



White House Oval Office Scavenger Hunt for all ages

Facts about the Oval Office:

This is a full-scale replica of The White House Oval Office. The West Wing where it is located was built in 1902 during President Theodore Roosevelt's presidency. The first Oval Office was built in 1909 during the presidency of William Howard Taft. Painted green, it included a skylight that was later removed. The West Wing burned in 1929; only the fireplace mantel survives from that earlier era. To improve private access and light, President Franklin Roosevelt moved the room to its current location in 1934 and added the three French doors leading to the Rose Garden. The room's architecture has changed little since except for the flooring.

Presidents decorate the office to suit their own personal tastes and needs. Neither President Eisenhower nor Carter changed the room as furnished by their predecessors. President Obama added a striped wallpaper in 2010. A portrait of George Washington is always present in the Oval Office. The painting over the mantel here is a reproduction of an original by Rembrandt Peale done in 1853.

The Presidential desk is a reproduction of "*The Resolute Desk*", a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880. The plaque on the face of the desk tells its story. It first appeared in the Oval Office of President John F. Kennedy. While many have used the desk in their private study, it was also in the Oval Office of Presidents Carter, Reagan, Clinton, George W. Bush and the current President, Barack Obama.

Yesterday and today:

On the desk is a jar of jelly beans, a favorite of President Ronald Reagan. The Goelitz Candy Company delivered 3 ½ tons of "*Jelly Bellies*" to his 1981 Inauguration. President Harry Truman's famous desk plate "*The Buck Stops Here*", which expresses his view of the responsibility of the President, is also on the desk.

Located behind the desk is the ship model "*Halifax*". This hand-crafted model took more than three years to construct. Most of our Navy veteran Presidents - Kennedy, Ford, Carter, and George H. W. Bush - have kept models of sailing ships in the Oval Office.

Presidential china is on the left bookcase. George Washington's is on the top left, John Adams' china is on the top right. The Adams china was the first White House china since Washington never lived in The White House.

The room also features Remington bronzes, which are often displayed in the Oval Office.

Scavenger Hunt

It has often been said that Washington, D. C. is a city full of secrets. Some well kept, others not. See if you can uncover these secrets that are all “hidden in plain sight” in The Oval Office. Join in a little scavenger hunt in The Oval Office. Can you find the items listed below?

1. Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national bird, but the Bald Eagle was selected instead. ***Find at least 14 eagles that are in the Oval Office.***
2. Eighteen of our 44 Presidents have actually served in the Oval Office. Images of 14 different Presidents are in this office. They may be in paintings, sculpture, or photos. ***Find all 23 images of Presidents in this room.*****
3. President’s often display ship models in the Oval Office. ***Can you find the six ships and boats depicted in this space?***
4. George Washington laid the cornerstone of the White House on October 13, 1792. ***Where are the four different depictions of The White House around the room?***
5. Completed in 1863, the cast iron dome of the Capitol is the largest of its kind in the world. ***Can you spot the one image of the United States Capitol Building?***

Why is the President’s Office Oval?

Ever since John and Abigail Adams first moved into The White House in 1800, the building has contained three oval rooms; The Blue Room, The Diplomatic Reception Room, and The Yellow Oval Study. Yet, none of these ever served as the President’s Office. As an example, the famous Lincoln Bedroom (created by order of President Truman) was actually Lincoln’s office during The Civil War.

George Washington personally selected James Hoban to design The Executive Mansion. It is widely believed that Hoban’s design for the oval rooms was inspired by The President’s changes to The Robert Morris House. When George Washington was President, the capital was in Philadelphia, and he and Martha lived in the Robert Morris House. During that time, Washington made several alterations to the home. The most significant was the addition of a semi-circular window in the main parlor creating the “oval effect.”

Sizing Up The Oval Office

Major Axis: 35’ 10”

Minor Axis: 29’

Height: 18’ 6”

Circumference: 102’ 5”

Floor Space: 816 Sq. Ft.

Architects:

Nathan C. Wyeth
(original 1909 design)

Eric Gugler
(1934 redesign)

**** WASHINGTON (3); JOHN ADAMS (2); TAFT (1); JACKSON (1); LINCOLN (2); FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT (1); REAGAN (2); CARTER (2); HOOVER (1); CLINTON (2); OBAMA (1); TYLER (1); GEORGE H. W. BUSH (1); GEORGE W. BUSH (3)**