CHAPTER 7

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Working for the Federal Government

Chapter Outline

LESSON 1
Military Careers

LESSON 2
Careers in Aerospace

LESSON 3
Careers in Public Service

"[One] who does not have what it takes to perform military service is not likely to have what it takes to make a living."

John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

LESSON 1

Military Careers

Quick Write

Write a short paragraph about why a military career may interest you.

Learn About

- branches of the US military
- reasons for choosing a military career
- entering the military as an enlisted member
- educational opportunities for enlisted members by service
- serving in the military as a warrant officer
- entering the military as a member of the officer corps

"Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world, but the Marines don't have that problem."

Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States

Branches of the US Military

When planning for your career, the options are endless. Service in our nation's armed forces is one of those options. The US military includes four peacetime service branches.

- The Air Force is the military's primary air and space arm. It defends the nation's air, space, and cyberspace, *the online world of computer networks, especially the Internet*, at home and overseas. It transports troops and equipment, and conducts air superiority warfare. Air Force bases support and maintain bombers, fighters, helicopters, in-flight refueling tankers, and reconnaissance aircraft.
- The Army is the nation's major ground fighting force. It uses infantry, armor, and artillery to conduct sustained combat operations. Army units move into an area to control, secure, and then help the local populace transition back to peacetime. The Army has the largest helicopter wing of all the services. This is for troop movements, air combat support operations and medical support. The Army also guards US installations worldwide.
- The Navy makes the seas safe for travel and trade. During wartime, it can bring to a fight a sizable attack force with many warships. Or it can launch strategic missile strikes from submarines and other vessels. The Navy's aircraft carriers protect fleets, or sometimes go on the offensive. The Navy also performs search-and-rescue missions, and delivers supplies to forces around the world.

- The Marine Corps is the United States' rapid-reaction force. Marines are trained as naval infantry. They are skilled in amphibious operations to assault an enemy shoreline from the seas. Often, Marines are involved in the most challenging situations in fighting for, and holding, land for incoming heavier land forces and air operations. Marines also provide security for the nation's embassies around the world.

America's fifth military service is the US Coast Guard. It is not a branch of the armed forces during peacetime. The Coast Guard's peacetime mission is conducted under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Under DHS, the Coast Guard protects our nation's coastlines, ports, and waterways. Its mission includes maritime safety and law enforcement. The Coast Guard is also widely known for its rescue operations.

However, in wartime, the Coast Guard, under Presidential order, becomes a fifth branch, serving under the US Navy, and would take on missions as directed by the Navy.

This lesson contains basic information about military career options. It describes how to join, what to expect about military life, and the benefits.

The US military in uniform is America's largest employer. More than 1.4 million people are on full-time active duty today. These men and women have varied skills, knowledge, and talents. They work in more than 4,000 career specialties, *positions that are distinctive, or peculiar to a military career.* That's a wide range of career options.

Air Force

The Air Force has about 333,000 men and women on full-time active duty. They work in interesting careers. They fly aircraft. They maintain and support the world's most technically advanced air and space vehicles. These include long-range bombers, supersonic fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, and many others. Their skills are in demand in the commercial world, *also referred to as the private sector.* As you may know, the private sector consists of *businesses that are part of the nation's economy run by private individuals or groups, usually for profit.*

Vocabulary

- cyberspace
- specialties
- commercial world
- private sector
- term of enlistment
- civilian
- civilian equivalents
- enlisted personnel
- junior enlisted personnel
- noncommissioned officers (NCOs)
- senior NCOs
- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)
- Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score
- security investigation
- basic training
- warrant officers
- commissioned officers
- cadet

Army

The active duty Army has more than 550,000 soldiers. They provide the Army's combat power, support, and services. Army career opportunities are quite varied. Jobs can be challenging with the Army's many overseas missions. However, these jobs prepare soldiers well for later civilian careers.

Navy

The Navy's 326,000 sailors work in all kinds of sea, land, and air-based career fields. The Navy has a large number of sailors who support battle groups with many ship and shipboard aircraft operations and maintenance. These jobs all require technical skill. Sailors also support living in the veritable small cities that comprise aircraft carriers at sea. And they have similar duties at land-based naval bases around the world.

