

The background of the entire page is a large, waving American flag. The stars and stripes are clearly visible, with the flag appearing to be in motion.

# THE NEED-TO-KNOW GUIDE TO JOINING THE MILITARY



**Military.com**  
ALL THE BENEFITS OF SERVICE

## The Need-to-Know Guide to Joining the Military

<b>Introduction: What's in Here? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Why Should You Join the Military?</b></li> <li>- <b>Choose between Active Duty and the Reserve</b></li> <li>- <b>The 5 Basic Steps to Joining the Military</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Section 1: What Are the Rewards of Service? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Education Benefits</b> (Including GI Bill, College Funds, &amp; Tuition Assistance)</li> <li>- <b>Advanced Technical or Specialty Training</b></li> <li>- <b>Your Cash Rewards!</b> (Including Pay &amp; Enlistment Bonuses)</li> <li>- <b>Your Everyday Rewards!</b> (Including Vacation, Pension, Health Care)</li> </ul>	
<b>Section 2: What to Expect from Military Service .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>On-Duty (at Work)</b></li> <li>- <b>Off-Duty (at Play)</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Section 3: Do You Have What It Takes to Qualify? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Requirements to Qualify</b></li> <li>- <b>The Enlistment Process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Talk to a Recruiter</b></li> <li>- <b>Know What You're Getting Into</b></li> <li>- <b>The ASVAB</b></li> <li>- <b>The Medical Examination</b></li> <li>- <b>Remember: Be Honest</b></li> <li>- <b>Make Sure You Get the Best Deal</b></li> <li>- <b>Signed, Sealed and Delivered</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Section 4: Survive Military Training .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Basic Training</b></li> <li>- <b>Advanced Technical and Specialized Training</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>16</b>



## Introduction: What's in Here?

Have you ever bought a car, stereo equipment, a computer, or some other expensive electronics? Are you sure you got the best deal possible? What if you had all the important information and product comparisons right at your fingertips, in an easy-to-read guide?

Well, you should approach joining the Military the same way you would if you were buying a car ... carefully, and fully armed with information. That is why Military.com has created this collection of facts, tips, and advice to ensure that you get the best recruiting deal possible. Don't get tripped up by the recruiting process – read on, and get the inside scoop on how to get ahead.

This guide supplies answers to important questions like:

- What kind of life will I have in the military?
- Do I have what it takes?
- What do I get for serving in the military?
- What should I ask my recruiters?
- Can I make it through boot camp?
- How can I get the most benefits possible?

### First ask yourself: Why do I want to join?

If you can't answer this question, then you need to take the time to consider it carefully.

There are thousands of good reasons to join the military, including:

- Answering the call to serve your country
- Taking a stand against terrorism
- Educational and monetary benefits that can last a lifetime
- Personal satisfaction and pride
- Family tradition
- Honor
- Devotion to duty
- Learning useful new skills
- Full-time employment
- Job security
- Personal improvement

Whatever you decide, when you decide to join, be sure you have a good reason to do so.

### Choose between Active Duty and the Reserve

When you enlist in the Armed Forces, you have the option to enter the Active Duty, the Ready Reserve, or the National Guard.

Active duty means that the military will be a full-time job: you will live where you are stationed (the U.S. has bases worldwide) and receive a full-time paycheck. On the other hand, being in the Reserve or National Guard is a part-time job, where you serve only one weekend a month and two weeks each year for training. As a reservist you get most of the same benefits as active duty servicemembers. Keep in mind that reservists are subject to mobilization; this means that the part-time job could go full-time if your country needs you.

#### Did You Know?

You get virtually the same benefits from serving in the reserves as you do in the regular military, with only a part-time commitment.

