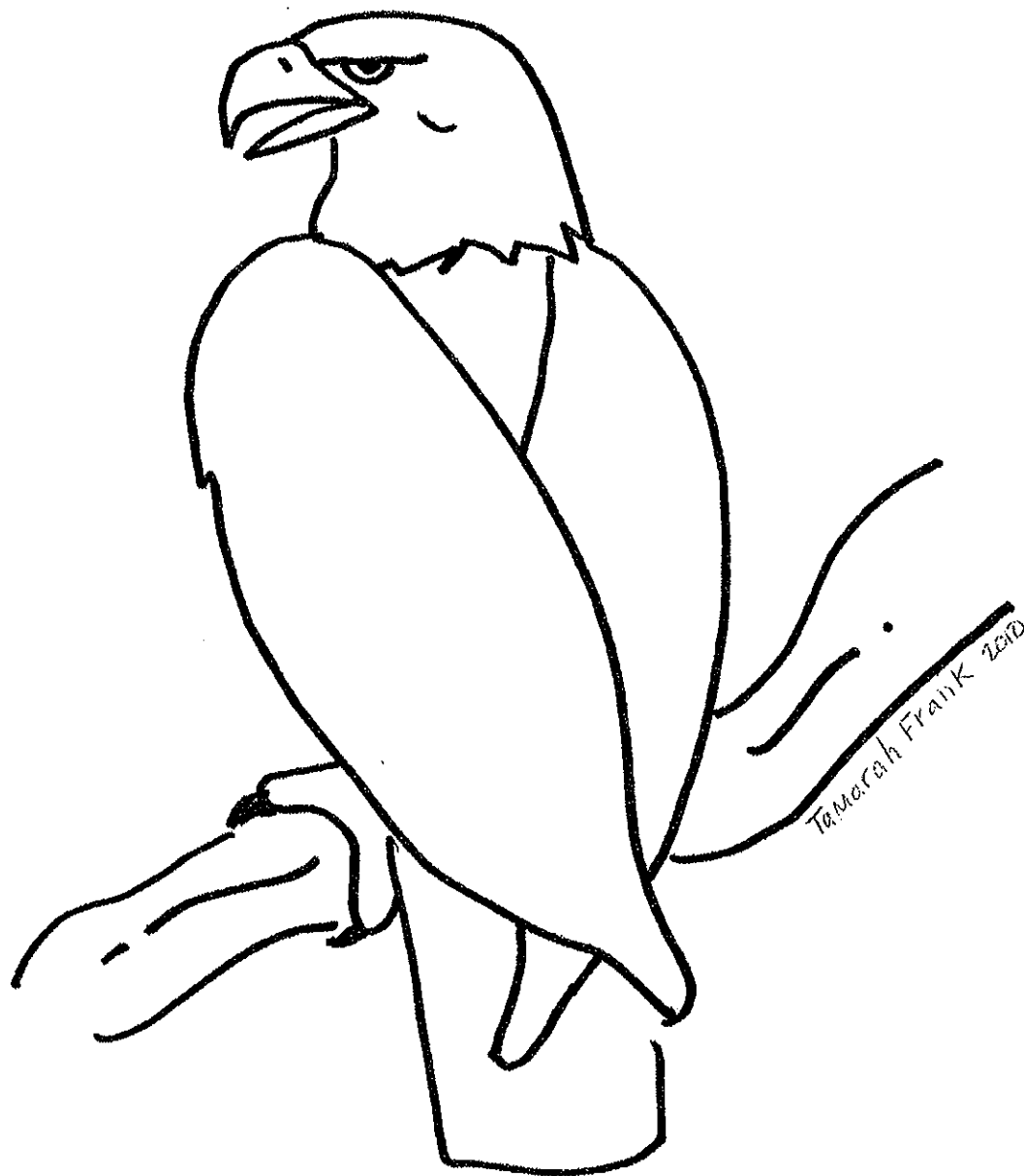


Tic-Tac-Toe is a really fun game to play, even through the mail! You can send the game back and forth with your letters until someone wins!

