

Ten Points to Consider Before You Sign a Military Enlistment Agreement

1. Do not make a quick decision by enlisting the first time you see a recruiter or when you are upset.

A recruiter is a salesperson who will give only a positive, one-sided picture of life in the military. Don't make this important decision when you are depressed, hard up for work, confused, unsure about your future, or pressured by your family. This decision affects many years of your life; don't make it lightly.

2. Take a witness with you when you speak with a recruiter.

There is a lot of information to take in. A friend can take notes and help you ask questions.

3. Talk to veterans.

Veterans can give you their view of military life, good and bad.

4. Consider your moral feelings about going to war.

The mission of the military is to prepare for and wage war. Are you willing to kill another person if ordered to do so? Would you be willing to fight in any war, no matter what the reason? If you would have trouble engaging in war or in killing, you should not consider enlisting. If you become opposed to war after you join, you may try to get a discharge, but it is a long, difficult, and uncertain process.

5. Get a copy of the enlistment agreement.

Read the fine print carefully, especially the part about what the military can order you to do. You have a right to take it home, look it over, and ask others about it.

6. There is no "period of adjustment" during which you may request and receive an immediate honorable discharge.

Once you have left for basic training, you must fulfill the entire number of years (usually eight, with some of these in the Reserves) on your enlistment contract. You cannot leave of your own free will. In contrast, however, the military may decide you are "unsuitable" and discharge you without your consent.

7. Get all your recruiter's promises in writing,

but also remember that the military can change the terms—such as pay, job, or benefits—of your work. Though there are no guarantees, a written statement may offer you (as a service member) some protection if promises are not met. However, the enlistment agreement is more binding on you than on the military. You are ultimately responsible for information on the form, so don't tell lies, even if pressured.

8. There are no job guarantees in the military.

The military is not required to keep you on a full-time or permanent basis in the job you trained for. In fact, most recruiters were assigned to recruiting jobs against their will. The kind of job you get depends mostly on what jobs the military needs to fill. Most military jobs are in areas that account for only a small percentage of civilian jobs.

9. Military personnel may not exercise all of the civil liberties enjoyed by civilians.

You will not have the same constitutional rights. Your rights to free speech, assembly, petition, and exercise of individual expression, such as clothing or hairstyle, will be restricted. You will be required to follow all orders given to you, whether you agree with them and consider them right or fair.

10. Many other opportunities exist for you to serve your community and enhance your skills.

Before you decide to enlist, check out other options that would help you "be all you can be." Travel, education, money for school, job training, and adventure can all be found in other ways. Your local community may even have opportunities that you haven't considered.

Learn more

To learn more about these issues, check out our web site. It offers up-to-date information about military recruitment, what it is like inside the military, and alternatives to the military.

www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm
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