

# What is the U.S. Navy?

GRADES 3-8



## Overview

This activity is geared toward participants in grades 3-8. The estimated amount of time to deliver this lesson is 45 minutes.

What do participants already know about the United States Navy? Why does the Navy exist? What does the Navy do? In this lesson, participants will share their prior knowledge about the Navy and learn about the origins of the Navy and how its role has changed over time. The lesson will culminate with participants matching different Navy resources to challenges the Navy might have to respond to and adding new information to their list of what they know about the Navy.



## Objective

Participants will be able to identify the purpose of the U.S. Navy and some of the resources used to carry out their mission.



## Materials

- Chart Paper
  - Markers
  - Sticky Notes
  - Pens/pencils
  - Photographs of Naval Vessels
- Optional:
- “How Should We Respond?” Worksheet
  - Relevant objects in touch collection



## Inquiry

Write each of the following questions on a separate piece of chart paper:

- What is the Navy?
- What does the Navy do?
- Why does the Navy exist?

Ask participants to write some answers to each question on a sticky note and add their sticky notes to the corresponding chart paper. Use this chart paper as a reference to what the group already knows about the Navy and what questions they have.

Compare and contrast the different responses:

- What are the similarities and differences between our responses?
- What are the common ideas that our group has come up with?



## Investigation

Share some background information about the history of the U.S. Navy's formation and their modern day mission statement.

- What might the Navy need to achieve its mission?

Have participants look at photographs of various vessels and try to determine what the Navy may do with them. They can work all together, in small groups, or individually:

- What do you notice in these photographs?
- Compare and contrast the size, shape, and configuration of the different vessels. What might this tell you about their possible function?



## Activity

After participants have made initial observations and drawn conclusions about the possible function of the different vessels, provide additional background information on each one.

- Why might the Navy need these types of vessels?
- Why might the Navy need submarines? Aircraft? Support ships? A force for special operations?

Have participants consider potential challenges the Navy might face and identify methods for the Navy to tackle each challenge.

### Meeting the Challenge (Suggested for grades 3-5):

Identify a challenge for the group and have them select the image that shows the best solution to that situation.

### “How Should We Respond?” (Suggested for grades 6-8):

Participants can go through the “How Should We Respond?” worksheet all together, in small groups, or individually.

Have groups write down any new thoughts on sticky notes and add it to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. They can also remove any answers they no longer agree with:

- Has your perception of the Navy or its mission changed? If so, how?
- What role do different people play in these Navy operations?



## Lesson Connection

Learn more about the people who make up the Navy in our lesson: **Who serves in the Navy?**



## Background

America's Navy was founded as the Continental Navy on Oct. 13, 1775, and the Department of the Navy was established on April 30, 1798. Navy ships were used during the Revolutionary War to protect American water, stopping enemy ships from bringing supplies to British soldiers on American land. The Navy expanded to protect American merchant vessels and interests in international waters. The Navy continued to expand as the country grew and technology advanced, with more than 250 active vessels, 332,000 active-duty service members and nearly 104,000 members of the Navy Reserve as of 2019.

The mission statement (2022) of the United States Navy states, "The United States is a maritime nation, and the U.S. Navy protects America at sea. Alongside our allies and partners, we defend freedom, preserve economic prosperity, and keep the seas open and free. Our nation is engaged in long-term competition. To defend American interests around the globe, the U.S. Navy must remain prepared to execute our timeless role, as directed by Congress and the President."

- Surface fleet - This consists of vessels of all sizes. Types of ships include:
  - Aircraft Carriers: Carry aircraft and have runways for aircraft to take off and land.
  - Guided Missile Cruisers: Defend against enemy aircraft and missiles.
  - Destroyers: Capable of attacking land and defending from air, water surface and submarine attack.
  - Frigates: Used to escort other ships or execute counterdrug operations.
  - Littoral Combat Ships: Multi-mission capability including mine hunting, reconnaissance, and special operations. Designed to use a minimum amount of crew.
  - Amphibious Assault Ships: Capable of transporting Marines onshore using helicopters and landing craft.
  - Amphibious Transport Dock Ships: Carry Marines and landing craft for land assaults.
  - Dock Landing Ships: A variation of amphibious transport dock ships that carry landing craft.
  - Miscellaneous Navy Ships: Various ships with a special purpose, such as command ships, coastal patrol boats, mine countermeasures ships, submarine tenders, joint high-speed vessels, Sea Fighters, semi-submersible naval vessels, oceanographic survey ships, surveillance ships and the sailing frigate *USS Constitution* (the oldest ship in the U.S Navy).
  - Small boats: Patrol boats, special operations craft, survey boats, landing craft, special operations craft and rigid hull inflatable boats.
  - Support ships: Provide services that keep the Navy running. This can include hospital ships, supply ships, tankers for refueling, rescue and salvage ships and tugboats.