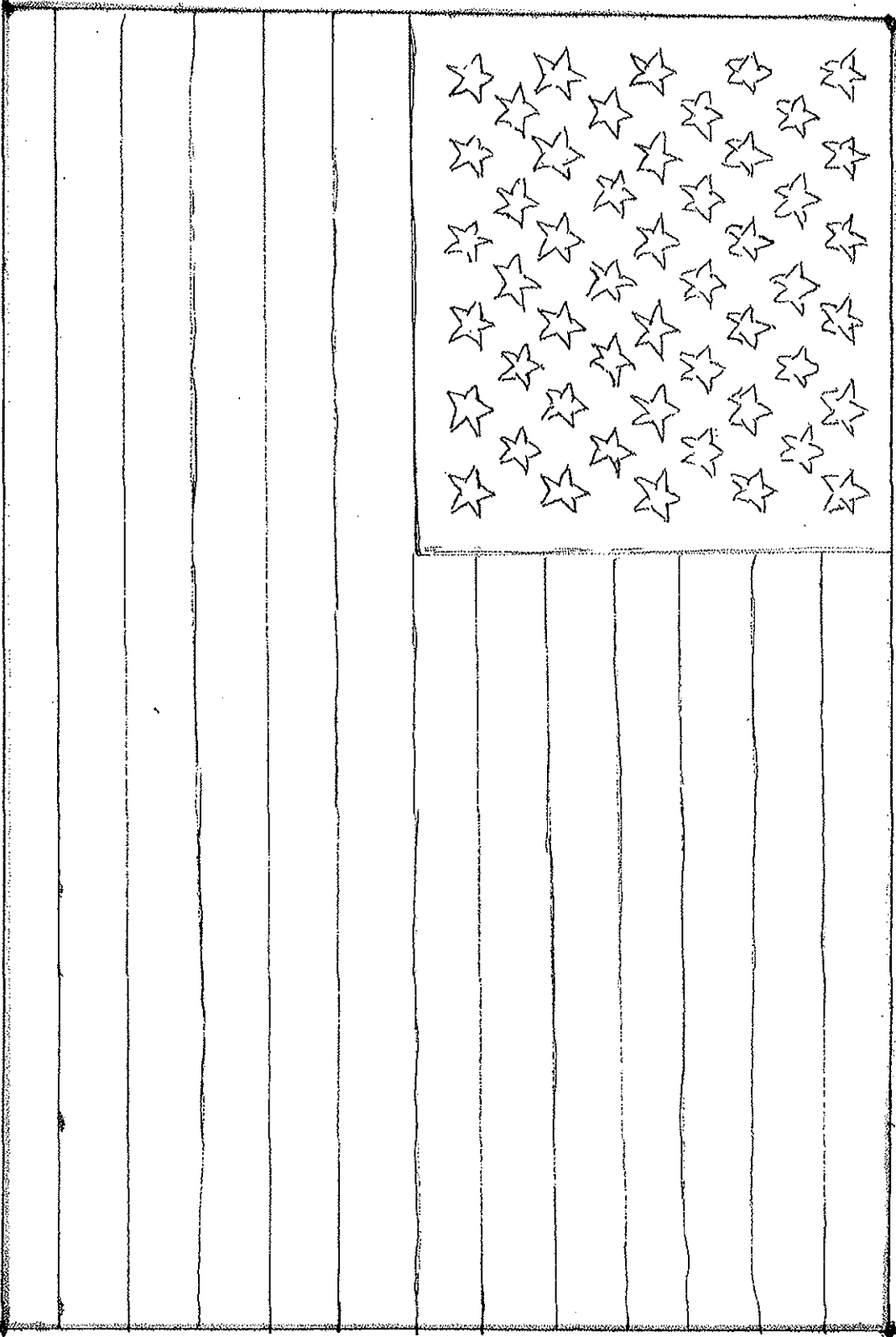
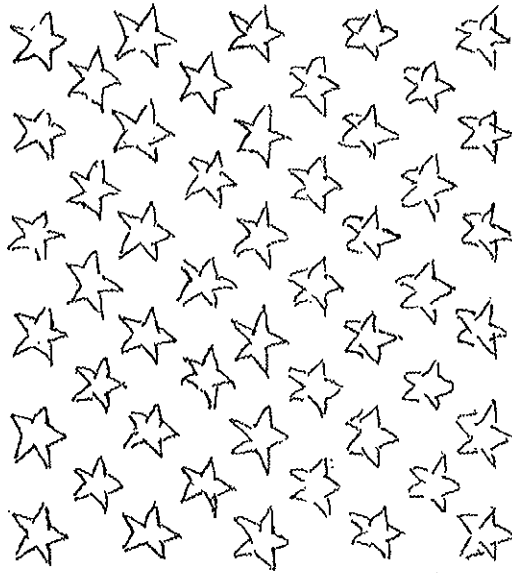
Maps can be useful to understand how far apart you are from your soldier.