Marines

The Marines are 202,000 strong. Most Marines are directly involved in light, mobile combat operations; others support units in hundreds of job specialties. They all require skill and a high level of discipline and dedication because of the nature of the Marine mission.

You can see that the range of possibilities for a service career covers a wide variety of jobs.

If you want to join the armed forces, you have two basic options. First, you can enter military service after high school. With this option, you'll quickly start to gain job skills during your training and will add valuable work experience throughout your time in service. Or you can go to college first, and then enter the military with the opportunity to prepare for a career as an officer. These options also have different requirements for your term of enlistment, or *the number of years you agree to remain in the military before you have the option to leave or sign up for another term*.

Reasons for Choosing a Military Career

Military careers are challenging. They require hard work and intelligence. The work offers great responsibility. It requires you to be strong—in mind, body, and spirit.

Military careers often appeal to people who are adventurous. Military service is also often a family tradition that is passed from one generation to the next. For many, the military experience is a chance to learn a skill for later in life. There are thousands of occupational specialties from which to choose. Many of them are very similar to civilian jobs.

In return for your service, the military will give you a chance to learn one or more job skills. You will gain work experience you can take back to the private sector as a civilian. A civilian is *a person who is not on active duty in the armed forces*.

What Military Life Is Like

To help you make a smart decision about a military career, here are some basic facts:

- *Earnings*—Pay itself starts fairly low in the military. However, it increases quickly as you are promoted and as your time in service. People serving in some positions receive extra pay for hazardous duty, specialized training, or foreign duty. In addition to salary, you'll receive clothing and housing allowances. You also receive medical and dental care. These benefits make earnings comparable to those offered by many civilian employers.

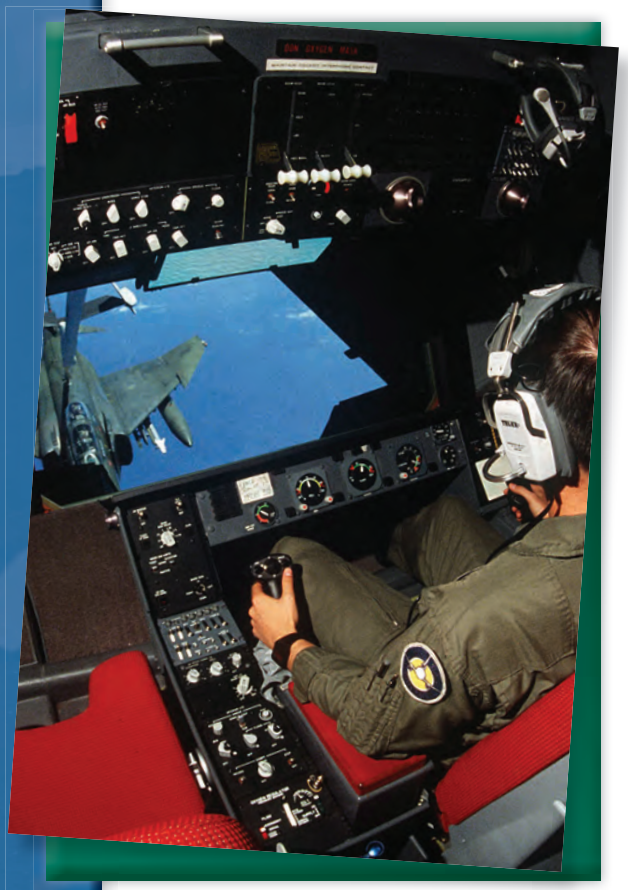
Military work requires you to be strong in mind, body, and spirit.

Courtesy of (clockwise from top left) *MSgt Scott Reed, US Air Force Photo Archives; Oleg Zabielin/Shutterstock; AP Images; Petty Officer 1st Class Jennifer Villalovos/Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System*

success TIP

In the military, staying in good physical condition is essential to teamwork and job performance. Military service is one of the best environments to help keep you in good physical shape.