When you join the military, you will be given a **pay grade**, which determines your rank and the amount of money you will receive each month. **Enlisted** servicemembers have pay grades between E-1 and E-9. **Officers** earn more money, and have pay grades between O-1 and O-9 (and also W1 through W5 if you are a

warrant officer). If you are an Enlisted servicemember, you can be promoted to officer if you put in enough time and experience, and serve your country well. If you want to become an officer immediately, you need to have different qualifications. See the Recruiting page at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting> for more information.

### The five basic steps to joining the military:

**Step 1: Do Your Homework.** Learn about what each service has to offer. You can check them all out with a “Compare the Services” guide at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Step 2: Ace the ASVAB.** Prepare for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Test. This is the equivalent of a Military Entrance Exam.

**Hot Tip:** Go to the **Ace the ASVAB** section at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting> to take a practice test, and tell the recruiter how well you did – this will help the recruitment process go much more smoothly.

**Step 3: Ask the right questions.** Take a long list of questions to ask a recruiter, and visit local recruiting offices (that’s right, visit more than one service, even if you have already made up your mind).

**Hot Tip:** For a list of questions to ask recruiters, go to <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Step 4: Go through the entrance process.** Take the ASVAB, pass your physical exam, and take care of all the paperwork. For one of many examples of what the entrance process is like, check out this first-hand article series: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Step 5: Seal the deal.** Carefully review and sign your contract, raise your right hand and swear to serve.

**Disclaimer:** Due to the needs of the individual services, the facts presented here are subject to change without notice, it is always important to verify this information with a recruiter.






## Section 1: What are the rewards of military service?

Military service brings many benefits, including:

- **Education Benefits:** Get money and tuition assistance to help pay for school.
- **Advanced Technical or Specialty Training:** Learn skills that help you get ahead in your career.
- **Cash Rewards!** Enlistment bonuses and regular pay – it does pay off to become a servicemember.
- **Everyday Rewards!** Paid time off, pension, travel benefits – all these and more.

### Education Benefits:

Below is a simple chart showing your most important education benefits.

Education Benefits	Army 	Navy 	Marines 	Air Force 	Coast Guard 
Montgomery GI-Bill & Reserve GI-Bill	X	X	X	X	X
College Fund **	X	X	X		
College Loan Repayment Program **	X	X		X	
Student Loan Deferment	X	X	X	X	X
Tuition Assistance Programs	X	X	X	X	X

\* The college fund and loan repayment program benefits are not automatic; you will need to ask your recruiter if you qualify.

#### 1. The Montgomery GI Bill:

The GI Bill gives active duty and veterans **over \$36,000** (tax free) that can be used for tuition, books, fees, and living expenses while you earn your degree, certification or attend trade school. Once you have completed two years of service, you can use the GI Bill to cover the cost of your while you are still on active duty. For a complete guide on what the GI Bill is all about and how to use it, see <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### 2. The Reserve GI Bill:

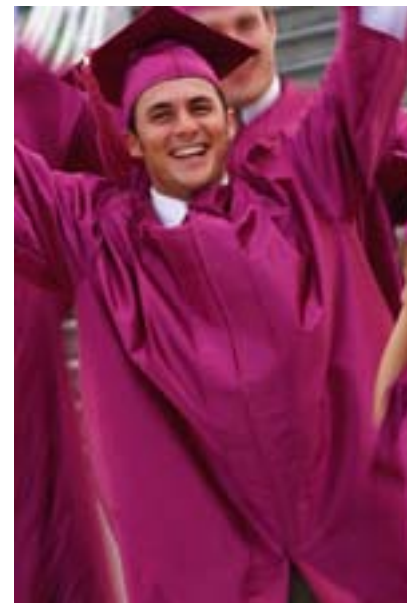
The Reserve GI BILL is for Reserve & Guard Members. Through the GI BILL you can get **over \$10,000** (tax free) to help with college tuition, books, fees and vocational training or certification expenses. For more on the Reserve GI Bill, see <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### 3. The Army, Navy, and Marine College Funds:

The College Fund, also known as a "GI Bill kicker," can give you up to an additional **\$20,000** for college. Qualifications and amounts vary from service to service. This benefit is available for both Active Duty and Reserve servicemembers.