- Keep a log of all the states your soldier has traveled through and where he/she is stationed. Draw a line on the map to show the route your soldier has traveled.
- Use the internet to see how far apart you are right now!
- If your soldier is outside the United States find a world map or globe to see where he/she is at in the world! Color the state you live in and the country your loved one is in.





Tamarah Frank 2010



American Word Find

Tamarah Frank

I E S E T A T S O R R N E  
O C E A A A E L A R N T S  
S G O E T N E D I S E R P  
S N A T I O N A L Y A H M  
E A S R E T R A R A A C V  
C O A S T G U A R D E O G  
L M C M U N T I R O L U E  
T I I A I I A R T O G N L  
N L R T L H R F S T A T O  
E D E I Y S M O D E E R F  
I D M V R A Y R E Y F Y C  
R N A R L W N C N A D R T  
O N Y L E A D E R S H A C

military  
national  
guard  
eagle  
army  
navy  
freedom  
marines  
coast guard  
air force  
hero  
president  
country  
united  
states  
america  
washington  
leaders

# FUN STUFF WORD FIND

Tamarah Frank

This is an easy puzzle all about things that are fun for people to do and make people happy!

R F A I L S L F P S M  
L G N I P P O H S E S  
O L A E G O A B B K S  
E H A L T E I A F I D  
L L A B T E K S A B N  
I T A P Y G O E M S E  
S L V A P E F B I M I  
L N M O N Y L A L I R  
P U P P I E S L Y L F  
R E T H G U A L O E P  
K I T T E N S A A V T

baseball  
basketball  
bikes  
family  
football  
friends  
happy  
kittens  
laughter  
puppies  
shopping  
smile  
volleyball

## Lighten Up!

Jokes are a good way to make someone smile. Send your deployed person some of these jokes, others you know, or make some up!

Knock, Knock

*Who's there?*

Boo

*Boo Who?*

Don't Cry! It's only a joke!

What did the boy octopus say to the girl octopus?

*I want to hold your hand, hand, hand*

*hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand*

What has four wheels and flies?

*A garbage truck.*

Why did the boy throw the clock out  
the window?

*He wanted to see time fly!*

Why was the broom late?

*It over swept!*

What runs but never walks?

*Water!*

What did one wall say to the other?

*Meet you at the Corner!*

Did you hear the skunk joke?

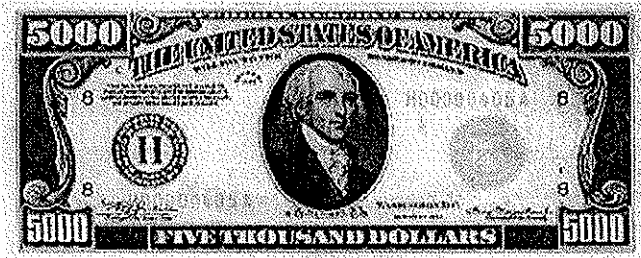
*Never mind. It stinks.*

Did you hear about the germs?  
*Never Mind. I don't want to spread it around!*

How does a baby ghost cry?  
*Boo-hoo Boo-hoo*

## Fun Presidential Facts

- Washington D.C. is named after our first president George Washington!
- The 4<sup>th</sup> president, James Madison, has his face on the 5,000 dollar bill.



