

Military and Career Pathways

Una guía para estudiantes y familias

Last reviewed: August 2026. Requirements, benefits, and eligibility rules are set by each branch and change over time. Confirm with an official recruiter or at va.gov before deciding. / Última revisión: agosto de 2026. Confirme con un reclutador oficial o en va.gov antes de decidir.

Military service is a real option after high school. It can come with training, a paycheck, housing, healthcare, and education benefits.

El servicio militar es una opción real después de la preparatoria. Puede traer capacitación, un salario, vivienda, seguro médico y beneficios educativos.

This guide explains the main routes in, what each generally requires, and what to ask before deciding. Each branch sets its own standards, so details vary.

Esta guía explica las rutas principales, lo que cada una requiere en general, y qué preguntar antes de decidir. Cada rama fija sus propios estándares, así que los detalles varían.

Verify before deciding / Verifique antes de decidir

Everything in this guide is a starting point, not a promise. Requirements, benefits, and eligibility change by branch and by service date.

A recruiter can tell you what a branch offers. Someone who served can tell you what it was like. Both conversations are worth having, and they are different conversations.

Todo en esta guía es un punto de partida, no una promesa. Un reclutador le puede decir lo que ofrece una rama. Alguien que sirvió le puede decir cómo fue. Valen la pena las dos conversaciones, y son distintas.

1. Four routes into service / Cuatro rutas al servicio

These are four common paths, not the only ones. Standards, timelines, and requirements vary by branch.

Estas son cuatro rutas comunes, no las únicas. Los estándares, plazos y requisitos varían según la rama.

ROTC: college first, commission at the end

Attend college full time while training to become an officer. Graduate with a degree and a commission.

Asista a la universidad a tiempo completo mientras se entrena para ser oficial. Se gradúa con un título y un nombramiento.

- Enroll at a college with an Army, Navy and Marine Corps, Air Force, or Space Force ROTC program
- Coursework and physical training alongside regular classes
- Scholarships may cover up to all tuition and fees depending on the program and scholarship level, plus a monthly stipend
- Applications commonly open in junior or senior year of high school. Deadlines vary by branch and by school, and they come earlier than enlistment.

WORTH LOOKING AT IF

- The student wants a degree and military service
- Leadership and management roles are appealing
- Paying for college is part of the question

Enlisted service: full time, straight after high school

Join after high school. Pay, housing, healthcare, and job training generally begin once enlistment, processing, and required training are complete, plus education benefits to use later.

Únase después de la preparatoria. El salario, la vivienda, el seguro médico y la capacitación generalmente comienzan al completar el alistamiento, el procesamiento y la capacitación requerida.

- Roughly 8 to 12 weeks of basic training, varying by branch
- Assigned a specific job or skill area
- Active duty commitments are commonly four years. Ask for the total obligation, since time in the reserves often follows.
- Six branches: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

WORTH RESEARCHING BEFORE COMMITTING

- Each branch has different jobs, culture, and deployment patterns
- Whether a job is written into the contract or only discussed

National Guard and Reserves: part time, close to home

Serve part time, commonly about one weekend a month and two weeks a year, while living and working in your community.

Sirva a tiempo parcial, comúnmente un fin de semana al mes y dos semanas al año, mientras vive y trabaja en su comunidad.

- Texas National Guard members may qualify for the Hazlewood Act, which can exempt up to 150 credit hours of tuition at Texas public colleges
- Eligibility is not automatic. It depends on Texas residency, service history, and current policy

WORTH LOOKING AT IF

- Staying close to home matters
- Education benefits are wanted without a full time commitment
- Emergency response or state level roles are appealing

Officer Candidate School: after a degree

The route to becoming an officer for college graduates who did not do ROTC. Enlist, complete OCS, receive a commission.

La ruta para ser oficial para quienes ya tienen un título y no hicieron ROTC. Se alista, completa OCS, y recibe un nombramiento.

