

Enlisting in the Military

Enlisted members of the Military have important, hands-on roles that often include mechanical, transportation, infantry, office professions and more. Although the process of enlisting is an experience unique to every individual, joining often follows a similar road map of required steps and rewarding milestones.

PLEASE NOTE:

- ✓ With very few exceptions, a high school diploma is required to enlist.
- ✓ This timeline does not represent all pathways or guarantee milestone timing.

START HERE

MILESTONE
1

CONDUCTING RESEARCH ABOUT JOINING THE MILITARY

When: Anytime after sophomore year of high school

- ✓ Learn about the Service branches and the opportunities they offer.
- ✓ Review enlistment criteria, as they vary for each branch and component.
- ✓ Become familiar with benefits, pay, service commitment, deployment, etc.
- ✓ Discuss interests with parents, guardians and/or counselors

MILESTONE
3

PREPARING FOR THE ARMED SERVICES VOCATIONAL APTITUDE BATTERY (ASVAB) TEST

When: While the medical prescreening is reviewed, which may take up to a few weeks

- ✓ Study for the ASVAB, which comprises 10 tests that measure verbal, math, science and technical, and spatial knowledge and abilities.

MILESTONE
5

RECEIVING ORDERS AND ATTENDING BASIC TRAINING

When: A few weeks after taking the Oath of Enlistment

- ✓ Army — Basic Training: 10 weeks duration
- ✓ Marine Corps — Boot Camp: 13 weeks duration
- ✓ Navy — Recruit Training: 9 weeks duration
- ✓ Air Force — Basic Military Training: 7.5 weeks duration
- ✓ Coast Guard — Basic Training: 8 weeks duration
- ✓ Space Force — Basic Training: 7.5 weeks duration

MILESTONE
2

CONTACTING RECRUITER(S) AND/OR SCHEDULING A MEETING(S)

When: Anytime after sophomore year of high school

- ✓ Ask questions about the Service branches and their components.
- ✓ Share interests and ask which branch or role might be a good fit.
- ✓ Complete a medical prescreening form and confirm joining eligibility; if there are no disqualifying factors, make an appointment at a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS).

MILESTONE
4

ATTENDING A MULTIDAY, MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING STATION (MEPS)

When: After MEPS prescreening is approved

Day 1:

- ✓ Take the ASVAB test.

Day 2:

- ✓ Complete a drug test, medical exam, fitness tests, hearing and eye test, weight and measurements, and security clearance interview.
- ✓ Meet with counselors to understand enlistment options and service contract, and select a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) (i.e., "military job").
- ✓ Take the Oath of Enlistment.
- ✓ Enroll in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) if joining as an active-duty member and a desired role is unavailable. Applicants will start Basic Training at a later date.

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MILESTONE
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GRADUATING BASIC TRAINING

- ✓ Celebrate a momentous occasion — family members may be able to virtually attend due to current pandemic restrictions.
- ✓ Attain first enlisted military rank, E-1.
- ✓ Receive instructions on next steps via out processing.

MILESTONE
8



TAKING LEAVE

- ✓ 10 days of leave is often granted before service members report to their first duty station.

MILESTONE
10



RECEIVING ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND CONTINUING TO GROW

When: Ongoing

- ✓ Apply and expand upon specialized skills while performing duties.
- ✓ Achieve higher ranks during military service — promotions are largely based on time in service and/or time in pay grade, and a clean track record during service.

MILESTONE
7



ATTENDING ADVANCED TRAINING

When: Following Basic Training

- ✓ Report to Advanced Individual Training (AIT) school, technical training school or school of infantry (depending on Service branch).
- ✓ Specialize in a chosen military role — training can range from four to 52 weeks, depending on the role.
- ✓ Receive orders of what and where your unit assignment will be.

Note: After completing AIT, many service members attain another promotion to rank E-2 or higher.

MILESTONE
9

REPORTING TO A FIRST DUTY STATION

- ✓ Relocate, if necessary, to a unit assignment; here service members will perform the duties they have been trained in.
- ✓ Reserve and National Guard service members will return home and report to their units for weekend drills and training.



Although this guide represents some early milestones that enlisted service members may encounter, it offers only a small glimpse of what it's like to join the Military. For a more complete picture of career opportunities, military life, education, benefits and more, visit [TodaysMilitary.com](https://www.TodaysMilitary.com)