

Thinking About Joining The Military? - Please Read This First!

Joining the military is a monumental lifetime decision, one that should not be taken lightly in any way, shape, or form. Before you decide to join the military, make sure you have as much factual information as possible, not just what a military recruiter tells you!

THIS IS IMPORTANT! - Before enlisting, you should be able to honestly answer some basic questions, and have realistic expectations about military life, such as...

Can I, as a person, follow orders without questioning them?

Following orders is a basic tenant in the military for some very good reasons. In a planned military action, to have individuals "running their own show" can be disastrous, resulting in people unnecessarily losing their lives. With that in mind you will be expected to follow orders without questioning them. Also, keep in mind that all military personnel (starting from the moment you raise your hand and enlist) are governed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), as well as local, state and national laws). For a good introduction on the UCMJ, visit <https://militarybenefits.info/uniform-code-of-military-justice>.

Can I ever refuse an order?

Yes, if it is an order that is criminal in nature. But when are things "criminal"? One scenario would be you are ordered to attack unarmed civilians or you are told to torture a person. In these situations, you are expected to refuse an unlawful order. At the same time, refusing to follow what you believed to be an unlawful order, while it is the right thing to do, can make you, in the eyes of many in the military culture, a traitor.

Am I able to kill a person, or many people, in the line of duty?

Depending on your assignment, you may have to kill other human beings, ranging from a small number in an infantry unit to hundreds of thousands if you are part of a team launching nuclear missiles.

Am I prepared to deal with possible life-long mental and physical problems due to military service?

- Sexual harassment and abuse in the military – Sexual abuse and harassment in the military continues to be a major problem in the military. The Defense Department's fiscal year 2019 report on sexual assault in the military said there were 7,825 sexual assault reports involving service members as victims or subjects, a 3% increase compared to 2018. Most military sexual assaults happen between service members who work or live nearby, and "when unit climates are tolerant of other forms of misconduct, risk of sexual assault increases," the report states. For active duty women, those who experience sexual harassment had a three times greater risk of sexual assault than those who did not, according to the report.
- Suicides - Suicide is the second leading cause of death for active-duty personnel in the U.S. military. The most common individual stressors identified for both military suicide decedents and military suicide attempts were relationship problems, administrative/legal issues and workplace difficulties. Other medical conditions that are associated with an increased risk for suicide include traumatic brain injury (TBI), chronic pain, and sleep disorders. The suicide rate for veterans is 1.5 times higher than that of the general population. Comparing the rate among female veterans to non-Veteran adult women, the rate is 2.5 times higher. About 20 veterans commit suicide a day.
- Work related health problems of active duty military personnel – While on active duty, military personnel can be subject to encountering infectious diseases, non-battle injuries, psychological stress, toxic industrial chemicals, chemical weapons, and biological weapons (more on this at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK225082/>).

Am I guaranteed, before I enlist, a certain job or duty location?

While you may put in preferences, and the military will attempt to honor them, the actual enlistment contract ([DD Form 4, Enlistment/Reenlistment Document – Armed Forces of the United States](#)), Section 9.b. states "Laws and regulations that govern military personnel may change without notice to me. Such changes may affect my status, pay, allowances, benefits, and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment/reenlistment document." So in other words, the military can change pretty much anything they want, at any time, of what is in the enlistment contract.

Do I know how long I have to serve for once enlisting?

The military enlistment document (form DD4) points out in "Agreements" that you must serve a minimum of 8 years "unless I am sooner discharged or otherwise extended by the appropriate authority". Depending on the situation, you may be required to involuntarily serve more than 8 years (i.e. a "[Stop Loss extension](#)").

I heard that if I don't like the military, I can get out while still in during initial training ("boot camp")

Once you raise your hand and take the enlistment oath, you are considered in the military. There is no trial period.

I have a drug and/or alcohol dependency problem, and heard the military can cure me of these problems

If you have drug or alcohol problems, work these out BEFORE you enlist. Once in the military, drug/alcohol problems can result in severe punishment and a dishonorable discharge, which will follow you for the rest of your life.

Suggested Web Based Resources For Information About The Military Are As Follows...

Project YANO (Youth And Non-Military Opportunities)

Information about military enlistments, the delayed entry program and resources for alternatives to the military.

<http://www.projectyano.org>

Center On Conscience And War

Information on Selective Service registration, the draft, and conscientious objector status.

<http://www.centeronconscience.org>

GI Rights Hotline - 800.394.9544 (24 hours)

Resource for people already in the military seeking conscientious objector status, delayed enlistment problems, or release from service.

<http://girightshotline.org>

American Friends Service Committee - Youth and Militarism Resources

Basic information about military enlistments and what questions you should have answered.

https://www.afsc.org/r_unless_I_am_sooner_discharged_or_otherwise_extended_by_the_appropriate_authority_unless_I_am_sooner_discharged_or_otherwise_extended_by_the_appropriate_authority_resource/counter-recruitment

Don't Want High School Student Contact Information Given To Military Recruiters?

First under the federal "No Child Left Behind" Act, and now under the federal "Every Student Succeeds Act", high schools are required to provide military recruiters with junior and senior student contact data. Students or parents can mandate that the information is not given out to recruiters, but often this "opt-out" provision is very confusing or hard to find, with different county school boards having different procedures.

It is the goal of Veterans for Peace Chapter 74 to have a standard "opt-out" form at all county high schools, and at the same time fully educating students and parents that they have the right to keep contact information private from military recruiters. To download a PDF "opt-out" form, which when filled out and delivered to a high school administration office, will by law prevent recruiters from contacting a student, [click here](#).

Change Your Mind And Want To Get Out Of The Delayed Entry Program (DEP)?

VFP Chapters have been urged to help spread the following message about the DEP, especially to high school students. In short, you are NOT in the military until you raise your hand and take the enlistment oath...

If you signed up for the Delayed Entry Program DEP (or the Army's "Future Soldiers Training Program") and then changed your mind, watch out for recruiters who say you can't get out of it, or that you must report to boot camp to be released. Neither is true. To quit the DEP, there are simple steps you should take before your date to report for basic training. Don't expect your recruiter to help you, and you should NOT go to a military base if you are told to report there to get released.

For free help getting out of the DEP, first talk to a counselor by contacting the GI Rights Hotline, (877) 447-4487 and leave a message that you want to get out of the Delayed Entry Program with your name and contact phone number and you will be called back. If you need to talk about your situation quickly, call the Military Law Task Force @ 619-463-2369 and talk to a counselor ASAP. Find out more about the Delayed Entry Program at <https://nnomy.org/depjustdontgo>.