- General Zachary Taylor never voted until his own election!
- James Buchanan, the 15<sup>th</sup> president, was the only president who was never married!
- Abraham Lincoln was our tallest president at 6 feet 4 inches!





- Ulysses S. Grant changed his name from Hiram Ulysses Grant because he didn't want his initials to be HUG!
- Grover Cleveland's face is on the 1,000 dollar bill!

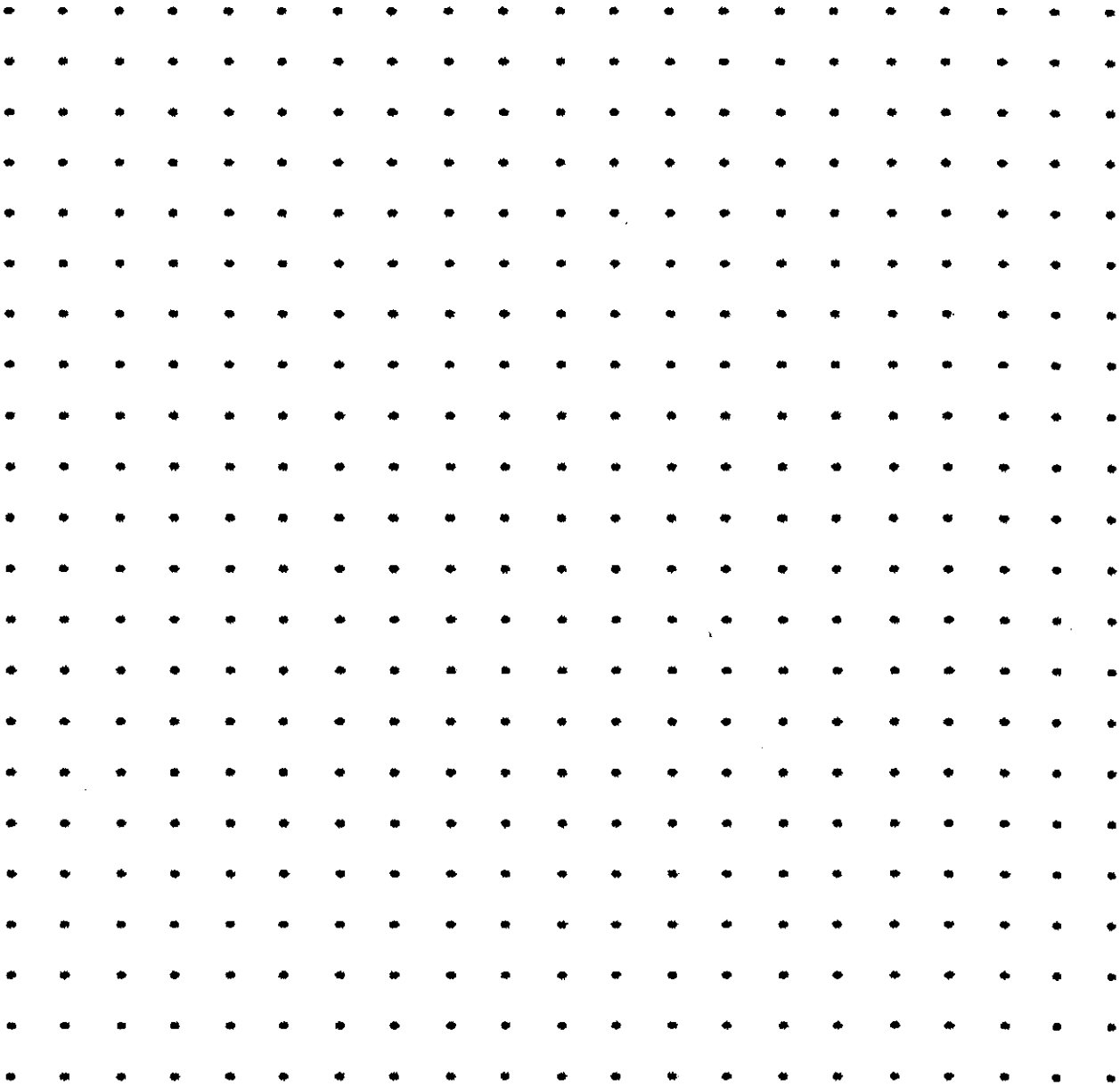


- William Howard Taft was the largest president; he was 6 feet tall and weighed over 300 pounds! In fact, he was nicknamed "Big Bill".
- Harry Truman had no middle name so he added an "S." when he became president!
- Jimmy Carter was nicknamed "The Peanut President" because his family had run a peanut farm in Georgia.
- John F. Kennedy's face is on the 50 cent coin.



