

What Military Options Are Available?

From Christine M. Hand Gonzalez, Ed.D. at College-Path.com

Every year thousands of young men and women make the choice to serve their country. They enjoy a military career by enlisting in one of the following branches:

[Air Force](#), [Army](#), [Coast Guard](#), [Marines](#), [Navy](#), [US Merchant Marine Academy](#), and [National Guard](#).

Some individuals will apply directly to a four-year service academy such as U.S. Military Academy-West Point, New York; U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the Air Force Academy in Denver, Colorado; and the Coast Guard Academy in Groton, Connecticut. Completing your education at one of these programs will earn you a bachelor's degree, commissioned reserve officer status, and a commitment to the military for a number of years. Another option is applying to a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship program at a college. These are two, three, and four-year scholarship programs which help you decide which direction you would like to pursue ([ROTC College Profiles](#)). You graduate with a degree and serve in the U.S. Military as a commissioned Officer. Your commitment for service will range from 2-5 years depending on the time your scholarship was in effect during your college education.

Thinking about Enlisting?

Questions a student needs to ask himself or herself include, "Is the military right for me?" and "In which branch do I have the most interest?" Are you interested in travel, job security, technical training, or money for college or a good paying job? Finding out the facts about each of your options is the next step.

Contact your local recruiter and ask about:

- the length of enlistment
- advanced pay grade
- length and type of training
- enlistment bonuses
- other pay and allowance; ability to pursue higher education
- taking the [ASVAB](#) – a battery of tests that will help you identify a vocation

There are several ways to pay for your education if you choose this career path. See the following websites:

Get started here – [Chapter 33 GI Bill Education Benefits](#) and [Military.com Scholarships Finder](#)

How to Apply to the Military Service Academies

The mission of the U.S. service academies and private military institutions is to provide instruction and experience to all cadets so that they graduate with the knowledge and character essential to leadership and the motivation to become career officers in the U.S. military.

Check Your Eligibility

An individual must be:

- A citizen of the United States
- Of good moral character
- Unmarried with no dependents
- At least 17, but less than 23 years of age by July 1 of the year you would enter.

How Selections Are Decided

Factors that are important include a well-rounded program of leadership, academic, and athletic preparation. A candidate must consider the characteristics of dedication; desire to serve others, ability to accept discipline, sense of duty, and morality, and the enjoyment of challenge in deciding if an individual wants to pursue an Academy education.

Choices of Military Academies

Choices include the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, and the US Merchant Marine Academy. Visit to get a feel for each institution and gather data by talking to cadets or midshipmen about their experiences.

Academic Preparation Includes

A young person who has the desire to attend one of the service academies must take a college preparatory curriculum in high school that stresses English and Math. Also, they should plan on taking the ACT and SAT test including the Writing section as early as possible and more than once.

Be Physically Prepared

During the admissions process prospective cadets will be given the Candidate Fitness Assessment. The purpose of these tests is to evaluate a candidate's upper body strength and endurance. Check with each academy on their specific requirements for the Candidate Fitness Assessment. Complete a medical examination. The medical exam is given by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB).

General Information

The minimum SAT scores for the academies are 500 verbal and 500 math. Virtually all cadets are from the top 25% of their high school class. See each academy's website for more specific information about average test scores for entering class.

How to Apply

- Download the application or ask for one to be mailed to your home address during the spring of the junior year in high school.
- Apply by obtaining an official nomination to qualify for admission to an academy. Those qualified to nominate candidates include the U.S. Vice President, U.S. Representatives, and U.S. Senators (a Congressional nomination is not needed for the Coast Guard Academy). Nominations are based on merit, not political connections. It is possible to receive a nomination from more than one Academy, but you may be asked for preference by your Congressperson.
- The interview with Congressman will focus on goals and qualifications.
- Be aware of deadlines.

The Application Process for Private Military Academies

Complete an online or paper application; send your transcripts for the last four years of academic work submitted; request teachers and/or counselor to submit recommendation forms, check to see if particular teachers need to send evaluations such as math and English teachers; send standardized tests to institutions; and be sure to send other documentation such as immunization records and birth certificates. List of private military academies with 4-year programs: The Citadel; The Military College of South Carolina; Mary Baldwin College; North Georgia College and State University; Norwich University; Texas A&M University; Virginia Military Institute; and Virginia Tech.