

MILITARY-TRANSITION.ORG

PLANNING

FOR THE

MILITARY TRANSITION



EXECUTE

I. TAKE CHARGE

Every service member will eventually take off their uniform, yet many ignore this truth until it's too late for effective planning. The key message of this guide is that you are responsible for your own future, not the military, so take charge. The ability to decide what's next can be a blessing or a curse, depending on your preparation. Aside from true retirement (doing nothing for recurring income) or caring for another, there are only three paths to your next career. This guide outlines these options along with ways to take charge. Throughout this book, we'll reference our previous eBooks and suggest these as prep reading:

- **Book 1: TRUTHS** about the Military Transition
<https://www.military-transition.org/truths>
- **Book 2: WINNING** the Employment Game
<https://www.military-transition.org/winning>
- **Book 3: CHALLENGES** of the Military Transition
<https://www.military-transition.org/challenges>
- **Book 4: MISTAKES** Veterans Make in Transition
<https://www.military-transition.org/mistakes>
- **Book 5: NETWORKING** for the Military Transition
<https://www.military-transition.org/networking>



II. SELF-EVALUATION

The first step when thinking about your future is self-evaluation. This should be an ongoing, lifelong process, both within and outside the military. You should regularly assess your situation while focusing on two key aspects. First, define your goals. This sounds simple on paper but is difficult in practice. What do you really want to be when you grow up? The second is to determine if you're moving towards or away from your goals. During this process, you should constantly evaluate and make improvements, while purposely avoiding complacency or getting comfortable with the status quo.

Deciding when and how you will transition from the military are major life decisions. Don't feel bad if you don't have clarity on these issues right now, since many don't. This guide was developed to help you get started and includes a decision matrix, planning framework, and multiple exercises to assist.

Once the decision has been made to transition, you should become fully invested in what's next. Don't rely on anyone else to define or derail your future. And don't feel guilty about preparing for life after the military. Every member will eventually transition, and you deserve the opportunity to be successful.



There are many things you can do after serving, but what do you want to do?"

Here are some exercises we recommend to help you begin thinking about your future and start planning.

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1: DAILY JOURNAL UPDATES

Journaling is a powerful tool and a safe place to reflect on your thoughts and goals. The journaling process allows you to gain clarity on issues, discover patterns, document ideas, and explore solutions. In addition to reflecting on life, relationships, and career issues, the following exercise should help identify your preferred environment.

- **Reflect:** take time each night to highlight three things that made you feel significant or valued that day. Write a short note or single sentence for each. Do the same for three things that made you feel insignificant or unappreciated.
- **Review:** after 60 or 90 days and look for any recurring patterns or themes.
- **Identify:** are there situations that make you feel significant and valued? If so, how can you do more of the events leading to this?
- **Avoid:** what about situations that make you feel insignificant or unappreciated. How can you avoid these situations?
- **Apply:** how can you leverage these insights when planning your future?
- **Explore:** what professional pursuits allow you to develop and maintain a sense of value and significance?
- **Grow:** what mentors can you talk with about your learnings and how to best apply these?



EXERCISE 2: VISUALIZE THE FUTURE YOU

Dream big and remove any limitations or constraints that hold you back from thinking about your ideal future (lifestyle, career, family, and location).

Be honest with yourself, invest a few hours, and provide your best answers to the following questions:

1. What do I want to have in 5 years?
2. What do I want to be doing in 5 years?
3. What do I want to be in 5 years?
4. Where do I want to be in 5 years?

Take your time and really think about these questions.

When completed, review your answers and make connections between the lists.

What did you learn? Can you prioritize these and develop plans to realize your ideal future?

EXERCISE 3: WRITE YOUR LAST CHAPTER

Imagine that your life is a book, and each phase represents a unique chapter. Here's an example:

Chapter 1 - the early years (prior to high school).

Chapter 2 - high school years.

Chapter 3 - from high school to the military and the years you served.

Chapter 4 - years after the military.

Chapter 5 - the last five years of your life.

In this exercise, we will focus on Chapter 5.

PART I: Write this chapter of your book. Focus on lifestyle, family, and career events. It's your book so remove all limitations or constraints and describe your ideal life. Here are some questions to help get started:

- a. How old are you?
- b. Where do you live?
- c. What's your family, work, and financial status?
- d. What are you doing on a daily basis?
- e. What brings the most joy?
- f. How are you helping others?
- g. What are you most proud of?
- h. What do people say about you?

