U.S. Presidential Trivia

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Which president became the first to live in the Washington, D.C., residence now called the White House?

A. John Adams
B. George Washington
C. Thomas Jefferson
D. James Monroe

Correct answer: A. John Adams
John and Abigail Adams moved into the president’s residence in 1800. They were the building’s first residents.

2. Which U.S. president designed his Virginia home, Monticello, and later oversaw a major rebuilding of it?

A. John Quincy Adams
B. James Madison
C. Thomas Jefferson
D. Martin Van Buren

Correct answer: C. Thomas Jefferson
Thomas Jefferson designed and redesigned Monticello over several decades. He completed the major rebuilding in 1809.

3. Which former president went on to serve as chief justice of the United States?

A. Grover Cleveland
B. William Howard Taft
C. Benjamin Harrison
D. Calvin Coolidge

Correct answer: B. William Howard Taft
Taft served as president from 1909 to 1913. He later became chief justice and served on the Supreme Court from 1921 to 1930.

4. Which nineteenth-century president returned to office in 1893, four years after his first term ended?

A. William McKinley
B. Chester A. Arthur
C. Benjamin Harrison
D. Grover Cleveland

Correct answer: D. Grover Cleveland
Cleveland’s first term ran from 1885 to 1889. He returned to the presidency in 1893 and served until 1897.

5. Whose 1925 inauguration was the first U.S. presidential inauguration broadcast on radio?

A. Warren G. Harding
B. Calvin Coolidge
C. Herbert Hoover
D. Woodrow Wilson

Correct answer: B. Calvin Coolidge
Radio stations broadcast Coolidge’s inauguration in March 1925. Listeners could hear the ceremony from outside Washington.

6. In 1906, Theodore Roosevelt used the Antiquities Act to proclaim the first U.S. national monument. Which landmark did the proclamation protect?

A. Devils Tower
B. Mount Rushmore
C. Yosemite Valley
D. Chimney Rock in Colorado

Correct answer: A. Devils Tower
Roosevelt’s proclamation established Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. It was the first national monument designated under the Antiquities Act.

7. A program records Franklin D. Roosevelt taking the presidential oath at the White House on January 20, 1945. Which of Roosevelt’s presidential inaugurations was it?

A. His first
B. His second
C. His third
D. His fourth

Correct answer: D. His fourth
Roosevelt’s first three inaugurations were in 1933, 1937, and 1941. The 1945 White House ceremony began his fourth term.

8. Which president signed the 1958 legislation establishing NASA as a civilian agency?

A. John F. Kennedy
B. Harry S. Truman
C. Dwight D. Eisenhower
D. Lyndon B. Johnson

Correct answer: C. Dwight D. Eisenhower
Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act on July 29, 1958. NASA began operating later that year.

9. Harry Truman kept a sign reading ‘The Buck Stops Here.’ Which explanation matches what he said the motto meant for a president?

A. The president is responsible for making the decisions that reach the office.
B. The president’s main duty is to set the value of the dollar.
C. Every presidential decision goes to a cabinet vote.
D. A departing president can transfer earlier decisions to the next administration.

Correct answer: A. The president is responsible for making the decisions that reach the office.
Truman connected the sign to a president’s responsibility for decisions. In his farewell address he explained that a president has to make the decisions that come before the office.

10. Before his own presidency, Herbert Hoover served in the Cabinets of both Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Which post did he hold?

A. Secretary of the Treasury
B. Secretary of State
C. Secretary of Agriculture
D. Secretary of Commerce

Correct answer: D. Secretary of Commerce
Harding appointed Hoover secretary of commerce in 1921. Hoover remained in that office under Coolidge before becoming president in 1929.

11. Roosevelt’s first inaugural program is dated March 4, 1933. His second is dated January 20, 1937. Which constitutional change explains the date on the later program?

A. The Twelfth Amendment assigned the inauguration date to the president-elect.
B. The Twenty-Second Amendment changed the calendar for second terms only.
C. The Twentieth Amendment changed the regular start of presidential terms to January 20.
D. The Twenty-Fifth Amendment moved every president’s oath to the first month in office.

Correct answer: C. The Twentieth Amendment changed the regular start of presidential terms to January 20.
The Twentieth Amendment changed when presidential terms begin. Roosevelt’s 1937 inauguration was the first regular presidential inauguration held on January 20 under that amendment.

12. A researcher has a recording of Richard Nixon announcing his resignation in August 1974. Which separate item directly documents the formal resignation?

A. An unsigned draft of Nixon’s televised address
B. Nixon’s signed resignation letter to the secretary of state
C. The text of Gerald Ford’s remarks after taking the oath
D. A newspaper’s advance notice of the television broadcast

Correct answer: B. Nixon’s signed resignation letter to the secretary of state
Nixon’s signed letter to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger formally communicates his resignation as president. The recording documents his public announcement.

13. A presidential library preserves a 1963 photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson raising his hand inside a plane. The catalog identifies Judge Sarah T. Hughes and describes the ceremony. Which claim can the photo and catalog support together?

A. The photograph shows Hughes approving Johnson’s election results.
B. Hughes administered the vice-presidential oath to Johnson at the Capitol.
C. Johnson gave his first State of the Union address aboard Air Force One.
D. Hughes administered the presidential oath to Johnson aboard Air Force One.

Correct answer: D. Hughes administered the presidential oath to Johnson aboard Air Force One.
The library identifies the scene as Johnson’s presidential oath aboard Air Force One. Its catalog supplies the date, the setting, and the people in the photograph.

14. A 1973 record concerns Gerald Ford’s confirmation as vice president. An August 1974 record shows him taking the presidential oath. Which sequence under the Twenty-Fifth Amendment connects the two?

A. Ford was nominated and confirmed as vice president, then succeeded to the presidency after a vacancy.
B. Ford was elected vice president in a 1973 national election, then won a separate presidential election in 1974.
C. Ford first became president by appointment and later moved to the vice presidency.
D. Both records concern the same appointment to the vice presidency.

Correct answer: A. Ford was nominated and confirmed as vice president, then succeeded to the presidency after a vacancy.
Ford became vice president after a presidential nomination and confirmation in both houses of Congress. He became president in 1974 when Richard Nixon resigned.

15. Two fictional accession notes describe otherwise comparable official presidential memos created in 1978 and 1982. Which falls within the period covered by the Presidential Records Act of 1978?

A. Both memos
B. The 1978 memo only
C. The 1982 memo only
D. Neither memo

Correct answer: C. The 1982 memo only
The act was passed in 1978, and its coverage began with the administration that took office on January 20, 1981. The 1982 memo falls within that period.