

# VE Day

## What is VE Day?

VE Day stands for Victory in Europe Day and is celebrated on 8<sup>th</sup> May. It was the end of six years of suffering, misery and courage during the Second World War in Europe. Although it was not the end of the Second World War, it was the end of warfare in Europe.

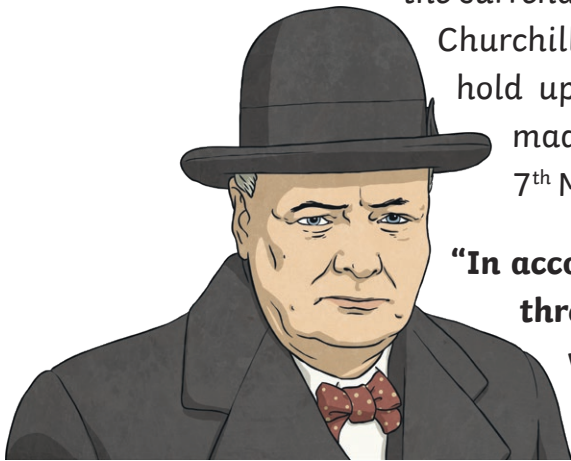
## How did it happen?

On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1945, following Hitler's death in the April, the German President of the Third Reich, Grand Admiral Donitz, gave orders that General Jodl should go to the American Head Quarters based in France. Jodl surrendered on behalf of the Germans, to the Western and Russian officers, and agreed to all their demands.

## The Announcement

The British people began celebrating as soon as they heard the news. Although no official announcement had been made, bell ringers in the churches around the country were on standby to ring out the good news when an official notice was given.

Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Russians, was taking his time to announce the surrender, but the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, did not want to give Stalin the chance to hold up what everyone already knew! Churchill made the following announcement at 19:40, 7<sup>th</sup> May.



**“In accordance with arrangements between three great powers, tomorrow, Tuesday, will be treated as Victory in Europe Day and will be regarded as a holiday.”**



## The Effects of War

In Britain, during the war in Europe, half a million homes were destroyed, thousands of ordinary people were killed and millions of lives had been torn apart.



### Did you know ...?

The three great powers were The British Empire, the US and the Soviet Union, now known as Russia.

Although everyone was pleased the war in Europe had ended, for many the celebrations would have been a sad reminder of the loss of many loved ones. They would have been fighting abroad, caught by the enemy or died in air raids attacks. This meant that many did not completely feel the lasting joy of the time.

### Bring on the Celebrations!

People began decorating the streets with banners, bunting and ribbons. They organised street parties where neighbours shared food, which was still rationed, and listened to the radio news broadcasts.

King George VI and the Queen appeared eight times on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, and their two daughters, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth – who is now Her Majesty the Queen – walked amongst the crowds! Churchill told the crowds, “This is your victory!”

Churchill spoke to the nation, reminding them that although Japan still had to be defeated, and the war was not yet over, for now Great Britain “May allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing. God Save the King!”

### The End of the VE Day

At 21:00, King George VI made a final broadcast to the nation. Buckingham Palace was lit up in floodlights for the first time since the start of the war, and two searchlights formed a V, the sign of victory, above St Paul’s Cathedral in London.

All the lights were turned off again the next day.

### A Special Celebration

To celebrate 75 years since the original VE Day, the May Day bank Holiday has been moved for the second time in history. Although it’s usually on a Monday, this year, the May Day Bank holiday will be on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May to coincide with the anniversary of VE Day.

Buglers have been invited to play The Last Post and Reveille from their homes at 2:55 p.m. This will be followed by a 'Nation's Toast to the Heroes of World War II' at 3:00 p.m. Here, people at home can raise a drink of their choice and say the following:

**"To those who gave so much, we thank you."**

The thought is that as a nation, the UK will toast their remembrance, together.

**Bugler:** Someone that plays the bugle – a horn-like instrument used by soldiers to send signals and orders.



# Questions

1. What date is VE Day?

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2. VE day stands for...? Tick **one**.

- Victory and Excellence Day  
 Victory in Europe Day  
 Vanquish in Europe Day  
 Very Excellent Day

3. What did General Jodl do?

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4. Tick the boxes to say whether the statements below are **true** or **false**.

Sentence	True	False
Hitler died in May 1945.		
Grand Admiral Donitz gave the order to surrender.		
The 'three great powers' were The British, Empire the Soviet Union and the US.		
Half a million homes were destroyed in Britain during the war.		

5. How was a sign of victory made above St Paul's Cathedral?

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6. What did Stalin do, and how did this affect Britain?

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7. In detail, explain what VE day ended.

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8. Name one of the ways VE Day is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

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9. Why do you think the author has used an exclamation mark when commenting on the princesses walking around the crowds in London? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

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**8<sup>th</sup> May**

2. VE day stands for...? Tick **one**.

- Victory and Excellence Day  
 **Victory in Europe Day**  
 Vanquish in Europe Day  
 Very Excellent Day

3. What did General Jodl do?

**General Jodl went to the Head Quarters based in France. He surrendered on behalf of the Germans to the Western and Russian Officers and agreed to all their demands.**

4. Tick the boxes to say whether the statements below are **true** or **false**.

Sentence	True	False
Hitler died in May 1945.		✓
Grand Admiral Donitz gave the order to surrender.	✓	
The 'three great powers' were The British, Empire the Soviet Union and the US.	✓	
Half a million homes were destroyed in Britain during the war.	✓	

5. How was a sign of victory made above St Paul's Cathedral?

**Lights were used to make the sign of victory above St Paul's Cathedral.**

6. What did Stalin do, and how did this affect Britain?

**Stalin took his time announcing the surrender. This meant Churchill could not let Britain know officially that there was an end of the war in Europe.**

7. In detail, explain what VE day ended.

**Answers will vary, based on: VE Day ended six years of suffering, misery and courage during the Second World War in Europe/ ended warfare in Europe.**