- *Working conditions*—Many military personnel do much of their work outdoors, but others work entirely indoors. In either case, be prepared for plenty of exercise. In the military, physical fitness is part of the job. All military service members are deployed in many locations around the country and the world, in climates ranging from extreme cold to desert environments.
- *Hours*—The hours vary with the job. The mission comes first. You may have to work more than eight hours a day, and at times exceed a normal workweek.
- *Age*—You must be at least 18 years old (or 17 if a parent or guardian consents) to join the military.
- *Physical Requirements*—You must be in good physical shape and meet established weight standards.
- *Motivation*—In the military, you'll be serving your country. That's probably the most important attraction, along with college benefits for most young people who choose a military career.



Many Air Force enlisted jobs require highly skilled airmen such as Inflight Refueling Technicians..

Courtesy of the US Air Force

Military life offers many other advantages. The job security is great. While you are in the service, the military will meet most of your basic needs. You will have benefits like health care for you, your spouse, and children; low-cost life insurance; 30 days of vacation with pay each year; and the option to shop on the base, where prices tend to be lower than in civilian stores. Military bases also offer a variety of recreational facilities. In addition, you get to travel and see different countries. Finally, you can retire with benefits after only 20 years of service.

If you are18 when you enter the military, you could retire and begin a new career at age 38. Civilian employers will highly value your military training and experience. They will also welcome your discipline and leadership skills.

How Military Training and Experience Can Be Used in Civilian Jobs

Military service offers chances to gain many different skills. Once you've gained them, you'll have more career options. Many military positions have civilian equivalents, *jobs that are the same or similar to those in the civilian workplace*. These offer the chance to take your skills into a successful career elsewhere. In fact, nearly 80 percent of the military's career specialties have civilian job equivalents.

Air Force career options include jobs operating and maintaining aircraft. Airmen also work in strategic operations centers. Others work at air bases in communications; air traffic control; flight operations; or air transport logistics. Airmen also are office managers, vehicle mechanics, and computer specialists. As base security police and firefighters, they are first-responders. Like their civilian colleagues, they must react quickly to accidents or security problems.

One of the most valued skills you will learn in the military is how to work with others.
Courtesy of Larry Steagall/AP Images

The proportion of combat troops is fairly small among the Army's more than half a million soldiers. Some 80,000–90,000 new soldiers are needed each year. The Army has jobs in administration; logistics; food preparation; supply; and transportation of all kinds. Soldiers fix all types of weapons and equipment. They also serve in emergency medical treatment jobs. Many are in field computer and communications jobs. In the combat arms component of the Army, soldiers gain a background in their technical specialties, but also teamwork and leadership training that is unparalleled outside of the military. Most of these skills are needed in the private sector. A well-trained soldier has a chance for success in uniform and in civilian life.

Navy jobs also give sailors a chance to build skills for successful careers in and out of the service. Sailors serve in a variety of jobs aboard ship and on shore. They are navigators, pilots, flight officers, mechanics, and radio operators. Others work in intelligence or computer networks. Navy personnel operate and repair nearly 300 combat ships, submarines and support vessels, and over 4,000 aircraft.

The Marine Corps may be a small, mobile combat force, but it offers many career choices. Marines serve in about 300 specialties. They include construction; communications; logistics; maintenance and repair; security; computers; and field medical specialties. Marine training is intense. The Marine approach to all duties is highly regarded by civilian employers. They know that, as with all former service members, they'll get a motivated person ready to take on all challenges.

success TIP

When you consider a career, think of the military as a training ground for your future.

Entering the Military as an Enlisted Member

The majority of the military consists of enlisted personnel. Enlisted personnel are *generally young men and women who enter the armed forces with a high school diploma or equivalent*. They make up 85 percent of military personnel. They do most of the hands-on work. They perform much of the combat and support work that involves details and specialized skills.

In 1973, the draft was eliminated. Now, all of the military services rely on volunteers to fill thousands of enlisted jobs that come open each year. Enlisted ranks follow a career path, as outlined below:

- Junior enlisted personnel *enter at the lowest ranks, and focus much of their time on learning skills*. After training, they gain increases in responsibility and rank. But generally, they have little authority.
- Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) *have advanced leadership and technical skills. They often serve as specialists and supervisors*.
- Senior NCOs are *highly skilled and experienced. They carry significant authority and responsibility at the top enlisted ranks as leaders and managers*.

If you enlist, you will move up the ranks as you develop new technical and leadership skills.

