

The Accidental Presidents (Vice Presidents Who Succeeded to the Presidency Upon the Death of Their Predecessor)

#	Vice President	President's Term	Succeeded	Cause of Predecessor's Death	Elected to Own Full Term?	Major Challenges	Significant Successes	Principal Failures/Criticisms	Historians' General Ranking	Notes
1	John Tyler	1841–1845	William Henry Harrison	Pneumonia (after 31 days in office)	No	Constitutional uncertainty over succession; hostile Whig Party	Established that the vice president became the full president, creating the "Tyler Precedent." Annexation of Texas approved just before leaving office.	Alienated his own party; veto battles; cabinet resignations	Lower third	First "Accidental President." Set the precedent later written into the 25th Amendment.
2	Millard Fillmore	1850–1853	Zachary Taylor	Acute illness (likely gastroenteritis)	No	Growing sectional conflict over slavery	Signed the Compromise of 1850, temporarily preserving the Union	Signed the Fugitive Slave Act, damaging his reputation	Lower third	Attempted to calm North-South tensions but merely delayed the Civil War.
3	Andrew Johnson	1865–1869	Abraham Lincoln	Assassination	No	Reconstruction after Civil War	Restored civilian government in much of the South	Constant conflict with Congress; impeached (acquitted by one vote); weak protection of freedmen	Bottom five	Generally regarded as one of America's least successful presidents.
4	Chester A. Arthur	1881–1885	James A. Garfield	Assassination	No	Civil service corruption; factional Republican politics	Signed the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act; modernized the Navy	Limited broader legislative accomplishments	Middle tier	Surprised critics by becoming an effective reformer.
5	Theodore Roosevelt	1901–1909	William McKinley	Assassination	Yes (1904)	Regulating trusts; labor unrest; conservation; expanding U.S. influence	Progressive reforms; trust-busting; conservation movement; Panama Canal; Nobel Peace Prize	Critics viewed him as overly energetic and expansionist	Top five	At age 42, the youngest president in U.S. history.
6	Calvin Coolidge	1923–1929	Warren G. Harding	Heart attack (officially)	Yes (1924)	Restoring confidence after scandals; booming economy	Fiscal restraint; tax reductions; stable administration	Failed to recognize warning signs preceding the Great Depression	Upper-middle	"Silent Cal" became associated with prosperity and limited government.
7	Harry S. Truman	1945–1953	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Cerebral hemorrhage (stroke)	Yes (1948)	Ending WWII; atomic bomb decision; Cold War; Korean War	Marshall Plan; NATO; recognition of Israel; desegregated armed forces	Korean War stalemate; firing MacArthur; low approval when leaving office	Upper tier (Top 10–15)	Modern historians have steadily elevated his reputation.
8	Lyndon B. Johnson	1963–1969	John F. Kennedy	Assassination	Yes (1964)	Vietnam War; civil rights; poverty	Civil Rights Act (1964); Voting Rights Act (1965); Great Society; Medicare and Medicaid	Escalation of Vietnam overshadowed domestic achievements	Upper-middle (Top 10–15)	Perhaps the greatest contrast between domestic success and foreign policy failure.
9	Gerald R. Ford	1974–1977	Richard Nixon	Resignation (not death) See note below	No	Watergate aftermath; public distrust; inflation	Restored honesty and stability; Helsinki Accords	Nixon pardon proved politically costly	Middle tier	Not technically an "Accidental President" by death, but often grouped with them because he assumed office without election.