# The Dot Game

How to Play: Two or more people take turns drawing a line to connect the dots to make small boxes. If you finish a box you get a bonus turn to draw a line! Every time you create a box put your initials in it! Each box is worth one point! The winner at the end of the game is the one with the most points!!



# Hidden Word Fun!

The numbers below can be decoded to find a message! Use the key to find out what it is!

A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 G=7 H=8 I=9 J=10 K=11 L=12 M=13  
N=14 O=15 P=16 Q=17 R=18 S=19 T=20 U=21 V=22 W=23 X=24  
Y=25 Z=26

\_\_\_\_\_  
9 12 15 22 5

\_\_\_\_\_  
1 13 5 18 9 3 1

# More Hidden Word Fun!

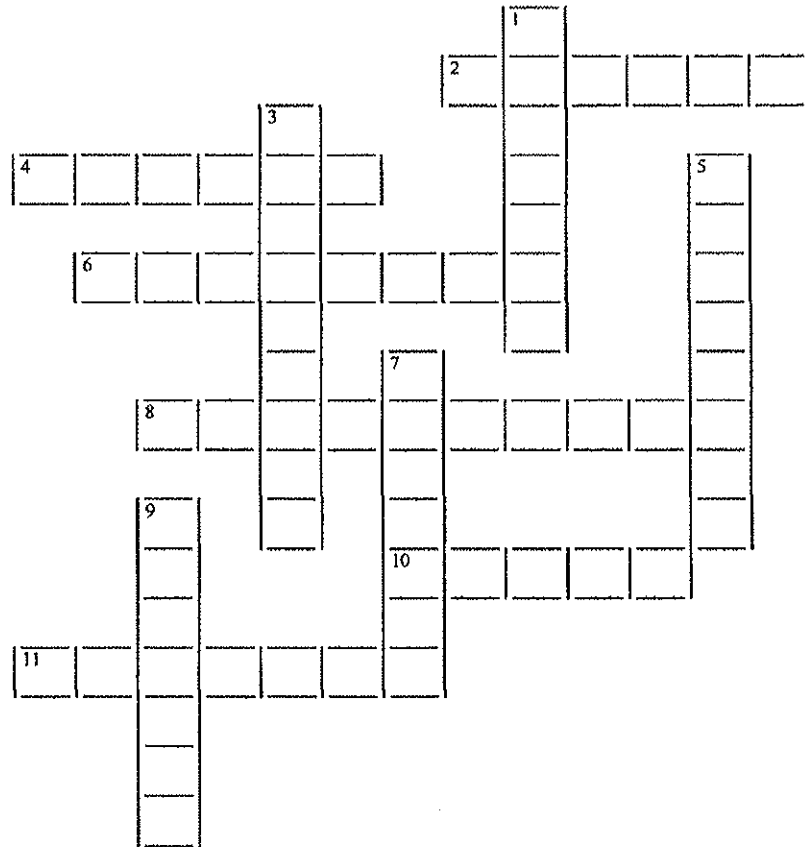
A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 G=7 H=8 I=9 J=10 K=11 L=12 M=13 N=14  
O=15 P=16 Q=17 R=18 S=19 T=20 U=21 V=22 W=23 X=24 Y=25 Z=26