Requirements for Entering the Service as an Enlisted Member

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)

Each of the services requires minimum scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which is *the entrance test to enlist in the US Military*. The ASVAB has two main purposes:

1. It determines whether you have the mental aptitude to enlist in the military branch of your choice.
2. The results help the service(s) determine which military job(s) you have the mental aptitude to perform.

The most important score from the ASVAB is the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score, *used to determine if someone is eligible to enlist in the military*. The AFQT is made up of four subtests from the ASVAB. These include Paragraph Comprehension (PC), Word Knowledge (WK), Math Knowledge (MK), and Arithmetic Reasoning (AR). All enlistees must obtain a minimum score on the AFQT (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2).

Table 7.1 Enlistment Requirements by Service

US AIR FORCE	• Be between the ages of 17–27* • Have no more than two dependents • Minimum AFQT Score: 36 • ASVAB score determines available specialties
US ARMY	• Be between the ages of 17–34.* • Have no more than two dependents • Minimum AFQT Score: 31 • ASVAB score determines available specialties
US COAST GUARD	• Be between the ages of 17–39* • Have no more than two dependents • Minimum AFQT Score: 40 • ASVAB score determines available specialties • Have a willingness to serve on or around the water
US MARINES	• Meet exacting physical, mental, and moral standards • Be between the ages of 17–29* • Minimum AFQT Score: 32 • ASVAB score determines available specialties
US NAVY	• Be between the ages of 17–34* • Minimum AFQT Score: 35 • ASVAB score determines available specialties • Have a willingness to serve on or around the water

*Age limits vary based on active-duty, prior service or reserve status. 17-year-old applicants require parental consent.
Source: MILITARY.COM

The ASVAB is the most widely used multiple-aptitude test battery in the world. The ASVAB measures your strengths, weaknesses, and potential for future success. The ASVAB also provides you with career information for various civilian and military occupations; as such, it is a guide for planning whether you choose to go to college, vocational school, or into the military.

For each service, there are slightly different enlistment requirements (Table 7.1). Women are eligible to enlist in almost all fields, including combat-related specialties. Because some specialties are still restricted, interested women should contact a specific service's recruiter for details.

Table 7.2 Minimum Scores Required for Enlistment on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT)

	MINIMUM AFQT	
	TIER I	TIER II
Branch	≥ HS Diploma	= GED
US ARMY	31	50
US NAVY	35	50
US AIR FORCE	36	65
US MARINES	32	50
US COAST GUARD	45	50
US ARMY NATIONAL GUARD*	31	50
US AIR NATIONAL GUARD*	31	50

*The AFQT's minimum required scores for persons with a high school diploma (as of May 2012) are significantly lower than for those with a GED equivalent.

Source: MILITARY.COM

If you enlist, a security investigation will reveal any trouble you may have had with the law.

Courtesy of Mikael Karlsson/Alamy

If you graduated from high school, or obtained a GED equivalent, Table 7.2 shows what score each service requires.

Security Investigations

If you enlist, you will go through a preliminary security investigation. This *reveals information on any past arrests or questioning by law enforcement officers*. Military members must maintain high standards of behavior. They may have to handle classified information and equipment. You may need a more complete security check if your job requires it.

Delayed Entry Program

If you want to enter the military but wish to delay your entry until a more convenient time, you may often do so. Under the Delayed Entry Program, you can enlist before you graduate from high school, or in some cases, college, and report for training after you graduate. After you enlist, you can put off starting your training for up to 365 days. You will not have to do any active duty military activities. Also, you will not receive pay or benefits during the waiting period. You agree to enter active duty on a certain date, and if qualified, you will start your initial training at that point. One benefit of using the delayed entry program is that the job you want may not be available right now. However, if you are willing to wait a period of time prior to entering the military, an opening may become available in a job you really want.

Military Occupational Groups for Enlisted Personnel

Most military enlistees may choose jobs from the occupational groups listed in Table 7.3, which are common to all of the military services. But as you can see, there are skills also specific to each service.

What do you want to do? The military offers many rewarding careers within all the services. While you may think you want to work in one particular service branch, you should keep an open mind and know that many of the same jobs are offered within multiple branches.