PART II: Ask yourself, what do I need to start doing today to make this future my reality?

EXERCISE 4: SEEK FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS

Reach out to individuals who know you well and can offer honest and thoughtful insights. Select a diverse group of people to gain a well-rounded assessment. Explain that you are on a journey of self-discovery and value their input in describing your strengths and qualities at your best.

Provide them with the following questions to guide their feedback:

- a. When have you seen me truly happy and fulfilled?
- b. In what situations or activities do you think I excel the most?



c. What unique qualities or strengths do you believe I possess?

d. What do you think sets me apart from others?

e. How do you perceive my impact on those around me?

Encourage them to take their time and, whenever possible, provide examples to support their responses.

After collecting their feedback, read through each response carefully. Pay attention to common themes, attributes, as well as any unique observations. Take note of any surprises or unfamiliar aspects mentioned. Reflect on their descriptions and consider how they align or differ from your own assessment. This exercise is an opportunity to celebrate your strengths, embrace your uniqueness, and reflect on areas for growth.

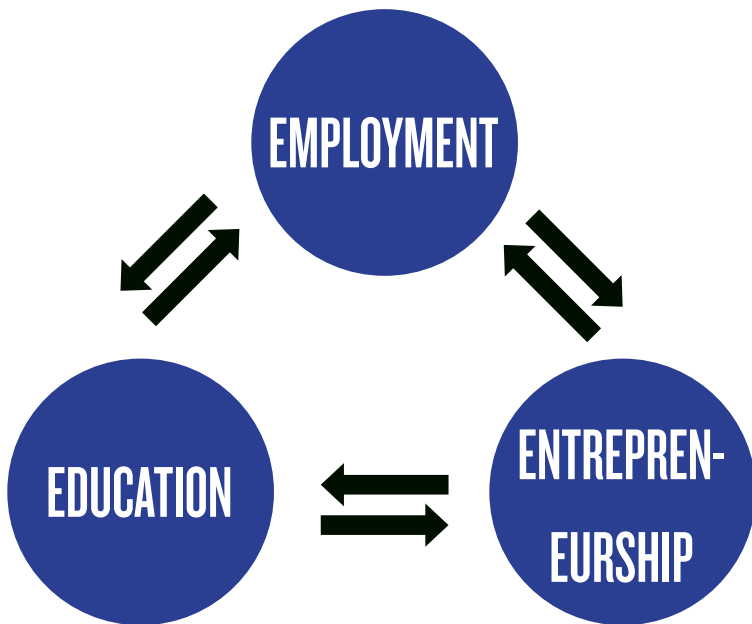
Final note: be sure to thank everyone that responded.

EXERCISE 5: CAREER TASTE TEST

One of the best ways to discover new foods is at a buffet. Here you can sample flavors in smaller quantities and get more of those you like, and avoid those you don't. You should take the same approach when thinking about your post-military career. Learn about different fields and then find someone with experience in this area to help you better understand. Sample as many as you like through mentors in the fields of interest. This is a great way to discover careers you've never heard of or don't fully understand. The cost is low and the rewards are unlimited. Ask those you speak with if they would recommend others you can learn from.

III. THE BIG 3

When veterans re-enter the workforce, they follow one of three paths. We call these The Big 3.



#1: EDUCATION

This path is a stepping stone to future employment, entrepreneurship, or both. Education takes many forms such as technical training, the trades, or a university. There are significant advantages when transitioning through an educational pathway along with some cautions. The best advice to those considering this path is to do your homework beforehand. You don't have to know exactly what you want to do in the civilian workforce, but need to invest the time and determine realistic options.

III. THE BIG 3 CONTINUED

Here are some activities and resources to help you think about educational tracks and options:

A. GET ORGANIZED

1. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

Define your broad field of study. Specifics might change as you progress, but this is the minimum level of clarity needed to begin. If you're not ready to answer this question, we recommend speaking with mentors. We also suggest you complete the exercises in this guidebook along with talking to individuals who might help you think through realistic options.

2. WHERE DO YOU WANT LIVE?

This short-term decision may have a long-term impact. In the military, degrees are often seen as square filling for advancement. In the civilian workforce, specific schools and degrees matter.

Some schools are known regionally versus nationally. If your long-term goal is to work in a different geography, think about how your education will transfer. For example, do you know anything about Central University? How do their programs compare to well-known universities? Think about this as you consider your next location.