\_\_\_\_ ' \_\_\_\_\_  
9 13 16 18 15 21 4 20 15

\_\_\_\_  
2 5 1 14

\_\_\_\_\_!  
1 13 5 18 9 3 1 14

## Presidential Crosswords



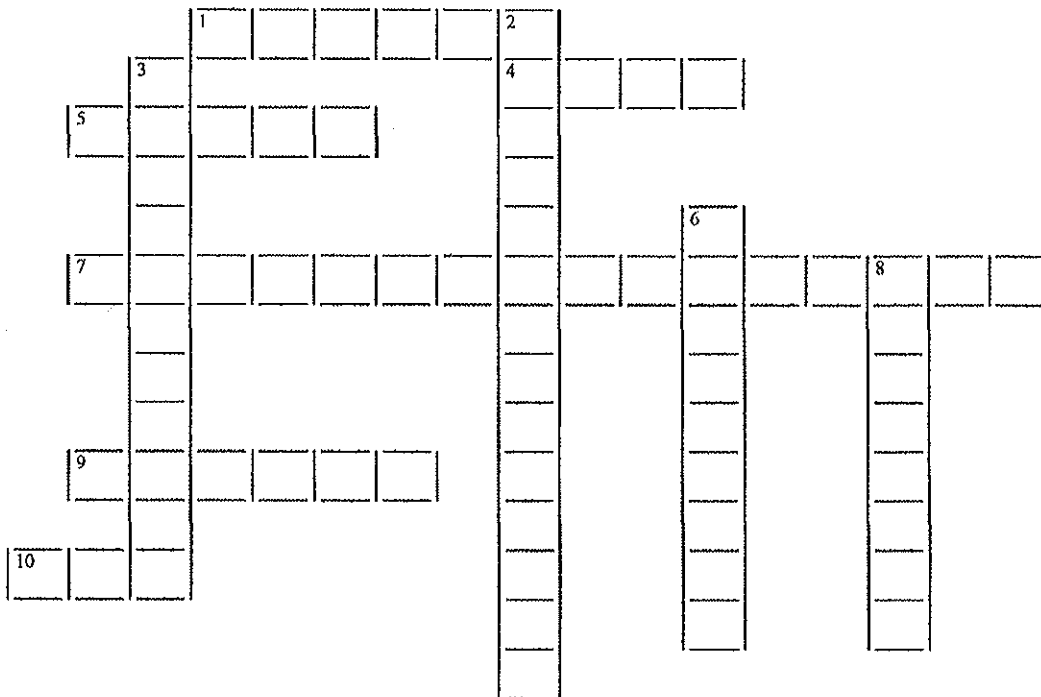
### ACROSS

- 2 40th president, loved jellybeans and was an actor who appeared in 53 films
- 4 Nicknamed Jimmy but his real name is James
- 6 20th president, first left-handed president
- 8 The first president of the United States
- 10 First African-American President
- 11 Nicknamed Bill, plays the saxophone

### DOWN

- 1 35th president, youngest president ever elected
- 3 Wrote most of the Declaration of Independence and is on the two dollar bill
- 5 15th president, only president never to marry
- 7 "Honest Abe"
- 9 On the 5,000 dollar bill which is no longer used

## American Crossword Puzzle



### ACROSS

- 1** The largest State in the United States
- 4** The Color behind the stars on the American flag
- 5** The color of the stars on the American flag
- 7** The first President of the United States
- 9** The only state that is an island
- 10** The color of some of the stripes on the American flag

### DOWN

- 2** This presidents face is on the penny and five dollar bill
- 3** The smallest state
- 6** This state is nicknamed "The Gopher State"
- 8** The amount of stripes on the American flag

# Word Scrambles

Unscramble the letters below to find words all about America!