Educational Opportunities for Enlisted Members by Service

Post–9/11 GI Bill

The Post–9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in 2009. It is the most comprehensive education benefit since the first GI Bill of 1944. If you serve at least 90 continuous days on active duty, you can qualify. If you decide to go into the National Guard or the Reserves, you can qualify if you have more than 90 days of active duty in any period starting after 9/11. Since all veterans benefits are legislated by Congress, benefits are subject to change.

The current Post–9/11 GI Bill pays all public school in-state tuition and fees. The full benefits are significant:

- Tuition and fees paid up to the highest such public in-state fees in each state
- Tuition and fees paid for online courses same as in-resident fees
- Living stipend that would be equivalent to the basic housing allowance for an E-5 with dependents (for that Zip Code)
- Up to $1,000 per year for books and supplies

Table 7.3 Occupations by Area for Each Military Service

US ARMY	Over 200 MOSs* for active duty personnel in such fields as: • Administrative Services • Combat Operations • Electronic Maintenance • Engineering and Construction • Health Care • Intelligence and Electronic Communications • Mechanical Maintenance • Media, Public and Civil Affairs
US NAVY	Over 100 careers in such fields as: • Arts and Photography • Aviation • Business Management • Computers • Construction • Education • Electronics • Engineering • Finance and Accounting • Information Technology • Intelligence, Law Enforcement • Legal • Medical and Dental • Music • News and Media • Special Operations • Transportation and Logistics • World Languages
US AIR FORCE	Over 300 AFSCs† in 35 career fields, including: • Administration • Avionics • Base Operation • Communications • Electronics • Engineering • Flying/Navigation • Information Technology • Intelligence • Medical • Professional • Special Forces • Weapons Systems
US MARINE CORPS	Over 150 careers in such fields as: • Avionics • Data/Communications • Electronics and Aircraft Maintenance • Engineering • Intelligence • Legal Services • Logistics • Personnel & Administration • Public Affairs • Transport
US COAST GUARD	Over 20 jobs for enlisted personnel in: • Administration • Aviation • Deck and Ordnance • Engineering • Port Security • Science

*Military Occupational Specialties †Air Force Specialty Codes

Source: MILITARY.COM

Basically, full benefits are paid for those who serve a minimum of three years on active duty. You can get a portion of the benefits for serving less time on active duty. Some colleges will contribute additional money to qualified service members under the Yellow Ribbon Program. The schools that participate, and the amounts they will contribute can be found at the Department of Veterans Affairs website. See: *http://www.gibill.va.gov/gi_bill_info/CH33/YRP/YRP_List_2010.htm*.

These GI Bill benefits are payable for up to 15 years following an honorable discharge or retirement from service.

The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps College Fund Program

Called the GI Bill Kicker, the Army, Marine Corps and Navy all offer an additional amount of money that can be added to the Post–9/11 GI Bill. However, each service branch determines who qualifies for the College Fund and the amount received. These programs are usually offered when you first join the military.

To qualify, you must have a high school diploma and also be enrolled in the Post–9/11 GI Bill. Depending on test scores and your military occupation, there may be additional limits. Talk to a recruiter to find out if you are eligible, then ask for an application.

The Air Force doesn't have a College Fund Program, but it does have its own unique community college program.

Community College of the Air Force

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) is the largest multi-campus, two-year college in the world. It has more than 355,000 students. CCAF offers an associate of applied science degree for Air Force specialties. It combines credit for off-duty formal education with credit for training in Air Force skills. All active-duty Air Force enlisted persons are eligible for admission to CCAF after they pass the ASVAB and complete basic training. Basic training is *the period during which an enlistee enters the service and learns basic military skills*.

Tuition Assistance Programs

If you are in the service and want to continue your education, Tuition Assistance Programs are available. They allow you a chance to enroll in courses at accredited colleges, universities, junior colleges, and vocational-technical schools.

Each service has its own requirements, but all can help with tuition for almost any kind of degree or certificate. The monetary benefit, if you are on full-time active duty, is the same—up to 100 percent of the cost of tuition, or expenses up to $250 per credit, or up to $4,500 total per fiscal year.