#### 4. College Loan Repayment:

The Air Force, Army and Navy all offer Student Loan Repayment programs for qualified candidates. The Army and Navy will actually pay-off up to **\$65,000**



#### Did You Know?

Each service has its own unique education programs and benefits. For more details, check out the Service-Specific Education page at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>



of outstanding College Loan Debt! This Benefit is available to both Active Duty and Reserve servicemembers.

### 5. Student Loan Deferment / Forbearance:

The U.S. Dept. of Education offers Student Loan Deferment or Forbearance to Active Duty and Reserve (on Active Duty) servicemembers. This means that you would be able to postpone student loan repayment until you make enough money to begin repayment.

### 6. Tuition Assistance Programs (TAP):

The armed forces Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is a benefit provided to eligible members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The military will pay up to **\$4,500** a year for the tuition expenses to help you go to school while serving your country. That could total over **\$18,000** in a four year enlistment. For more on tuition assistance, see

<http://www.military.com/Recruiting>



#### What Does This All Mean?

If you add all the above education benefits together, **you could get up to \$138,000 in education benefits as a reward for service.**

### Advanced Technical or Specialty Training:

After you graduate from basic training, you will be given Military Occupational Specialty (MOS or Rate training) where you will learn new skills and develop new abilities that will increase your opportunities inside and out of the military. These skills and abilities will be in specialties like electronics, administration, and mechanics just to name a few. Advanced Technical or Specialty Training could easily cost you over **\$20,000** if you were to pay for it at a trade school.

To get a head start on figuring out which military job and technical training interests you, go to the Interest Matcher: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### Did You Know?

The leadership and skills you learn in the military will improve your chances in the job market when you leave the service.

### Your Cash Rewards!

#### 1. Military Pay:

As an enlisted member, your pay will increase the longer you are in the military, and as you advance in rank. You also benefit from an annual cost-of-living adjustment.

There are 9 levels of enlisted pay in the military. Most people enter the service at E-1, which stands for Enlisted Pay Grade 1. Most people advance to E-4 within about 3 years of service. Below is an example of the annual Regular Military pay for a servicemember at the E-4 pay level, with three years of military service.

## Example of Military Pay:

	Unmarried Servicemember	Servicemember w/ Family of 4
<b>Basic Pay</b>	\$19,983.60	\$19,983.60
<b>Cash for Meals</b>	\$2,913.72	\$2,913.72
<b>Cash for Housing</b>	\$8,496.00	\$10,920.00
<b>Cash Total</b>	\$31,393.32	\$33,817.32
<b>Tax Advantage</b>	\$2,013.48	\$1,696.20
<b>Regular Military Compensation</b>	\$33,406.80	\$35,513.52

For more on both enlisted and officer pay, with complete pay tables and other information on special pays you can receive, check out the Pay Overview at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

## 2. Enlistment Bonuses:

The first reward you may receive for enlisting is a payment called an **enlistment bonus**. Enlistment bonuses vary from service to service to meet their particular needs -- be sure to ask your recruiter about the availability of enlistment bonuses.

## 3. Advanced Enlistment Rank:

In addition to enlistment bonuses recruiters can offer you the chance to enter the service at a higher pay grade called an Advanced Enlistment Rank. There are 9 enlisted pay levels called pay grades. Most people start out at E-1 (Enlisted Pay grade 1) however qualified enlistees may enter at E-2 or E-3. You must score high on the Armed Services Vocational Battery (ASVAB) test and meet other criteria to qualify.

**Remember:** Take an ASVAB practice test **as soon as you can**. If you can give your recruiter a practice test score, this helps the recruiter pinpoint the benefits and incentives that you qualify for, and focus on the jobs you're suited for. For the ASVAB practice test, go to: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Be sure to ask your recruiter:** about opportunities for Advanced Enlistment Rank, Student Loan Repayment, enlistment bonuses, and many other incentive programs. You won't know what's available until you ask.