“If your long-term goal is to work in a different geography, think about how your education will transfer.”



DECIDE — PLAN — EXECUTE

III. THE BIG 3 CONTINUED

B. GET CONNECTED

I. WITH PEOPLE

Find advisors that help you understand and navigate the process. Does the school have a veteran's group? Have you talked with anyone that completed this program? All of these actions are helpful and will contribute to your decision.

2. WITH ORGANIZATIONS

There are numerous organizations that want to help you select and succeed in an educational program. Here are some to consider:

- <https://www.boots2books.com>
- <https://www.ActNow.org>
- <https://studentveterans.org>
- <https://www.service2school.org>
- <https://troopstotruckers.com>
- <https://wfw.org>
- <https://helmetstohardhats.org>
- <https://explorethetrades.org>



III. THE BIG 3 CONTINUED

C. GET BUSY

I. UNDERSTAND YOUR BENEFITS

From state to federal, you should explore the educational benefits you've earned. The first step in this process is to check with the VA and understand your post 9/11 benefits.

- <https://www.va.gov/education>

After this, we suggest checking on state benefits. Remember to speak with an advisor if unsure:

- <https://nvf.org/state-benefits-for-veterans>
- <https://veteran.com/state-veterans-benefits>
- <https://www.legion.org/education/statebenefits>
- <https://collegerecon.com/states-offering-free-college-veterans-dependents>

2. APPLY FOR PROGRAMS, CREDITS, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Start this process early since it can require time and effort. You don't want to miss getting accepted, receiving credit for previous courses/experience, or funding because you waited.



Waiting to begin reduces your choices and limits opportunities for assistance."

#2: ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The idea of owning a business is appealing and there are several ways to achieve this goal in the short or long-term. If your intent is to have a business immediately after serving, you need to begin planning well ahead of your transition. Some veterans become entrepreneurs after attending an educational program and others start by working for another organization where they obtain the knowledge, skills, or resources to be successful. Another option is for a spouse to begin an entrepreneurial venture and join at a later time. Regardless of the path, here are some resources to assist:

■ **Bunker Labs:** <https://bunkerlabs.org>

Offers several programs to help you develop, launch, and scale your ideas. Bunker has teams in more than 30 cities and numerous virtual communities. This is a must visit site if you're considering a business venture.

■ **Institute for Veterans and Military Families:**
<https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship>

From ideation to start-up and growth, IVMF has a program, mentor, or resource to assist. This another must visit site if you're considering a business venture.

■ **DAV Patriot Boot Camp:**
<https://patriotbootcamp.org>

Provides service members, veterans, and spouses with access to mentors, educational programs, and a robust community of experts to help innovate and build an impactful business.



III. THE BIG 3 CONTINUED

■ **Boots to Business:**

<https://sba.my.site.com/s>

This is an education and training program offered by the Small Business Administration. Immersive 2-day workshops are available at military installations or virtually, along with a reboot program for veterans.

■ **The Rosie Network:**

<https://www.therosienetwork.org>

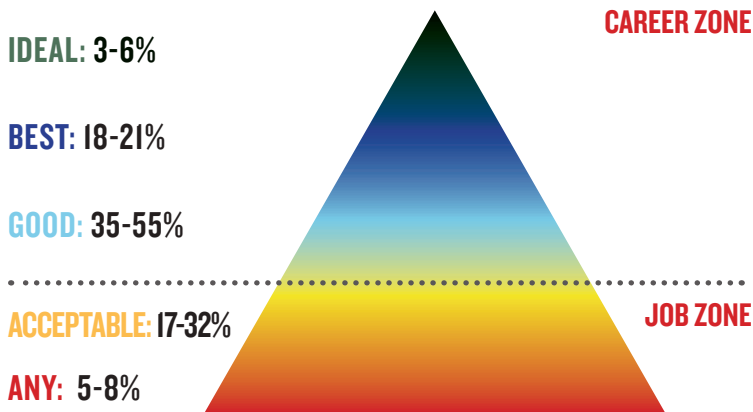
A network of military connected business owners and resources to help you start an entrepreneurial venture. We recommend the Service2CEO training program to help accelerate your business.

WHAT ABOUT FRANCHISING?