- Requires a bachelor's degree in any major
- Age, fitness, medical, and background requirements vary by branch
- Program length commonly runs 10 to 17 weeks, varying by branch

2. Career fields by branch / Campos profesionales por rama

Each branch trains for its own mission, so available jobs differ. These are examples, not a complete list. Exact jobs depend on recruiting needs, qualifications, and current openings.

Cada rama entrena para su propia misión, así que los empleos varían. Estos son ejemplos, no una lista completa.

- Army: infantry and combat arms, aviation, cyber and signal, military police, intelligence, medical, engineering and construction, logistics
- Navy: naval aviation, nuclear power and submarines, medical, cryptology and intelligence, special warfare, logistics and supply
- Marine Corps: infantry, intelligence and communications, aviation maintenance, logistics, military police, combat engineering

- Air Force: aviation and flight, cyber and intelligence, maintenance and repair, healthcare, science and engineering, security forces
- Space Force: space operations, intelligence, cyber operations, engineering, acquisitions and contracting
- Coast Guard: deck and weapons, engineering, aviation, maritime law enforcement and search and rescue, administration and science

3. Where military training meets civilian work / Dónde se conecta con el trabajo civil

Every military job builds transferable skills. Some fields line up with civilian occupations more directly than others. Civilian hiring still depends on credentials and licensing.

Todo empleo militar desarrolla habilidades transferibles. Algunos campos se alinean más directamente con carreras civiles. La contratación civil también depende de credenciales y licencias.

- Cybersecurity and IT. Cyber and IT roles often align with information security analyst and network administrator work. Information security analysts are projected to grow 29 percent from 2024 to 2034, the fastest growing computer occupation.
- Healthcare. Combat medics and corpsmen often qualify for EMT or paramedic roles, and with more schooling can pursue nursing or physician assistant paths. Nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives, and nurse practitioners are projected to grow 35 percent from 2024 to 2034.
- Logistics and supply chain. Supply and logistics roles across every branch align closely with supply chain coordinator and operations work.
- Skilled trades. Construction, electrical, and mechanical training can lead to licensed trade work, sometimes with credit toward apprenticeship hours.
- Law enforcement and security. Military police and security forces roles align with civilian police work and corporate security.
- Leadership and operations. Roles without a direct civilian match still build leadership and team management experience.
- *Ciberseguridad y TI, atención médica, logística, oficios especializados, aplicación de la ley, y liderazgo y operaciones.*

Growth figures, and what they mean / Cifras de crecimiento

Both projections above are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook and cover 2024 to 2034. They describe a whole occupation nationally. They are not a promise about any one person, and BLS republishes them every two years.

Las dos proyecciones vienen de la Occupational Outlook Handbook de la Oficina de Estadísticas Laborales de EE. UU. y cubren de 2024 a 2034. Describen una ocupación a nivel nacional. No son una promesa sobre ninguna persona.

Free tool / Herramienta gratuita

The O*NET Military Crosswalk at ononline.org/crosswalk/MOC lets a student enter their exact military job code and get a list of matching civilian careers, the education each requires, and typical pay.

*El O*NET Military Crosswalk permite buscar el código exacto del empleo militar y obtener una lista de carreras civiles equivalentes, la educación que requieren y el salario típico.*

4. Paying for school / Pagar la escuela

While serving: Tuition Assistance

The Department of Defense pays up to \$250 per semester credit hour, capped at \$4,500 per fiscal year, which runs October through September. It pays tuition only. Books, supplies, and in most branches school fees are not covered.

El Departamento de Defensa paga hasta \$250 por hora crédito, con un tope de \$4,500 por año fiscal, que va de octubre a septiembre. Paga solo la colegiatura. No cubre libros, materiales, ni en la mayoría de las ramas las cuotas escolares.

The Department of Defense reviews these caps every year, and each branch sets its own credit hour limits and eligibility rules. Confirm current figures with the education office.

El Departamento de Defensa revisa estos topes cada año, y cada rama fija sus propios límites de horas y reglas de elegibilidad. Confirme las cifras actuales con la oficina de educación.