## Your Everyday Rewards!

Every day that you serve, the military rewards you by providing you with, housing, meals, vacation, and much more. The following is a list of the major

“everyday” rewards you get for serving your country:

### 30 Days Paid Vacation:

Unlike any other job you will find, the U.S. Armed Forces offer their members 30 Days of fully paid vacation (leave) each year, starting the first year of your enlistment. In fact, you can take leave the day after you graduate from basic training!

### Vacation for Reserves and Guard:

If you are called to temporary active duty (mobilized) as a reserve/guard servicemember you will earn 2.5 days of paid vacation (leave) for each 30 days of Active Duty service.

### Military Pension:

If you decide to make the military your career, you will be eligible for retirement pay, including continued health benefits and on-base shopping privileges similar to those you enjoyed while on duty. For instance, a 20-year career in the service will often result in retirement in your late 30's. Considering that a typical enlisted retiree will receive **over HALF-A-MILLION Dollars** in retirement pay alone, a military pension is a great deal and you pay nothing into this it is all part of your rewards for serving!

### Pension for Reserves and Guard:

If you are in the Reserves you become eligible for retirement when you have served 20 “good years,” but you cannot draw your pension until age 60.

### Health Care:

You and your family will have medical insurance (TRICARE) for as long as you remain in military service. If you remain in the Military through retirement, your medical benefits will extend throughout your lifetime and that of your spouse.

### Health Care for Reserves and Guard:

As a reserve you and your family are eligible for health care whenever you are activated, or under special circumstances you may qualify for military health care insurance (TRICARE) at a reduced premium.

#### Did you know?

Pension is only one benefit of military retirement? To get the full scoop, check out this article: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**The Skinny on TRICARE:** TRICARE is a complex system, with many benefits available. Find out about the programs available here: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

### Meals:

As a continuation of the military tradition of providing room and board, meals (rations) are considered part of your pay. While on active duty you will be eligible for free dining services or you will be given an allowance to cover the cost of your meals when dining facilities are not available.

### Housing:

Housing on base is also included as a part of your compensation package. If





you are married and on-base housing is not available, or you would like to live off base, a tax-free monthly housing allowance will be provided. The military also pays all travel and expenses for required moves.

#### **Affordable Life Insurance:**

As an active duty servicemember, you are eligible for \$10,000 to \$250,000 in life insurance coverage at a cost ranging from \$0.65 to \$16.25 a month.

#### **Life Insurance for Reserves and Guard:**

As a reserve, you may be eligible for either full-coverage or partial-coverage depending on the type of unit you are assigned to.

#### **Travel:**

Besides getting to see the world while serving your country, you will be eligible for "space available" (or Space A) military flights to almost anywhere in the world at **no cost**. In addition, you will be able to stay in lodging facilities at any military base and at world-class resorts that are specially created for military personnel, including the Shades of Green® near Walt Disney World and the Hale Koa Hotel on the beach of Waikiki. And that's not even mentioning the special military discounts and fare reductions offered by resorts and airlines all over the world. For more on Space A travel and other military travel benefits, visit the Military.com Travel Center at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### **Veteran Benefits and Discounts:**

The benefits of service extend far beyond your active duty or reserve service. The Federal Government and most states offer Veterans Programs for Education, Home Loans, Small Business Loans, Health Care, and more. Many retailers and businesses also offer veteran and servicemember special discounts. For a directory of all the discounts available, check out <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### **The Intangible Rewards!**

When you serve in today's military, you learn self-discipline, earn respect, and demonstrate honor and a devotion to duty. The experience, training, and leadership skills you will get in the military are exactly what today's employers are looking for.