1. MEAACIR

---

2. SSTNDIPEER

---

3. FDMOREE

---

4. YRMA

---

5. RIA RCOEF

---

6. NNAALTI

---

7. OHER

---

8. GLAF

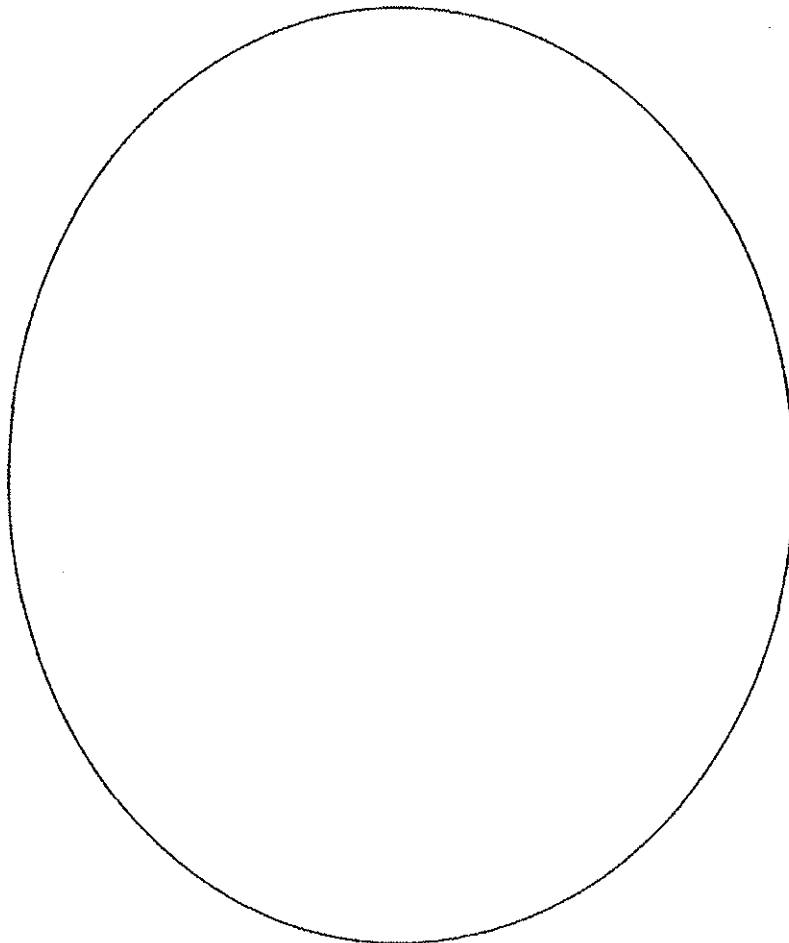
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9. EEGLA

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# HOW DO I FEEL TODAY?

Draw in the face for how you are feeling today! Are you happy or sad? Design a person with hair and a face!! 😊





## Journaling 101

Journaling is the practice of keeping a diary or journal that explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of one's life. Journaling, as a stress management, is not the same as simply recording the happenings in one's life but should contain details about feelings and thoughts related to stressful events. Journaling allows people to clarify their thoughts and feelings. It's also a good problem-solving tool. Some experts believe journaling can decrease the symptoms of health conditions, improve cognitive functioning, strengthen the immune system, and counteract many of the negative effects of stress.

### What do you need to Journal:

- Paper
- Pencil

There is nothing more basic than that. You can purchase journals with fun designs on the cover. You may want to look for one at a dollar store, discount store, or bookstore.

### How to journal:

There is no right or wrong way to journal your thoughts and feelings. Simply start writing. It is nice to write the date at the top of the journal page. Write whatever comes to mind. You should not self-edit; let your thoughts and feelings flow out on the paper. Many times expressing most inner thoughts and feelings helps to bring clarity and resolution to stressful situations. It is fine to go off on tangents. Set aside time in your day to journal. If you miss a day pick up where you left off when you have journaling time..

