



Serve Yourself with a Post-Military College Education

Military service prepares you for many things, but transitioning to civilian life isn't necessarily one of them. You may not be aware of the many [options](#) you have, whether it's buying a home, starting a business, or going to school. The Defense Department's Transition Assistance Program, or [TAP](#), will provide you with an overview of your available options and related benefits, but what you do with it is up to you. The college route may come with some challenges but it also gives you time to explore your career skills and passions, so that when the time comes, you are more confident about your civilian career choice. Consider this great insight from [Nashville's American Legion Post 5](#).

Benefits of post-military college life

In addition to career preparation, your decision to attend college following your service can provide you with several other benefits that can help your transition. First, leaving the security and [stability](#) of military life can be intimidating; a college education can give you a sense of certainty about your prospects to help you with that unease.

Second, college life as a veteran student can lessen some of the typical transition [challenges](#) that plague veterans, such as loss of social connections and losing a sense of purpose and direction. And, the social networking that occurs in college life will be helpful to you as you ponder your career. Even if you have an idea of what degree you want to pursue, engaging in discussions with peers and instructors can add clarity that either reinforces your decision, or points you into a different but more rewarding direction.

Let's get practical about finances

How you support yourself is a weighty consideration for many new veterans, and even more so if you have a family. You will find yourself with "normal" civilian [expenses](#) that were previously included in your service, such as insurance and housing, and perhaps some additional taxes.

The earlier you and your spouse can lay out your transition finance plan prior to you leaving the service, the more prepared you will be to take the college plunge.

One of the first steps is to know what help is available to you, both for counseling and for tuition and related living expenses. Examine the many [federal programs](#), and also visit any student veteran centers or counselors in colleges and universities that you're considering; some have scholarships designated for veterans in addition to your other assistance options.

Flexible options

If you're determined to pursue college, but the financial puzzle just won't fit together without you also working or you're unsure about how prepared you are for campus life, take a close look at what online courses are available to you. Many colleges and universities offer several online degree options that are well-suited to the skills you bring from your military service.

For example, most veterans are used to analyzing problems and using that analysis to make a logical, and often quick, decision. That skillset is shared by many business executives and entrepreneurs, so a degree in business or business [administration](#) can be a logical option for you that readily transfers to a number of careers, from starting and running your own business, to working in retail or banking.

If you enjoyed any specialized work you did in the military, look for a degree that compliments and strengthens that experience. For example, if you [worked in IT](#), look for a degree in information technology management. You can specialize even more by industry, such as IT management in the healthcare industry.

Not all online course programs align with all benefits eligibility requirements, so weigh your options carefully to see what works best for you.

You're used to obstacles – and removing them

Transitioning from military service can present obstacles, but don't let those deter you from achieving your college education goals. Your benefit options, flexible college course options, and sheer will and dedication that made you a great service member will serve you well in this next chapter.

Are you a veteran who lives in Nashville? Join the American Legion Post 5 community. Visit us in person or learn more about us by completing [this form](#).

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