You will also experience great satisfaction from knowing that you have proudly done your part in carrying on a tradition of selfless service that dates back over 200 years. In addition you will be joining the ranks of famous veterans who have also served their country like: Mike Anderson (NFL), David Robinson (NBA), Fred Durst (Limp Bizkit), Gene Hackman, Chuck Norris, Road Dogg, Jesse James, Montel Williams, Shaggy, and Dennis Franz, just to name a few.

Here is what Chuck Norris of "Walker, Texas Ranger" had to say about his time in the Air Force: **"My years in the military changed my life. It helped me to get my focus."**

You will also find that your military experience will make you stand out above the rest. You and your family will notice a difference in how you handle adversity, hardship, trials, and confrontation. You will also find that people will come to count on you for your leadership skills and ability to make wise decisions.

As you can see, the benefits of military service are enormous. Most American



citizens have no idea about the value of the opportunities and experiences you can get for faithfully serving your country.

## Section 2: What to Expect from Military Service

Military life can be divided into two categories: on-duty (when you're "on the job"), and off-duty (the time you have to yourself).

### What to Expect "On-Duty" (at Work):

Your personal military experience will depend on:

- The branch of the service you choose
- The type of unit you go to
- Your job (or Military Occupational Specialty (MOS or Rating))

For example, life at a Coast Guard Air Station is vastly different from life onboard a Navy ship. That is why it's critical to choose the branch of service and job that best suits you.

While you're on duty, you should be prepared for the following:

- A physically and mentally demanding lifestyle.
- A high possibility of deployment and separation from your family.
- A fast pace.
- Hard or challenging work.
- Continuous training.
- Being held to high standards.
- Being transferred every two to four years.
- Facing hazardous or dangerous duty.
- Serving for the amount of time you signed up for (you can't quit anytime you want).
- Becoming a leader and taking on responsibility.
- Pushing yourself beyond your current limits.
- Living where your country needs you most (whether it's overseas or your hometown).
- Job security and satisfaction.

### What to Expect "Off-Duty" (at Play):

In general, your off-duty lifestyle in the military will be much like the civilian world. Most military bases have a small town atmosphere, with fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, barber shops, bowling alleys, movie theaters, swimming pools, automotive hobby shops, service stations, credit unions, you name it. The following are some things you can count on:

- Liberty: Plenty of time off.
- Leave: 30 days a year paid vacation.
- Space Available Travel: Hitch rides on military aircraft all over the world for virtually free.
- Time off: Most weekends and holidays.
- Education: Time and financial support as you pursue your education goals.
- Access to Recreational Facilities, Equipment, and support programs.
- Opportunities to compete and play sports.
- Freedom to do as you please.

**Work It Up:** Get an idea of what jobs (MOS or rating) are available in the military with the Military Interest Matcher:  
<http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Something to Think About:** If the "full-on" Active Duty lifestyle doesn't appeal to you, you should consider serving part-time in the Reserve or National Guard. You get similar benefits as Active Duty without a full-time commitment. For more on Reserve and National Guard options, check out  
<http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Did You Know?**  
 There are many full or part-time employment opportunities for you or your spouse on most military installations.

## Section 3: Do You Have What It Takes to Qualify?

### Requirements to Qualify

Before you visit your local recruiter, be sure you meet the minimum qualifications for serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Some qualifications are required by all five services:

- You must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien.
- You must be at least 17 years old (17-year old applicants require parental consent).
- You must (with very few exceptions) have a high school diploma.
- You must pass a physical medical exam.

In addition to the above, the following table lists the Basic Qualifications for each branch of the Armed Forces:

To join the...	You must:
<b>Marines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet exacting physical, mental, and moral standards.</li> <li>• Be between the ages of 17-29. *</li> <li>• Pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (<a href="#">ASVAB</a>) test. <b>(Minimum AFQT Score: 32)</b></li> <li>• Women are eligible to enlist in all occupational fields, with the exception of combat arms specialties: infantry, artillery, and tank and amphibian tractor crew members.</li> </ul>
<b>Navy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be between the ages of 17-34. *</li> <li>• Pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (<a href="#">ASVAB</a>) test. <b>(Minimum AFQT Score: 35)</b></li> <li>• Women are eligible to enlist in all occupational fields, with the exception of serving in the Navy Seals or on submarines.</li> </ul>
<b>Army</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be between the ages of 17-34. *</li> <li>• Have no more than two dependents.</li> <li>• Pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (<a href="#">ASVAB</a>) test. <b>(Minimum AFQT Score: 31)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Air Force</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be between the ages of 17-27. *</li> <li>• Have no more than two dependents.</li> <li>• Pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (<a href="#">ASVAB</a>) test. <b>(Minimum AFQT Score: 40)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Coast Guard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be between the ages of 17-27. *</li> <li>• Have no more than two dependents.</li> <li>• Pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (<a href="#">ASVAB</a>) test. <b>(Minimum AFQT Score: 65)</b></li> <li>• Have a willingness to serve on or around the water.</li> </ul>

\*17-year old applicants require parental consent.

Each service has differences in benefits (enlistment bonus, training, etc.). For a closer look at each service, see <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

## The Enlistment Process

### 1. Talk to a Recruiter:

The first part of the recruiting process will involve getting in touch with a recruiter, and having a first interview. At the interview, the recruiter will get an idea of your interests and strengths, and you can get information on what military service will be like. For an example of how the process works, see this article written by a potential recruit: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

### 2. Know what you're getting into.

Joining the military is ultimately your decision. Make sure you know everything there is to know so you won't have any unpleasant surprises after you've joined. Talk it over with your family. Talk to people who have served in the military. Ask your recruiter to take you to a local military base if possible, so you can ask current servicemembers about their jobs, and experiences, and see first hand what they do.

For tips on how to get the information you need to make your decision, see the Insider's Guide to Joining the Military at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

### 3. The ASVAB

After you've met with your recruiter, done your research, and determined that you'd like to join the military, you will then visit the Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS), where you will take the **Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)**, your Physical Examination, and later be sworn into service. The ASVAB is the most important exam you'll take when it comes to joining the military – more on this in a bit.

### 4. The Medical Examination:

Some medical conditions could disqualify you from enlisting. Although many variables can affect the final decision of the MEPS physician, the following conditions may be grounds for disqualification:

- Surgery of the brain, back, spinal cord, chest, upper abdomen, pelvis, joints, tumors and lumps
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- History of mental health treatment (more than 6 months)
- Skin diseases
- Allergies
- Severe joint or back sprains or pain
- Heart conditions
- Hepatitis, mononucleosis, and AIDS

If you have experienced any of these conditions, you should bring all the medical records and documentation to the MEPS center -- this will help you avoid delays in your recruiting process. For an example of how the medical examination might go, see this article: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Hot Tip:** Don't walk into an interview with your recruiter unprepared – know the questions you should ask. See the Insider's Guide to Joining the Military for more details: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Hot Tip #2:** Even if you think you've made up your mind about which service you want to join, visit more than one recruiting office to get a good idea of what each service has to offer.

#### Did You Know?

Military.com has a discussion board where you can ask questions about the enlistment process, and talk to servicemembers and veterans who have been through it all. Check it out at <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

#### Did You Know?

Taking the ASVAB and the Physical Exam are **not binding**. You won't be committed to joining the military until you have reviewed and signed your enlistment contract, and raised your right hand.

**Hot Tip:** If you are color blind, you should ask your recruiter about the limitations this will make on your possible jobs or specialties. You need to know about these critical limitations long before you make your final decision about joining the service.



## 5. Remember: Be honest.

Think twice before you consider lying or hiding information from your recruiter, giving false information or withholding required information on any recruiting form is a felony, punishable by a \$10,000 fine and three years in prison. If you happen to get away with it long enough to actually enlist, and are caught later, it becomes a "military offense "Which means you can be prosecuted for a violation of the **Uniform Code of Military Justice** (UCMJ). Recruiters are required to run background checks, which always find the truth. Being upfront with your recruiter will ensure that you don't waste your time and theirs.