- Submarine fleet - Known as the "Silent Service," submarines have played a number of roles including attack, surveillance, commando insertion, research and nuclear deterrent.
- Naval aviation wing - In addition to the surface and submarine warfare capabilities, the Navy can provide firepower and support from the air as well. The Navy's aviation contingent consists of helicopters, fighter/attack aircraft, surveillance, transport and cargo aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).
- Shore "support" establishment - The shore establishment provides support to the operating forces or fleet. This support can be in the form of medical facilities, resupplying, refueling, ship and aircraft repair, machinery repair, training areas, air bases, weather support, construction and communications centers.
- Navy Reserve - The Navy Reserve is made up of citizens that serve on a part-time basis, training near home until called to Active Duty.
- Naval Special Warfare Command - Conducts covert operations, capturing high value enemy personnel and terrorists, reconnaissance missions and small unit direct action against military targets.



## Additional Resources/References

Origins of the Navy:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/heritage/origins-of-the-navy.html>



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## Documents and Images



**Aircraft Carrier** - The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* (CVS-12) underway on August 9, 1968, shortly before her final Seventh Fleet deployment from September 30, 1968 to May 12, 1969 to the Western Pacific and Vietnam. On deck are various aircraft of Carrier Anti-Submarine Air Group 57 (CVSG-57).

Credit: Official U.S. Navy photograph [USN 1116887](#) from the U.S. Navy [Naval History and Heritage Command](#).



**Battleship** - The USS *Battleship Missouri* sailing underneath the Golden Gate Bridge.

Credit: Battleship Missouri Memorial



**Submarine** - USS *Lionfish Balao*, launched November 7, 1973.

Credit: Historic Naval Ships Association





**Destroyer** - The USS Laffey Destroyer USS *Laffey* (DD-724) is an Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer, which was constructed during World War II, laid down and launched in 1943, and commissioned in February 1944.

Credit: Collection of the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum, Mount Pleasant, SC



**Landing Craft Mechanized** - LCM(6) Landing Craft from USS *Magoffin* (APA-199) beaches to unload U.S. Marines, British Commandos and Australian infantrymen during the SEATO Exercise Pony Express on May 1, 1961.

Credit: Official U.S. Navy Photograph. Catalog #: USN 1054472, Naval History and Heritage Command



**Supply/Refueling Ship - *Intrepid*** being refueled by an oiler.

Credit: Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of Stuart Gelband. P2017.41.57



**Destroyer** - 1 Gulf of Aden: the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS *Farragut* (DDG 99) passes by the smoke from a suspected pirate skiff it had just disabled. USS *Farragut* is part of Combined Task Force 151, a multinational task force established to conduct anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. Pirates on the high seas, particularly near the Gulf of Aden, have increased their attacks on oil tankers, jeopardizing supply lines between the Middle East and the rest of the world. In order to provide greater security for these supplies, naval vessels from several countries have been deployed to provide additional security, but with limited success.

Credit: U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cassandra Thompson



**Hospital Ship** - Hospital ship USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20) departs New York Harbor after treating patients in New York and New Jersey. The Navy, along with other U.S. Northern Command, dedicated forces in support of the COVID-19 response.

Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brendan Fitzgerald



**Research Vessel** - Carol Armstrong, ship's sponsor for the Auxiliary General Oceanographic Research (AGOR) research vessel (R/V) *Neil Armstrong* (AGOR 27), breaks a bottle across bow during a 2014 christening ceremony at Dakota Creek Industries, Inc., shipyard in Anacortes, Washington.

Credit: U.S. Navy photo



**Helicopter** - Japanese citizens unload humanitarian assistance supplies from an SH-60F Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the Black Knights of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS). 4 embarked aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) at a landing zone in northern Japan March 22, 2011. *Ronald Reagan* was off the northeastern coast of Japan conducting humanitarian assistance operations as part of Operation Tomodachi.

Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alexander Tidd

## ACTIVITY 1: HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Scenario: You are the Chief of Naval Operations and you have received word of different challenges taking place around the world that you need to use certain equipment for. Below are eight options of what you can send out.

Your task is to match each situation with the equipment you believe would be best for that response and share your rationale for why you chose that equipment. You cannot use the same equipment twice.

Aircraft Carrier Submarine Hospital Ship Helicopter	Landing Craft Destroyer Supply Ship Research Vessel
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Situation	Equipment	Rationale	Limitations of Equipment
Natural disaster			
Pirates raiding local ships			
Collect information on other country			
Rescue downed pilots			
Protection from enemy			
Collect data off ocean floor			
Ship needs supplies			