

# What's Next?

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## So You Think You Might Want to Join the Military?

**J**oining the military is a serious decision. As with any contract, be sure you know what you're getting into. The military is under a lot of pressure to recruit, and sometimes recruiters may not give you all the facts. See next section "Truth and Myth about Joining the Military."

We've also included a fact sheet on the results of military training and a list of questions you should ask yourself to help you decide if the military is the right choice for you. Remember: unlike jobs, internships, or college, joining the military can mean giving up your independence for many years.

If you decide to enlist, make sure you check out the advice of Sgt. Abe the Honest Recruiter (a document prepared by Quaker House) and read the fine print in the enlistment agreement *before you sign on the dotted line!* (go to [www.quakerhouse.org/documents/enlist.html](http://www.quakerhouse.org/documents/enlist.html)) Your parents may also want to read Sergeant Abe's "Letter to Parents." ([www.quakerhouse.org/documents/toparents.html](http://www.quakerhouse.org/documents/toparents.html)) Or simply go to the Quaker House website and explore: [www.quakerhouse.com](http://www.quakerhouse.com).

- ◆ Truth and Myth About Joining the Military
- ◆ Questions to Ask When Considering Enlisting

Several organizations like the American Friends Service Committee ([www.AFSC.org](http://www.AFSC.org)), Center on Conscience and War ([www.centeronconscience.org](http://www.centeronconscience.org)), the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors ([www.objector.org](http://www.objector.org)), Youth for Peace ([www.youth4peace.org](http://www.youth4peace.org)), and Project Yano ([www.projectyano.org](http://www.projectyano.org)) provide information about questions to ask recruiters. Check out these websites for more information and links to other resources.



***Know your real choices before you sign up.***

# **Truth and Myth About Joining the Military (See CCCO\*)**

**O**ur Vice President, Dick Cheney, when he was Secretary of Defense, said, “The reason to have a military is to be prepared to fight and win wars . . . it’s not a jobs program.” (see **CCCO\*** at [www.objector.org/jrotc/oped.html](http://www.objector.org/jrotc/oped.html))

Many people believe that joining the military is a way to get jobs training or money for college. Some veterans say that their experience in the military, or the college benefits that they were able to get, was helpful to them. But the reality for most veterans is far different. The military spends \$1.9 billion each year on recruiting, and the military’s ads project an image of opportunity in the military that does not withstand sober analysis.

Here’s some recruiting mis-information that you need to know about.

## **Length of Service**

The first recruiting myth is **how long you will serve**. Even if you only signed up for two years, the military regards you as part of the Individual Ready Reserve, and therefore subject to call-up for **eight years** from the date of your arrival at basic training. Talk to those who were deployed to the Persian Gulf and the Iraq war long after they thought their commitment had ended!

## **Money for College (see [www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html](http://www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html))**

“The primary job of the military is not to help you pay for school. **Two-thirds of all recruits never get any college funding from the military.** Only about 15 percent graduate with a four-year degree.

What about going to school while you’re in the military? Many GIs report that military life leaves them too busy and exhausted—and doesn’t really make time for them to go to classes.”

**\*** From CCCO Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors  
[www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/myths.html](http://www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/myths.html)  
See also AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) website:  
[www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm)

## **Job Skills Training**

### **Fact: Veterans Earn Less than Non-Veterans.**

The best measure of the likely economic impact of joining the military is knowing if veterans earn, on average, more or less than comparable non-veterans. In an "overview of 14 studies which analyzed this question, Stephen R. Barley of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell U. found that the average post-Vietnam War-era veteran will earn between 11 percent (Crane and Wise, 1987) and 19 percent (Rosen and Taubman, 1982) *less* than non-veterans from comparable socioeconomic backgrounds. According to a 1990 study by Bryant and Wilhite study, the average veteran will earn \$.85 less per hour (about \$1,700 less per year) than non-veteran peers." (see [www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html](http://www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html))