**Hot Tip:** You may want to join with your buddies, but the recruiter may be able to offer you more incentives (benefits, bonuses, and advanced enlistment rank) if you join alone. Be sure to ask your recruiter about this.

## 6. Make sure you get the best deal:

If you're serious about joining the military, and you're also serious about getting yourself the best possible job (and best possible pay) in the military, then get serious about the **Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)**. The ASVAB test is the single most important aspect of the enlistment process.

The ASVAB test is broken down as follows:

Subtest	Minutes	Questions	Description
General Science	11	25	Measures knowledge of physical and biological sciences
Arithmetic Reasoning	36	30	Measures ability to solve arithmetic word problems
Word Knowledge	11	25	Measures ability to select the correct meaning of words presented in context, and identify synonyms
Paragraph Comprehension	13	15	Measures ability to obtain information from written material
Auto and Shop Information	11	25	Measures knowledge of automobiles, tools, and shop terminology and practices
Mathematics Knowledge	11	35	Measures knowledge of high school mathematics principles
Mechanical Comprehension	19	25	Measures knowledge of mechanical and physical principles, and ability to visualize how illustrated objects work
Electronics Information	9	20	Tests knowledge of electricity and electronics

**Total number of items:** 200

**Test Time:** 134 minutes

**Administrative Time:** 46 minutes

**Total Test Time:** 180 minutes

Your scores in four critical areas -- Arithmetic Reasoning, Word Knowledge, Paragraph Comprehension and Mathematics Knowledge -- count towards your Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) score. The **AFQT** score determines whether you're qualified to enlist in the U.S. military. More importantly, the AFQT determines whether a recruiter can offer you enlistment bonuses, guaranteed jobs, advanced enlistment ranks (enlisting at E-2 or E-3), the Army College fund, or Student Loan Repayment. The higher your AFQT score, the greater your benefits and bonuses. Each service has a different minimum

AFQT score requirement for enlistment -- the minimum qualification scores range from 30-65.

**Note:** Many recruiting offices have become very selective. This means that you may not get to enlist unless you have a high ASVAB/AFQT score (80 or better), or some other attribute that sets you apart from the other prospects.

In short: The higher you score on the ASVAB, the higher you score on the AFQT, and the better your chances of getting the job specialty you want, increased benefits, and enlistment bonuses. Studying and taking practice tests can make the difference of **thousands of dollars in benefits**.

#### **7. Signed, Sealed and Delivered:**

After you have taken your ASVAB and undergone your physical examination, you will receive further counseling on your decision to join the military, and you will indicate the job (or jobs) you are interested in. After all this is taken care of, you'll be presented with your contract to serve the U.S. armed forces. Usually active duty servicemembers sign up for six years of service, after which you can leave (or separate from) the military, or re-enlist.

Once you sign the contract, raise your right hand, and are sworn in, you are legally committed to being in the military – **not before**. For more on this process, see this first-hand article: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Did You Know?** ASVAB results are valid for **two years**. After taking an initial ASVAB Test (any ASVAB test taken in High School doesn't count as an "initial test"), one can retake the ASVAB after 30 days. After the re-test, one must wait at least six months before they can take the test again. The military services use the latest ASVAB scores, not the highest, for service and job qualifications.

**Hot Tip:** Take time to choose your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS or Rating) wisely; the job you choose will directly affect your choice of duty stations, working conditions, time off, lifestyle and more.

#### **Check out these great Military.com resources:**

- \* Military.com Scholarship Finder - <http://www.military.com/scholarships>
- \* Job Search – <http://www.military.com/careers>
- \* Get all the information you need about being in the military – <http://www.military.com/benefits>
- \* Access special military discounts - <http://www.military.com/discount>
- \* Get pay charts and benefits info - <http://www.military.com/pay>
- \* Reconnect using our military Buddy Finder - <http://www.militarylocator.com/>
- \* Veteran Job Board - <http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/>

## Section 4: Survive Military Training

Training is a benefit of service that starts the day you enlist. In fact, you may spend most of your first year in training – and that's just the beginning. In the military you will be given continuous training and opportunities to learn new skills throughout your career.