Many veterans discover franchising to be a seamless transition after serving. Why? Because franchising offers a structured path similar to the military, which allows you to be your own boss but with a proven blueprint. As a franchise owner, you're equipped with training, mentorship, and guidance from experts in the field. If the idea of leveraging your military experience in a business setting appeals to you, consider reaching out to an advisor at FranNet (<https://frannet.com>). To get a clearer picture of what it's like to transition from service to franchise ownership, we recommend these videos: www.military-transition.org/business-owner-videos.html

#3: EMPLOYMENT

Many start their post-military careers working for someone else as an employee. This might be a large or small company, for-profit or non-profit, or government enterprise. Regardless of the size or purpose, these individuals have a boss and must adapt to the culture and organizational expectations. Some veterans start great careers immediately after serving, while others are forced to accept transitory jobs that are below their expectations. Your goal when finding civilian employment is to begin a new career, not just find a job. Here's our analysis of the first positions veterans begin immediately after serving:



CAREER ZONE: IDEAL POSITION

This is the position every member wants immediately following the military because it matches their skills, interests, geographic preferences, and may exceed desired compensation. A small percentage (3-6 percent) will begin their post-military career here, but all should aspire to reach the ideal position. Members in this group tend to have specialized skills that are in high-demand along with experience to match. They generally have an extensive or influential network that opens doors and introduces them to key individuals. Your first civilian



position might not be at this level, but you should always be developing your skills and network to help find the ideal position. Veteran entrepreneurs may also fall within this category since business ownership allows members to leverage their strengths while pursuing their passion.

CAREER ZONE: BEST POSITION

This is also a position every member wants immediately following the military because it matches their skills and interests. About 18-21 percent will begin their post-military career here and everyone should aspire to reach this level in the career zone. Members in this group tend to have in-demand skills and experience, combined with focused preparation and networking that lead to a position which matches or exceeds their expectations. They are normally open to alternate locations and could have multiple offers across a variety of companies and roles. In time, these opportunities can lead to the ideal position within the same organization, or provide the experience required to secure this role elsewhere. This position might also help prepare members or inspire them to pursue a future entrepreneurial role.

CAREER ZONE: GOOD POSITION

This position is attainable by every member and an initial step towards a promising civilian career. The majority (35-55 percent) start their post-military journey in positions that capitalize on relevant skills and allow professional growth. Members in this group have a range of marketable skills, depending upon their backgrounds. When combined with adequate preparation and networking, they often receive multiple offers. Specific duties or compensation levels may or may not fully align with expectations, for a variety of reasons. These individuals may also have geographic limitations or preferences that impact future career opportunities.

When growth opportunities are taken, members are promoted into better internal positions or gain the experience necessary to obtain an outside role. Individuals in this category may continue looking and are normally open to a better or higher paying role that's attainable once they adapt to the new civilian environment and culture.

JOB ZONE: ACCEPTABLE POSITION

This situation occurs when members have a limited number of offers and few, if any, meet compensation expectations or align with skills and interests. Lack of planning, networking, and the inability to highlight relevant skills often impedes employment opportunities across this group. Limited time to prepare compounds these issues. Options within this group can be further reduced by a member's desire or inability to move to a location with more opportunities. Individuals in this category continue looking for a better position within or outside their organization.

JOB ZONE: ANY POSITION

This situation occurs when members lack in-demand skills and don't understand how their skills and experience align with employer requirements. They conduct limited, if any, true preparation ahead of their transition. These members might have an inflated sense of self-worth and negative issues are compounded by limited life experience or family situations that reduce flexibility. Veterans in this group have few offers, none of which align with their expectations. These individuals are forced to accept any position that allows them to pay bills and continue looking for something better. Returning to a hometown with a limited labor market often expands the challenges these individuals face.

One of the best ways to land in the career zone is through SkillBridge.



IV. WHAT IS SKILLBRIDGE

This is a DOD program that allows active-duty members to gain civilian work experience through industry training, apprenticeships, or internships/fellowships during the last 180 days of service.

Participation allows you to connect with industry partners in real-world job experiences while still receiving full military pay and benefits.

Employers invest in your development and may offer continued employment at the conclusion, but aren't obligated.

“Never before have military members been able to gain this level of understanding and build experience while still in uniform!”

BENEFITS FROM PARTICIPATION:

1. Hands-on training and experience in roles of interest
2. Networking and interactions with employers
3. Assistance translating skills in ways employer's value
4. The ability to obtain important certifications and credentials
5. The ability to understand and adapt to employer culture

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN SKILLBRIDGE:

1. DIRECT INTERNSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS WITH DOD AUTHORIZED EMPLOYERS

These are programs offered by companies that have partnered directly with the DoD to offer temporary SkillBridge positions or training opportunities. At the end of the program, the company may offer employment but is not obligated.

