

Your Checklist Before Joining the Military

This comprehensive list covers a wide range of essential considerations for those contemplating military service, ensuring preparation for this significant life decision
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Financial and Legal Arrangements:

- Handle rental lease: termination, subletting, or transfer.
- Evaluate car loan status, explore selling or storage options.
- Adjust or pause phone, utilities, and internet services.
- Arrange affordable storage for personal items.
- Automate or delegate bill payments.
- Appoint a trusted power of attorney.
- Update insurance policies, focusing on health and auto.
- Notify banks, discuss overseas account management.
- Establish an emergency fund for unexpected expenses.
- Clarify tax obligations, seek professional advice.
- Review credit reports, maintain credit health.
- Plan for loan deferments under Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

Personal and Family Arrangements:

- Arrange continuous pet care; consider boarding options.
- Create an emergency contact list with detailed information.
- Complete medical check-ups and vaccinations.
- Draft or update your will and end-of-life directives.
- Establish regular communication plans with family.
- Arrange property maintenance for long-term absence.
- Discuss employment leave or resignation.
- Securely store or backup important documents and passwords.
- Update social media and online presence settings.
- Plan childcare for dependents.
- Understand military family support programs.



Preparation and Transition:

- Organize comprehensive mail redirection.
- Digitally backup important files and photos.
- Deepen understanding of military benefits and resources.
- Review military commitments and legal obligations.
- Mentally prepare for lifestyle and routine changes.
- Reflect deeply on personal reasons for enlisting.
- Arrange transportation to the enlistment or training center.
- Plan meaningful farewells with friends and family.
- Investigate absentee voting options for service members.
- Familiarize yourself with post-service reintegration and support services.

Educational Planning:

- Assess how military service impacts existing college credits.
- Plan to use military tuition assistance; understand contract implications.
- Prepare for potential cross-country moves for military schooling.
- Consider online or distance learning options for flexibility.
- Research educational benefits for dependents and family.

Family and Childcare Considerations:

- Ensure reliable childcare during training or deployment.
- Address child support or custody issues, if separated or divorced.
- Inform family of military support programs for dependents.
- Plan for potential family relocation due to military assignments.
- Understand benefits and resources for military families, including housing.

Communication and Mailing:

- Provide military mailing addresses to family and friends.
- Prepare for restricted phone privileges during training.
- Explore options for international communication.
- Set up a system for regular updates with loved ones.
- Inform important contacts of potential communication delays.



Goal Setting and Career Path Planning:

- Develop long-term career goals within and outside the military.
- Set short-term objectives for initial training and assignments.
- Have contingency plans for extending or ending military service.
- Explore military career advancement/specialization opportunities
- Plan for civilian career transition
- Utilize military career counselors and resources for guidance.
- Consider the impact of military service on long-term career goals.
- Monitor changes in military policies affecting your career.
- Network with fellow service members for career advice and jobs.
- Continuously assess personal/professional satisfaction while serving.