Each service has different requirements for assistance; this can include the time you must have remaining on active duty, or the total number of credit hours you can complete. For example, under the Coast Guard's College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative, you must attend a school from a specific list.

In the Selected Reserves and National Guard, tuition assistance benefits will also vary.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) is a flexible way to gain an education while serving. Family members can benefit as well. Hundreds of thousands of people are enrolled in SOC each year. Courses can be taken in the classroom or at a distance by computer or correspondence.

SOC offers college degrees through an association with accredited colleges, universities, and technical institutes. Two-year, four-year, and graduate-level programs are available. A subgroup of SOC offers associate and bachelor's degree programs to Army, Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard servicemembers and their families.

SOC offers servicemembers a personal degree plan. It also offers college credit for military experience, military training courses, and for national tests (see below). Member schools acknowledge and transfer credits. This makes it possible to continue your studies when you move to new duty stations. You can see more details at: *http://www.soc.aascu.org/*.

Loan Repayment Programs

The Army, Navy, and Air Force offer loan repayment programs. These programs help enlisted members pay off college loans accrued prior to their active service. Each service's program has unique requirements, but they are all designed as enlistment incentives to help recent college attendees manage education debt.

- *Army*—Active-duty soldiers can qualify to have their loan(s) repaid at the rate of one-third of the loan for each year of full-time duty served (up to $65,000). The Army even helps soldiers pay off approved Perkins, Stafford or other Department of Education–guaranteed student loans.
- *Navy*—For active-duty Navy personnel, a $65,000-maximum Loan Repayment Program is also available. To qualify, you must have a high school diploma; a loan guaranteed under the Higher Education Act of 1965; and had no prior military service.
- *Air Force*—The College Loan Repayment Program (CLRP) is a program created for those considering duty with the Air Force who have taken some college courses and have accumulated debt. Participants can qualify when signing the enlistment contract. Under CLRP, the repayment maximum is $10,000 per recruit.

For additional information about college loan repayment programs contact the service's recruiter. There may be additional restrictions to accepting loan repayment.

Educational Testing Programs

Military enlistees may also earn college credits by passing certain tests. Testing is a fast and inexpensive method of obtaining college credit.

Military members study to get ready to take tests for college credit.
Courtesy of Lisa Billings/AP Images

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

The CLEP consists of a series of general examinations that test a person's college-level knowledge. You can gain this knowledge through courses or through independent study, cultural pursuits, travel, or other avenues. The 90-minute CLEP exams are funded by the Department of Defense. You could save hundreds, even thousands, of dollars toward your degree. You can take them at over 1,700 locations across the country. They are also given at on-base testing centers worldwide. College credits for successful scores are valid at 2,900 colleges and universities.

The CLEP general tests cover five topics:

1. English Composition
2. Social Science, History
3. Natural Sciences
4. Humanities
5. Mathematics

There are more specific "subject exams" that are computer-based and timed. For each one a servicemember passes, he or she usually gets three college-credit hours.

According to the College Board, each college and university has its own CLEP evaluation system that it uses to determine how much credit to give you for your knowledge. Some colleges offer up to 30 hours of credit to enlisted members who pass the tests.

DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)

Passing a DSST exam also earns servicemembers college credit. There is no time limit and the test is paper-based.

Excelsior College Exams (ECE)

Excelsior College is a "virtual university" that counts many military personnel among its worldwide graduates. Excelsior College Exams are accepted for college credit by hundreds of colleges and universities.

Also, as of August 1, 2011, servicemembers can receive reimbursement for some licensing and certification exams, as well as for fees related to the SAT, LSAT, ACT, and other college and graduate school entrance tests.

Serving in the Military as a Warrant Officer

A second career path open through military service is that of a warrant officer. Warrant officers are *highly skilled officers who work in a single-track specialty throughout their military service*. Warrant officers serve in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The Air Force ended its warrant officer program in 1959. A warrant officer (grade W-1 to CW-5) is rated as an officer above the senior-most enlisted ranks, as well as officer cadets and candidates, but below all commissioned officer grades.

Warrant officers serve as the military's technical experts, covering virtually all fields where in-depth knowledge is needed. They provide specialized skills and guidance to commanders and organizations. Unlike commissioned officers, whose careers offer increased levels of command and staff positions, warrant officers remain single-specialty officers with career tracks within their fields.