After serving: education benefits

Veterans who complete their service obligation may qualify for benefits covering college, trade school, and certificate programs. Benefit levels depend on time served and other factors. This is a summary, not a guarantee.

Los veteranos que completan su obligación de servicio podrían calificar para beneficios que cubren universidad, escuela de oficios y programas de certificado. El nivel depende del tiempo de servicio y otros factores. Este es un resumen, no una garantía.

POST-9/11 GI BILL, CHAPTER 33

- May cover up to all tuition and fees at public in state schools, depending on length of service
- Monthly housing allowance and a book and supply stipend, where eligible
- Up to 36 months of benefits, roughly four academic years, for those fully eligible
- May be transferable to a spouse or child if eligibility and service commitments are met

MONTGOMERY GI BILL, CHAPTER 30

- Monthly stipend for education, with the amount depending on enrollment and training type
- Requires a \$1,200 contribution during service to activate

VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT, CHAPTER 31

- For veterans with a service connected disability
- Covers education, training, and employment services

Rates, eligibility, and program details change. Verify current figures at va.gov before deciding.

Las tasas, la elegibilidad y los detalles cambian. Verifique las cifras actuales en va.gov antes de decidir.

One thing people mix up

Selective Service registration is a federal requirement for most men aged 18 to 25. Check the current rules at sss.gov. It is a separate matter from financial aid eligibility. Do not let anyone tell you the two are the same thing.

El registro con Selective Service es un requisito federal para la mayoría de los hombres de 18 a 25 años. Verifique las reglas vigentes en sss.gov. Es un asunto aparte de la elegibilidad para ayuda financiera. No deje que nadie le diga que son lo mismo.

5. Questions to ask before deciding / Preguntas antes de decidir

- What job or career am I interested in, and does the military train for it?
- Am I ready for a multi year commitment right after high school, or do I want college first?
- What branch fits what I want and how I work?
- What happens to my education if I enlist, and what benefits would I have?
- What is the total obligation, active duty plus reserve?
- How would deployment affect my family and my plans?
- What do veterans in my community say about their experience?

- Have I spoken with an official recruiter and with a veteran or service member I trust?
- ¿Qué trabajo me interesa y el ejército capacita en eso? ¿Estoy listo para un compromiso de varios años? ¿Cuál es la obligación total? ¿He hablado con un reclutador oficial y con un veterano de confianza?

6. Write down what you are told / Anote lo que le digan

An enlistment contract lasts years and is usually signed by someone who just turned 18, after conversations nobody wrote down. A job, a school seat, or a bonus counts when it appears in the paperwork. Anything else is a conversation.

Un contrato de alistamiento dura años y normalmente lo firma alguien que acaba de cumplir 18, después de conversaciones que nadie anotó. Un trabajo, un lugar en una escuela o un bono cuentan cuando aparecen en los papeles. Todo lo demás es una conversación.

Use the workbook / Use el cuaderno

Before You Sign is a free Anchored Pathways workbook for recording what a recruiter told you, who told you, on what date, and whether it is in the contract or only spoken.

To put military service next to a college, a trade program, or a job and ask all of them the same questions, use Before You Say Yes.

Antes de Firmar es un cuaderno gratuito para anotar lo que le dijo un reclutador, quién se lo dijo, en qué fecha, y si está en el contrato o solo de palabra. Para comparar el servicio militar con otras opciones, use Antes de Decir Que Sí.

When you get stuck / Cuando tenga dudas

AP Clínica

Thursdays, 5:15 to 7:45 PM

East Harris County Activity Center, 7340 Spencer Hwy, Pasadena, TX 77505

Reserve your spot. Time slots are 30 minutes. Free, in English and Spanish.

Or request a private meeting at anchoredpathways.org

Jueves, 5:15 a 7:45 PM. Reserve su espacio. Las citas son de 30 minutos. Gratis, en inglés y español. O solicite una reunión privada en anchoredpathways.org

Anchored Pathways does not recruit for any branch and does not receive anything from any branch. We help families ask questions and keep their own records. / Anchored Pathways no recluta para ninguna rama y no recibe nada de ninguna rama.