2. INDIRECT INTERNSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS WITH THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS

Some companies rely on outside organizations to identify participants and manage their SkillBridge program. These organizations, known as third-party providers, help match service members with host companies. At the end of the program, the host company may offer employment. Internships and fellowships are often divided into two categories:

- **Individual based:** After working with a third-party provider, members undergo an individual experience with a host company. Their specific duties and program start/end dates are unique to their situation. These individuals might interact with other military members participating in SkillBridge at the same host company, but their work or training experience is customized for their unique situation.
- **Cohort based:** After working with a third-party provider, members begin and conclude their experience with a group of fellow service members. Pre-defined schedules outline when cohorts occur and often start with training to develop important skills. Some cohorts have specific tracks such as cyber-security, project management, or human resources. After some initial training, members begin working with host companies.



3. DOL APPRENTICESHIPS

These experiences focus on specific training and may result in employment opportunities after the apprenticeship. Examples include skilled trades (construction, HVAC, or logistics) and IT training.

4. FIND YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE

You can work with a company that isn't approved for SkillBridge by following the process on the DoD website. The company must demonstrate the experience they provide is valid and legitimate, which means you need to do something that enhances the likelihood of gaining meaningful post-military employment. Working with a company that's not already approved by the DoD requires additional time, so we recommend you start early. Instead of working directly with the DoD to become an authorized provider, these companies can also work with a third-party provider to reduce their administrative burden and timelines. Here are some providers to consider:

- **Hiring Our Heroes:** <https://www.hiringourheroes.org>
- **Recruit Military:** <https://recruitmilitary.com>
- **Hire Military:** <https://www.hiremilitary.us>
- **50 Strong:** <https://www.50-strong.us>
- **Vets2Industry:** <https://vets2industry.org>
- **7 Eagle Group:** <https://7eagle.com>
- **Vets2PM:** <https://vets2pm.com>
- **Civilian Ready:** <https://civilianready.org>

SkillBridge participation isn't guaranteed, so here are some recommendations to consider as you begin the process:

1. ENGAGE YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND

Well before your planned transition date, you should talk with your supervisor. You might not be able to request approval at this point, but feedback from those who applied early suggests the approval rating is higher. Once inside a year, you can start requesting official approval.

2. CONSIDER WHICH EXPERIENCE BEST MEETS YOUR OBJECTIVES

Are there companies of interest that offer fellowships? If not, maybe you should explore a third-party provider or find your own experience. Do your homework and realize that all have different approval processes and timelines.

3. PARTICIPATE IN TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

This is the obligatory first step in the process and most base education centers have resources to assist. Processes and complexity can be different from branch to branch and between installations, so do your research.

As you start coordinating with your chain, it's important to understand some common reasons why SkillBridge participation is declined:

1. IMPACT ON THE MISSION

The mission must still be accomplished and reduced manning impacts readiness. Some members have critical skills their units can't afford to lose for an extended period. This also makes participation a challenge from those more senior or in command roles. If this is your situation, we suggest helping your supervisor navigate this issue as early as possible. Proactive solutions tend to be most effective.



2. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Uniformed decisions often lead to delays and disapproval. We recommend sharing current DoD guidance to help supervisors and commanders.

3. DELAYED APPLICATION

The application process requires time for all parties to complete (supervisors/chain, installation/branch/command, and employers/providers). Feedback from applicants suggests that delayed application is one of the most common reasons for rejection. **Don't wait.**

4. PERCEIVED FAIRNESS

Supervisors or commanders might be reluctant to approval packages because other unit members will subsequently ask to participate, so they need to be fair and consistent.

5. EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Some think individuals with significant experience or education shouldn't have issues finding a civilian job and don't need to participate.

Some additional lessons to help you navigate the SkillBridge application process and be successful:

1. DON'T EXPECT SUPERVISORS OR COMMANDER TO FIND ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

It's your future, not theirs, so do the homework.

2. BE PREPARED TO WORK HARD THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM

Don't consider it a breather from the military. The most successful members are eager to learn and contribute during the program.

3. FOLLOW-ON EMPLOYMENT ISN'T GUARANTEED

The only commitment employers make is to provide an interview. Some companies know ahead of time that a position won't be available and you need to understand this risk. Others view SkillBridge as a way to gain free labor. Know the facts before accepting any SkillBridge opportunity.