### **Fact: Military Training Is Primarily for Military Jobs.**

"Bryant and Wilhite also found that veterans averaged only 1.78 months of training during 31 months of active duty. Mangum and Ball, Ohio State researchers who received funding from the military, found that only 12 percent of male veterans and 6 percent of female veterans surveyed made any use of skills learned in the military in their later civilian jobs. Barley concluded: 'The evidence on the probability of finding a job in one's chosen occupation strongly suggests that, all else being equal, young people should look to sources of training other than the military if they wish to optimize their careers.'" (same site)

## **Economic Opportunity?**

"*Army Times* reports that over 50,000 unemployed veterans are on the waiting list for the military's "retraining" program. The Veterans Administration estimates that one-third of homeless people are veterans." (same site)

## **Travel, Adventure, and Discipline**

"People often talk about a skill that you are supposed to learn in the military: discipline. It's something that is valued highly. But what kind of discipline will you learn? Do you want to learn how to make decisions on your own or learn how to follow someone else's orders? The military takes care of every detail, telling you where, when, and how to do everything. Maybe that's the kind of discipline you think you need. But it isn't the kind of discipline most of us need in the real world. We need to think on our own and be responsible for making our own decisions." (same site)

## Who Goes Into the Military?

"It's a form of economic discrimination, sometimes called economic conscription or an economic draft, that forces lower income people into the military in order to earn a living, try to learn a trade, or get money for their education. The American Council on Education even attributes a drop in black college enrollment to more aggressive military recruiting in the 1980s. The worst thing is that often those who feel they must go into the military to learn a trade, or earn money for school, don't even get what they believe they were promised!" (same site)

For additional information about military recruitment, check out CCCO's **Third World Outreach Program** at [www.objector.org](http://www.objector.org).

## War and Killing

"Above all else, **the military is an institution with one overriding purpose: to prepare for and fight wars.** You *literally* sign your life over to the military. Some who joined the military before the Gulf War didn't fully realize this until they were faced with an actual war in Afghanistan or Iraq. Don't make the same mistake they made. If you're going to join the military, be prepared to fight a war, even a war you may not agree with. It could be a war we "lose," as in Vietnam. Or, it could be a war we "win," as in Kuwait. Either way, people are killed, and you are likely to be trained to kill them. You can find US veterans who can't forget some of the awful things they saw and had to do during war. Is that the kind of risk you want to take to finance your college education?" (see same website: [www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html](http://www.objector.org/before-you-enlist/mths.html))



# Questions to Ask When Considering Enlisting

**From *Do You Know Enough To Enlist?* (by AFSC\*)**

## **Will Enlistment Help Me Achieve My Goals?**

“Many people enlist hoping to get job training and work experience. But you may find that military enlistment will hurt, rather than help, your search for a good job later. Going into the services also may not be the best or only way to get money for college or vocational training.

Before you decide to enlist, look carefully at what you’ll actually be doing—not just at your job title. You may find that your job isn’t what you thought it would be.

- The military might not give you the job training and work experience you expect. Jobs with fancy sounding titles often are low-skill and non-technical.
- Many military jobs are so different from civilian jobs that you may not be able to use your training after you leave the military, or you may have to be re-trained.
- The military is not required to keep you full time in the job for which you trained or for the entire time you are in the military.

The military’s money for education plan (New GI Bill) is not as easy to use as it sounds. It is only after you leave the military that you find out whether you’ve met all of the requirements. The largest amount of money mentioned in the ads—\$50,000—is offered only to those GIs who take jobs the military has a hard time filling.”

## **Am I Trying to Escape My Own Problems?**

“If you’re thinking about joining the armed forces to get out of a bad personal or family situation, don’t rush to enlist. Don’t make this important decision when you are upset, confused, unsure about your future, or pressured by your family.