### Kids may need some help getting started:

- Help kids find a comfortable area to journal
- Provide supplies
- Be positive about the journaling process
- Never criticize what their journaling
- Sometimes a starting phrase will help them get started
- Ask child if they would like to share their journaling with you
- Ask permission to share their thoughts with others
- Kids can also express their feelings through drawing pictures

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

Today's date is \_\_\_\_\_.

My \_\_\_\_\_ is a soldier in the military.

These are things I miss about \_\_\_\_\_  
when he/she is gone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Draw a picture here of you and your soldier!

My goals for myself while my soldier is  
away \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A picture of me when my soldier left on \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Today's date is \_\_\_\_\_.

Things I worry about:

---

---

---

---

Things that make me happy:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Today's date is \_\_\_\_\_.

If I am sad while my soldier is away I can talk to \_\_\_\_\_ to make me feel better. I can journal or \_\_\_\_\_ to make me feel better. I could write a letter to my soldier and ask him/her about some of the things I wonder about.

I wonder about: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.



My Artwork!

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This is my family when my soldier went away.

My Artwork!

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This is my family when my soldier returned.



These are the things that have changed  
while my soldier was away:

---

---

---

---

This is how my soldier changed:

---

---

---

This is how I changed:

---

---

---



# Answer Key

American Word Find  
Tamarah Frank

I E S E T A T S O R R N E  
 O C E A A A E L A R N T S  
 S G O E T N E D I S E R P  
 S N A T I O N A L Y A H M  
 E A S R E T R A R A A C V  
 C O A S T G U A R D E O G  
 L M C M U N T I R O L U E  
 T I I A I I A R T O G N L  
 N L R T L H R F S T A T O  
 E O E L Y S M O D E E R F  
 I D M V R A Y R E Y F Y C  
 R N A R L W N C N A D R T  
 O N Y L E A D E R S H A C

military national guard eagle army navy freedom marines coast guard air force hero president country united states america washington leaders

FUN STUFF WORD FIND  
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Fun is an easy puzzle all about things that are fun for people to do and make people happy!

R F A I L S L F P S M  
 I G N I P P O H S E S  
 O L A E G O A B B K S  
 E H A L T E I A F I D  
 L L A B T E K S A B N  
 I T A P V G O E M S E  
 S L V A P E F B I M I  
 L N M O N Y L A L I R  
 P U P P I E S L Y L F  
 R E T H G U A L O E P  
 K I T T E N S A A V T

baseball basketball bikes family football friends happy kittens laughter puppies shopping smile volleyball

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I L O V E  
9 12 15 22 5  
A M E R I C A  
1 13 5 18 9 3 1

## More Hidden Word Fun!

A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 G=7 H=8 I=9 J=10 K=11 L=12 M=13 N=14 O=15 P=16 Q=17 R=18 S=19 T=20 U=21 V=22 W=23 X=24 Y=25 Z=26

I M P R O U D I O  
9 13 16 18 15 21 4 20 15  
B E A N  
2 5 1 14  
A M E R I C A N  
1 13 5 18 9 3 1 14

### Presidential Crosswords

**ACROSS**  
 2 40th president, loved jelly beans and was an actor who appeared in 53 films  
 4 Nicknamed Jimmy but his real name is James  
 6 20th president, first left-handed president  
 8 The first president of the United States  
 10 First African-American President  
 11 Nicknamed Bill, plays the saxophone

**DOWN**  
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 3 Wrote most of the Declaration of Independence and is on the two dollar bill  
 5 12th president, only president never to marry  
 7 "Boss" Abe  
 9 On the \$2000 dollar bill which is no longer used

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2. SSTNOIPEER	_____
3. FDMOREE	_____
4. YRMA	_____
5. RIA RCOEF	_____
6. NNAALTI	_____
7. OHER	_____
8. GLAF	_____
9. EEGIA	_____

A M E R I C A  
 P R E S I D E N T S  
 F R E E D O M  
 A R M Y  
 A I R F O R C E  
 N A T I O N A L  
 H E R O  
 F L A G  
 E A G L E