4. SOME CANDIDATES ARE ASKED TO REDUCE THEIR TERMINAL LEAVE TO MINIMIZE THE IMPACT ON THEIR UNIT

Only you and your family can determine the pros and cons on this issue.

5. SOME ROLES ARE ENTIRELY REMOTE

This means you won't have the ability to assess a company's culture and assimilate into their workforce. If your desire is to only work remotely, this might be a viable option. We suggest finding a position with greater direct engagement if you're not looking for remote work after the military.

Now that you understand the basics, we'll provide a framework for evaluating your situation, considering potential futures, planning, and executing your transition.

There's no single solution or "one-size-fits-all" approach, so use this eBook as a guide to help navigate the process.

We recommend completing multiple items in this framework concurrently and advocate for the continual use of mentors and journaling.



V. SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

The next several pages offer a guide to assess your current situation, contemplate future options, set clear goals, and create action plans. Deciding whether to stay in the military or transition is a personal choice. We encourage you to use this framework, along with the additional resources highlighted in these pages, to help you with this decision and beyond. This framework is divided into three main parts:

1. CONTINUOUS EVALUATION

You should always be reviewing your situation with a goal of developing clear life and career goals. These insights will help you decide when and how to transition, or help improve your current situation in or out of uniform. Self-awareness is the foundation to long-term success and is the starting point.

2. PLAN

Once you've made the call to transition, it's crucial to understand what's ahead and develop plans to turn goals into reality. Effective planning is a blend of hard work and leveraging the support of your network. In this section, we provide advice to help you excel.

3. EXECUTE

The final step in the transition is executing your plan and starting your new civilian life with positive momentum and focus. The transition doesn't end when you take off the uniform and we provide some ideas to in this section to empower your success.

AI. EVALUATE | SELF | WELL-BEING

AI. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE REVIEWING YOUR LIFE AND CAREER, BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE MILITARY.

The more you know about yourself, the more you can create a lifestyle that enables happiness and well-being.

A2. IN ADDITION TO THE SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISES SHARED EARLIER, HERE ARE SOME TOOLS WE RECOMMEND:

- <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/home.aspx>
- https://www.ihl.org/Engage/Initiatives/100MillionHealthierLives/Documents/100MLives_Well-Being-Assessment_Adult_24-Item.pdf
- https://fctl.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/03/2021-03-12_WellbeingAssessment.pdf
- <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/wellbeing-assessment>

A3. CONDUCT YOUR OWN LIFE ASSESSMENT, INDEPENDENT OF YOUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION AND POSITION.

- Be honest with yourself and take the necessary self-care actions in the following areas: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

A4. AS YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT FOLLOWS MILITARY SERVICE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Read TRUTHS about the Military Transition: www.military-transition.org/truths.html
- Complete this video course: www.FourBlock.org/programs/find-your-calling



DECIDE — PLAN — EXECUTE

A5. START A PERSONAL JOURNAL AND KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS TOGETHER.

No one else needs to see your inputs, so be candid. Journals are powerful tools for self-discovery and are invaluable when reflecting and making important life decisions.

A6. START DEFINING YOUR IDEAL FUTURE BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN YOUR JOURNAL:

- Who are the people you truly admire?
Are they family members, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, celebrities, community leaders, professional athletes, religious leaders, bosses, or current/past co-workers?
- Why do you admire these individuals?
- What are the specific traits, behaviors, or accomplishments that make these individuals appealing?
- If you could assemble a single person from the best characteristic of this group, what would this person be like?
- Look at all aspects of this person: work-life, personal-life, family-life, mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and financial.
- Would you like to become this ideal person?
- How could you develop the skills and experience needed to become this ideal person?

A7. UTILIZE THE SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISES IN THIS GUIDE AND WRITE ANSWERS IN YOUR PERSONAL JOURNAL. MAKE DAILY INPUTS AND REVIEW OFTEN.



B1. EVALUATE | SELF | FINANCIAL

B1. CREATE AND MAINTAIN A BUDGET. HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES TO ASSIST:

- <https://USAA.com/my/usaa>
- <https://TakeChargeAmerica.org/financial-resources-for-veterans>

B2. REVIEW TSP CONTRIBUTIONS AND INVESTMENT PLANS. CONSULT WITH A PROFESSIONAL, IF APPROPRIATE.

B3. REVIEW CURRENT/FUTURE VA BENEFITS TO INCLUDE THE GI BILL.