### First Things First: Basic Training

**Recruit Basic Training**, also referred to as "Boot Camp," is 6 to 13 weeks of extremely intense military training which, depending on the Service Branch, is conducted at one of the several Military Training Centers throughout the U.S., from California to New Jersey.

If you have the courage to succeed, "Boot Camp" will help you develop into a mature, highly disciplined, and fully capable servicemember. During this time, Drill Instructors (DI) will teach you how to care for yourself and others, function as a member of a team and to achieve success together. The Drill Instructor is responsible for ensuring recruits are fully prepared to meet the everyday challenges, from the dangers of the battlefield to the rigors of life at sea. You will be given the tools necessary to perform given your tasks with the efficiency, courage and confidence to succeed in the face of adversity.

Recruit Training includes first aid, water survival skills, marksmanship, tactics and other related topics. Training also focuses on the customs, traditions and history that have made the U.S. Armed Forces respected around the world.

Above all, remember these tips about Basic Training:

- Boot camp is mostly a mind game. It's designed to take the civilian out of you and replace it with a top-notch military servicemember (Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airman). Thousands of young men and women have survived basic before you – just roll with it.
- Keep a good attitude. Remember, EVERYONE gets chewed out in boot camp, even when they have done well. It won't be this way after you graduate Basic.
- Never, ever, make excuses. Unless you are asked to explain yourself, explanations are seen as excuses, so just say "Yes, sir" and take the chewing out.
- Do exactly what you're told to do, when you're told to do it, and how you're told to do it. Don't be inventive.
- If you're "on time," then you're late. Always be where you're supposed to be five minutes early.

**Get Ready:** Boot camp is physically intense. Start getting into shape before you leave. Focus especially on running, pull-ups and pushups. For more tips on how to get into shape before you go, visit fitness expert and Navy SEAL Stew Smith:  
<http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

**Hot Tip:** Bring to Basic Training ONLY what is on the list your recruiter gives you. Anything extra will be confiscated and give the DI an excuse to chew you out.

**Hot Tip:** Read everything you can about the military service you're going into before you enter boot camp – of course, if you've followed this guide, you've already done this! The more you learn beforehand, the less you'll have to learn in boot camp (where you'll be tested).

### Advanced Technical and Specialized Training:

After successfully completing Recruit Training, you will be transformed, both physically and mentally, into a vital part of a highly effective team. Then, and only then, are you awarded the title of Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine.

Depending on the service you have chosen, you will go from boot camp to either Advanced Individual Training (Army), Technical Training (Air Force), Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Training (Marines), or "A" School for

rate training (Navy and Coast Guard) to learn the specialized skills needed to perform your job. Or you may go to your first unit to get on-the-job training while you wait for your "A" School.

Following your technical training you will be sent out to the field fully equipped and highly skilled to do your part to keep our country free. You'll also have learned valuable skills that will get you far in the military and civilian worlds. Where you are stationed is determined by your military occupational specialty (MOS or Rating) and the needs of the service.

**Hot Tip:** Memorize the rank structure and insignias for your particular service (both officer and enlisted) before you leave for boot camp. For more on military insignia, see <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

## Conclusion:

Being a part of the U.S. military means being part of a fighting force, an elite group, and a community. Joining the armed force opens up doors for a satisfying career, pay and education benefits, and much more. Use this guide and do as much research as you can on the services you're interested in, and you'll be on your way to making the right decision and getting the most out of your military career. You can keep up with the latest insider tips, advice from experts and recruiters, and everything else you need to know about the Military Recruiting process at the Recruiting Center: <http://www.military.com/Recruiting>

## About Military.com:

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