You must be a high school graduate and a US citizen to apply for a warrant officer position. Most specialties also require applicants to have already served five years or more in the military (one exception is Army aviation). Therefore, becoming a warrant officer for most high school graduates is a long-term rather than an immediate goal.

However, this career path is an attractive one allowing you an extended career path as a highly respected specialist.

Entering the Military as a Member of the Officer Corps

Military Education and Commissioning Programs

The military has several options for combining education with a commission. Commissioned officers are *personnel who enter the armed forces with a four-year college degree or higher, and who compete to enter and earn a commission from the President after confirmation by Congress*. They fill key leadership, managerial, professional, and technical jobs. They include combat and support branch officers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, and pilots. Commissioned officers make up 15 percent of armed forces personnel.

One option for getting a commission is competing to get into one of the military service academies. You'll learn more about the service academies later in this lesson.

The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force also have bachelor's degree programs through SROTC (Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps). After achieving a degree through SROTC, each graduate is required to serve a military commitment.

All services have an Officer Candidate School or Officer Training School (Air Force). They accept college graduates who did not complete Senior ROTC courses or attend a service academy. OCS/OTS programs also train individuals with special skills such as chaplains, doctors, nurses, or lawyers for direct commissions. These programs will also be covered in more detail later in this lesson.

Commissioned officers are those with the rank of second lieutenant and above. Military officers in the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps with the rank of second lieutenant, first lieutenant, and captain are called *company-grade officers*. In the Navy, those with the rank of ensign, lieutenant junior grade and lieutenant are called *junior-grade officers*.

Air Force, Marine, and Army majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels are called *field-grade officers*. In the Navy, the equivalent ranks of lieutenant commander, commander and captain are called *mid-grade officers*. An officer who ranks above colonel is a *general officer*. In the Navy/Coast Guard, those above the rank of Captain are *flag officers*.

How to Become a Commissioned Officer

To be a commissioned officer, you must be a US citizen and have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college. You must achieve the minimum entry score on an officer qualification test administered by each service branch. Additionally, to earn a commission as an officer you must successfully complete an officer-commissioning program through a service academy, SROTC, or an officer candidate (training) program. Some positions require a graduate degree or specific courses. In addition, you must be physically fit and of high moral character. You must be in good health and pass a medical exam. Certain diseases or conditions may exclude persons from enlisting or commissioning.

There are four main paths to becoming a commissioned officer: the service academies, Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (SROTC), Officer Candidate or Officer Training School (OCS/OTS), and direct appointment.

The Service Academies

The United States has four service academies:

- United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (Army)
- United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland (Navy and Marine Corps)
- United States Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colorado
- United States Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut

Service academies are very competitive. Only those applicants with high qualifications are admitted.

Courtesy of (clockwise from top left) *Michael Kaplan/Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System; Dave Bartruff/Corbis Images; Jack Sauer/AP Images; Mayre Beltran/AP Images*

Competition for entry into the academies is keen. Only the highest-qualified candidates are accepted. To be eligible for admission to any of the academies, you must be at least 17 years old, a citizen of the United States, of good moral character, and academically and physically qualified.

In addition, candidates for the Army, Navy, and Air Force Academies must be nominated—usually by a US senator or representative, but sometimes by the Vice President or the President. The process for obtaining a congressional nomination is not political, and candidates do not have to know their senator or representative personally to secure a nomination. To request a nomination, you can call or write a senator or representative's office (from your state or territory) to ask for information.

Each member of Congress and the Vice President can nominate up to five nominees attending a service academy at any time. Additional nomination slots are available for children of career military personnel, children of disabled veterans or veterans who were killed in action, or children of Medal of Honor recipients.

The Coast Guard Academy does not require a nomination from a Congressional member or the President or Vice President. Admittance is based solely on personal merit. Applications for the Coast Guard Academy are now only accepted online.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force Academies all accept between 1,000–1,500 new student/cadets per year. The Coast Guard takes in only a little over 400 per year.

The academies offer four-year programs of study leading to a bachelor of science degree. Students receive free tuition, room, board, medical and dental care, and a monthly allowance. Graduates receive a commission as a military officer. After graduation, they must serve on active duty for at least five years. Depending on the type of specialty training you receive after graduation, your commitment to serve may be longer.

Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (SROTC)

Undergraduate students may receive training to become officers under the Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (SROTC) Program. SROTC programs for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps are available in more than 1,400 colleges and universities nationwide.

SROTC programs recruit, educate, and commission officer candidates through college campus programs. Cadets normally enroll in the first two years of SROTC classes at the same time and in the same manner as they enroll in other college courses. A cadet is *a SROTC candidate or military academy appointee*. Depending on the service and option they select, SROTC students train for two, three, or four years. Many receive scholarships for tuition, books, fees, and uniforms. They also get a monthly allowance, or stipend. In addition to their military and college course work, SROTC cadets perform leadership-building activities and drills for a number of hours each week. At some point, cadets take part in military training for several weeks during the summer. Graduating SROTC candidates receive commissions as military officers. They then go on active duty or become members of Reserve or National Guard units.

SROTC instructors are normally active-duty military officers (although there are some Reserve instructors, depending on the university). Most have a master's degree and usually hold the academic rank of assistant professor.

ROTC candidates climb ropes on an obstacle course at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon.

Courtesy of Bohemian Nomad Picturemakers/Corbis Images

Table 7.4 Officer Candidate/Officer Training Schools, by Service

School	Duration	Rank upon Graduation	Location	More info.
Army Officer Candidate School	12 weeks	Second Lieutenant	Fort Benning Fort Benning, Ga.	*Army OCS*
Marine Corps Officer Candidates School	10 weeks	Second Lieutenant	Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.	*Marine Corps OCS*
Navy Officer Candidate School	12 weeks	Ensign	Naval Station Newport, RI.	*Navy OCS*
Air Force Officer Training School	12 weeks	Second Lieutenant	Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base Montgomery, Al.	*Air Force OTS*
Coast Guard Officer Candidate School	17 weeks	Ensign	Coast Guard Academy New London, Ct.	*Coast Guard OCS*

Source: *http://www.todaysmilitary.com/before-serving-in-the-military/officer-candidate-school*

Officer Candidate/Officer Training Programs

Officer Candidate School (OCS), or Officer Training School (OTS) in the Air Force, for those interested in becoming officers, have similar training programs for enlisted servicemembers who go through Basic Training. The types of people who attend OCS/OTS usually are:

- Graduates from a traditional four-year college or university
- Enlisted servicemembers (often called "Prior Service") who are making the transition between enlisted ranks and officer roles
- Those who hold direct commissions, and are going through either an officer basic course or other form of an officer training school.

While duration and type of training varies among the Services, all teach military subjects, leadership skills and physical training. The goal is to prepare these recruits and newly commissioned officers for the challenges of officer life, from managing others to understanding military culture and law. You can learn more about specific programs and classes by visiting the service-specific websites listed in Table 7.4.

Direct Appointments

Professionals in medicine, law, biomedical engineering, and religion who are fully qualified in their fields may apply to receive direct appointments as military officers. After entering military service, they can begin practicing their professions with a minimum of military training. Their appointments last two years, although some are longer. Some scholarship programs are available to assist students in these fields in return for several years of service.

CHECKPOINTS

Lesson 1 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. Name the military services that make up the nation's armed forces in wartime. Describe them.
2. Name three military skills from any service that you could transfer into a civilian career.
3. Name and describe two major military educational programs from which you may benefit while serving in the military.
4. Describe the differences between an enlisted servicemember and an officer.
5. What is the name of the test administered by the armed forces to decide eligibility for enlistment and show aptitude for training?
6. List six military occupational groups from any service, that are available to enlisted personnel.
7. Describe and distinguish between the various levels of rank among enlisted servicemembers.
8. Name and describe the four main pathways to becoming a commissioned officer.
9. List the four service academies and write a brief description of each academy.
10. What are the basic requirements for you to receive an appointment to any service academy? Which service academy does not require a Congressional recommendation?

APPLYING CAREER SKILLS

11. Assume that you decide to enlist in the military after you graduate from high school or college. Write a letter to a relative that explains why you chose to take this step, which service, and why that service? Make your letter at least three paragraphs long.