B4. REVIEW YOUR LIFE INSURANCE POLICY/COVERAGE.

B5. WHICH OF THE ADMIRED INDIVIDUALS (FROM A6) ARE LIVING THE FINANCIAL LIFE YOU DESIRE?

- How can you model their behaviors?

C1. EVALUATE | SELF | RELATIONSHIPS

C1. CONSIDER YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS. ARE THESE CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR MENTAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, AND FINANCIAL WELL-BEING?

C2. DO YOU HAVE INDIVIDUALS YOU CAN SPEAK WITH ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES?

C3. DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE THAT CARES DEEPLY ABOUT YOU AND SOMEONE YOU CARE DEEPLY ABOUT?

C4. DO YOU HAVE MENTORS AND TRUSTED INDIVIDUALS THAT CAN HELP GUIDE YOUR LIFE AND CAREER?

C5. DO YOU TALK WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY OFTEN ABOUT YOUR IDEAS AND PLANS?

C6. EVALUATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPLORE LINKEDIN TO HELP DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK.

C7. WHICH OF THE ADMIRED INDIVIDUALS (FROM A6) HAVE THE TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS YOU DESIRE?

- How can you model their behaviors?

D1. EVALUATE | CAREER | GOALS

D1. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE EVALUATING CAREER OPTIONS AND PURPOSELY DECIDING WHAT'S NEXT.

- Staying in the military until retirement is a great career goal, but remember that someday you'll take off the uniform. If you're looking at civilian opportunities now or in the future, don't feel limited by your military specialty or duties.

D2. REMEMBER, THERE ARE THREE TRUE CAREER OPTIONS AFTER SERVING (THE BIG 3):

- 1) education – a stepping stone to future employment, entrepreneurship, or both.
- 2) entrepreneurship – owning a business or working for yourself.
- 3) employment – working for someone else.

D3. STUDY THE BIG 3 AND DEVELOP PROS/CONS FOR EACH.



D4. CONDUCT SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS THAT ALIGN WITH POST-MILITARY CAREER OPTIONS.

D5. ASK YOURSELF - DO I HAVE WHAT'S NEEDED TO ACHIEVE MY GOALS?

- Don't feel bad if the answer is no. Many are in this situation and the way to address is to formulate a plan to achieve your goals.

E1. EVALUATE | CAREER | PATHS

E1. DETERMINE WHICH OF THE BIG 3 CAREER OPTIONS BEST ALIGNS WITH YOUR INTENT.

E2. DISCUSS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MENTORS.

E3. BREAK YOUR LONG-TERM CAREER OBJECTIVE INTO PHASES. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- If you want to own a business, consider ways to gain the experience and training needed, or align with a franchise. Think about the people who might assist as you expand your network.
- If you want to work in the trades, consider additional training or credentials needed. Evaluate credentialing opportunities via COOL.
- If you want to become a leader in business, think about an MBA.
- In add cases, talk with mentors who know from experience and get their candid thoughts and advice.

E4. YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT AT THIS POINT.

- Identify obstacles and develop plans to learn more while filling any information or knowledge gaps.

E5. SELECT YOUR TOP FIVE PREFERRED CAREER OPTIONS AND DISCUSS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MENTORS.

- These might include options to stay in the military and get out. Remove all limitations and think about what you really want.

F1. EVALUATE | CAREER | OBSTACLES

F1. REVIEW YOUR PREFERRED OPTIONS AND DEVELOP PLANS TO ADDRESS THE OBSTACLES.

- There are numerous ways to navigate around or through obstacles such as: formal education, training, self-paced study, volunteering, and internships. One of the best ways to gather information and evaluate options is through networking and informational interviews.

F2. BRAINSTORM WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR PLANS. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- If you're an infantryman and want to become a medical doctor, you might look at med school requirements and how to fill these. What schools would you like to attend and what are some of the foundation courses. Can you take classes during your current enlistment to cover some of these. What actions should you begin if your transition date is 26-months from now?



- If you're intel NCO and want to become a financial analyst, you might look at attending business school. What schools are of interest? Are there any self-paced study programs that would be useful? Who in your network can provide some advice to help get started?
- If you are a logistics officer and want to have your own business, you might talk with some veteran entrepreneurs to see how they started. What type of business do you want? What geography would be most likely to help you succeed?

F3. CONSIDER HOW SKILLBRIDGE MIGHT BE USEFUL WHEN FILLING TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE GAPS.