Many people discover that their problems get worse, not better, in the military. Others find after enlisting that their situation at home improves, or they don’t want to be in the military after all. Don’t enlist unless you’re sure. If you change your mind after you join, it’s very hard to get out.”

**\*** A brochure published by AFSC,  
[www.afsc.org/youthmil](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil) or [youth4peace.org](http://youth4peace.org)

## **Am I Willing to Give Up Control?**

“If you enlist, the armed forces will be part of your life for at least eight years, including time in the Reserves. A lot could happen during those years. If you’re in the Reserves, the military could call you away from your home, job, or school.

What if you don’t like life as a soldier or sailor? You can’t just quit, and the military considers it a crime for you to leave your unit or disobey an order.

A recruiter may tell you that you can give the military a try and automatically get out after six months if you don’t like it. This is not true. **There is no such thing as a ‘period of adjustment’ in the military.”**

## **Am I Willing to Kill and Be Killed?**

“The military prepares for war. This purpose guides everything it does. Are you willing to kill another person if ordered to do so? Would you destroy people’s homes or food? Would you help others who are fighting, even if you’re not in combat yourself?

Would you risk your life in a fight for somebody else’s cause? Even soldiers who believe in fighting to defend their country have found themselves ordered to fight when they felt it was wrong. Once you enlist, you can’t choose.

If you answer “no” to these questions, you’re not alone, and you’re not unpatriotic. You don’t need to join the military to serve your country.”

## **Do I Have Other Options?**

“Even though it can be hard, you may be able to find a job or go to school. Talk with employed friends and neighbors to find out how they got their jobs.

A school guidance counselor, nurse, or social worker may have resources and connections that you can use to find a job or job-training program, get money for school, or get help with a bad personal or family situation. Organizations—such as neighborhood job counseling programs, church groups, city and state employment agencies, career centers, and union training programs—also can help you find a job.

If you want to earn money for college, find adventure, or travel, don’t assume you must enlist. Many other possible choices have been suggested in the previous pages. You can learn about other options at your public library or on the Internet.”

Check out AFSC’s website (American Friends Service Committee, National Youth & Militarism Program) cited on the previous page or **email: [youthmil@afsc.org](mailto:youthmil@afsc.org)**.

## **If You Talk With a Recruiter, Don't Rely Only on the Recruiter**

"Military recruiters are salespeople: their job is to "sell" you on enlistment. To keep their jobs and advance their careers, most recruiters must sign up a specific number of people each month. Naturally, they will stress the benefits of the military—not the problems.

Your decision about enlistment will affect the rest of your life and the lives of others. ***Don't rush.***

- Talk with recently discharged veterans—both those who had good experiences and those who didn't—about the questions raised in this article.
- Talk with a civilian counselor who can help you think about the military or suggest other options."

## **Take Along a Relative or Friend**

"You have a lot to think about when you talk with a recruiter. A family member or friend can take notes, ask questions, and watch out for your best interests. Also take along a relative or friend if you discuss job selection with a military "guidance counselor" at a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)."

## **Never Give False Information or Cover Up Anything**

"Be honest about police records, health problems, and school. If you lie to a recruiter, you will suffer when the truth comes out.

It's wrong, and in some cases illegal, for a recruiter to tell you a lie. Report any recruiter who does this to your Congress members and school officials. You will be protecting yourself and others."

## **If You Decide to Enlist:**

- "Do not sign any papers until you take them home for review by a parent, teacher, or someone else whom you know and trust.
- Make sure to get all the recruiter's promises **in writing** in your enlistment agreement. Spoken promises will not protect you.
- Find out whether you would need to pass a special test, get a security clearance, or do anything else before you can get the job or options you want.

If you've already signed up through the Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP) and are having second thoughts, call the **GI Rights Hotline at 800-394-9544**. This is a free nongovernmental service." **You are not committed until you actually step across the line at the induction center.** If you have problems in the military, call this GI Rights Hotline.

