**Military**

**Enlisted Personnel**

Enlisted personnel are the main workforce of the military. They work in office, mechanical, transportation, and combat positions. They include service members in pay grades E-1 through E-9. Most service members are in grades E-3, E-4, and E-5.

You will be promoted on a regular basis if you meet the requirements to advance. In higher grades, promotions are more competitive and may require additional training to take on greater responsibility. Promotions are not automatic in the military. You must earn them.

Grades E-5 and above are noncommissioned officers (NCOs). They are still enlisted, but have greater responsibility for the welfare and tasks of the men and women under their leadership. NCOs are often called the “backbone” of the military for their proficiency and leadership abilities.

First enlistment contracts last 8 years. You may serve on active duty for 2 to 4 years, and then in the Reserves for the remainder of your contract. About 38% of enlistees choose to remain in the military until retirement. Enlisted personnel can retire after serving for 20 years.

The military will teach you everything you need to know to do your job after you enlist. But you must earn a high school diploma or equivalent first.

**Things to Consider**

For many people, the benefits of serving the armed forces outweigh the negative aspects. Service members are paid well, their families are taken care of, and they are part of a large community. They also gain valuable life experience, including:

* The ability to lead
* Maturity, by facing challenges and making decisions that have consequences
* Organizational skills
* Self-management

**War & Combat**

The military exists to defend our nation, our allies, and our interests. But Congress and the President decide when to go to war. Service members do not get to choose whether to fight or not. If you join, you will likely be sent into combat, regardless of your specialty. There are no safe jobs in modern wars.

**No "Period of Adjustment"**

Once you leave for basic training, there is no turning back. You are in the military for 8 years whether you like it or not. You may be able to serve a few years on active duty and then transfer into the Reserve. However, the military can call you to active service at anytime until your contract is complete. The military can also extend your contract during war. As the saying in the military goes, "the quickest way out is to finish your contract."

**Benefits**

Military benefits are nearly unmatched in the civilian world. Most benefits are offered by every branch of the military, including Reserve and National Guard units. Spouses and family members are eligible for most benefits. Benefits include:

* Competitive pay and tax breaks
* 30 days paid vacation per year
* Full health care
* Legal assistance
* Recreational programs
* Military store privileges
* Tuition assistance for college education
* Free space-available travel
* Life insurance
* Retirement pay and benefits
* Veterans' benefits
* Hiring preference for veterans
* Discount programs from civilian companies

**The ASVAB**

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is the military's way of assessing what jobs you may be good at. It covers a wide range of abilities beyond just reading and math. Although it is designed to help you choose a military occupation, it is a great way to discover your natural abilities and what civilian careers you may be good at. Here are a few facts about the ASVAB:

* Taking the ASVAB is not a commitment to enlist.
* Everyone interested in enlisting must take the ASVAB. Your score determines which branches of service and jobs you can enlist in.
* Each enlisted occupation requires a minimum score. The score represents the skills needed to perform a particular job.
* Minimum scores vary from service to service, and from job to job.
* You may take the test in High School, at a Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS), or at a Military Examining Team Site (METS).
* You can take the ASVAB more than once, but only your most recent score is valid. Your score is good for 2 years.
* If you want to join as an officer, you do not have to take the ASVAB. However, it is a great way to evaluate your abilities.

**About the Test**

It is a multiple-choice timed test and takes about three hours to complete. The test is divided into 8 sections:

* General Science
* Arithmetic Reasoning
* Word Knowledge
* Paragraph Comprehension
* Mathematics Knowledge
* Electronics Information
* Auto and Shop Information
* Mechanical Comprehension

Scores in each of these sections are combined into 3 Career Exploration Scores: Verbal, Math, Science and Technical. All of your scores are combined to determine your Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) Score. This is the score recruiters will use to determine what jobs you can enlist in.

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| ****Military Requirements for Minimum ASVAB Score**** | | |
| **Military Branch** | **High School Diploma** | **GED** |
| Air Force | 36 | 65 |
| Army | 31 | 50 |
| Coast Guard | 40 | 50 |
| Marine Corps | 32 | 50 |
| National Guard | 31 | 50 |
| Navy | 35 | 50 |