You should always be evaluating your career to determine if a change is necessary. When we're not sure what to do next, we often continue going the same things and expect the situation to change. Don't allow momentum and the environment to determine your path. Be purposeful and determine for yourself using this framework, the exercises provided, and after speaking with your family, friends, and mentors.

Regardless of your decision to stay in the military or get out, you should continue the Self and Career Evaluation actions.

If you've made the decision to transition (retire or separate), then don't look back. A successful transition requires significant time and effort. Own it and make it your priority.

The following matrix helps clarify the transition decision. Always evaluate your situation and make a purposeful decision to **GO** (get out) or **STAY** (keep serving) until the time is right. Any aspect of these categories is acceptable; however, the final category (**MOMENTUM**) should be avoided. Don't surrender control of your future to the environment.

TRANSITION DECISION MATRIX

GO	Evaluate - decide to get out...	When eligible for retirement...
GO	Evaluate - decide to get out...	Wait for the right time...
GO	Evaluate - decide to get out...	As soon as possible...

STAY	Evaluate - decide to stay in...	Until eligible for retirement...
STAY	Evaluate - decide to stay in...	But start planning for when the time it right...
STAY	Evaluate - decide to stay in...	Keep options open and continue evaluating the situation...
MOMENTUM	Do nothing - surrender control to the environment (AVOID)	

****** If you've made the decision to get out, continue with the following actions. ******



GI. PLAN | CONNECT | PREP

GI. READ THE BOOK MILITARY TRANSITION MISTAKES SO YOU CAN AVOID COMMON ISSUES.

- www.military-transition.org/mistakes.html

G2. START PLANNING THE BIGGEST MISSION OF YOUR CAREER – THE TRANSITION BACK INTO CIVILIAN LIFE.

G3. CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL TRANSITION ASSISTANCE OFFICE.

- Complete initial training with a career counselor
- Review all activities on DD2648 and attend pre-separation counseling
- Schedule/Attend transition assistance

G4. CONSIDER YOUR SAVINGS/INVESTMENTS AND ENSURE YOU HAVE A SAFETY NET, IF NECESSARY.

G5. DEVELOP AN INITIAL TIMELINE WITH IMPORTANT MILESTONES (SEE EXAMPLE ON PAGE 24).

G6. DETERMINE WHEN TO SUBMIT YOUR REQUEST FOR RETIREMENT OR SEPARATION.

HI. PLAN | CONNECT | PEOPLE

HI. READ THE BOOK NETWORKING FOR THE TRANSITION.

- www.military-transition.org/networking.html

H2. SIGN-UP FOR A FREE LINKEDIN PREMIUM ACCOUNT.

H3. PURPOSELY DEFINE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND AND EXPAND YOUR LINKEDIN NETWORK.

H4. FIND MENTORS:

- Using ACP (<https://www.acp-usa.org>) and Veterati (<https://www.veterati.com>)

H5. RESEARCH AND ATTEND IN-PERSON NETWORKING EVENTS.

- Use tools like Eventbrite.com to find local activities

H6. CONTACT FORMER SUPERVISORS AND CO-WORKERS WHO TRANSITIONED AND LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES.

II. PLAN | CONNECT | PROGRAMS

II. IF YOU'VE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, CONSIDER PROGRAMS SUCH AS SKILLBRIDGE, HIRING OUR HEROES, AND FOURBLOCK.

12. EVALUATE CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH YOUR RESPECTIVE MILITARY BRANCH. (COOL PROGRAMS)

JI. PLAN | ALIGN | LEARN

JI. READ THE BOOK WINNING THE EMPLOYMENT GAME (VETERAN EDITION).

- www.military-transition.org/winning.html



J2. TALK TO YOUR NETWORK AND LEARN ABOUT THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT PROCESS.

J3. CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS (IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL) AND LEARN FROM OTHERS.

J4. CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING IF YOU WANT TO MEET PEOPLE OR LEARN MORE ABOUT A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CAREER.

J5. STUDY NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES.

J6. EVALUATE GEOGRAPHIES OF INTEREST AND THE LOCAL TALENT MARKET.

■ Are your skills in-demand?

K1. PLAN | ALIGN | TRANSLATE

K1. DEVELOP A MASTER RESUME THAT CAN BE ADAPTED BASED UPON SPECIFIC JOB OPPORTUNITIES.

K2. START LEARNING ABOUT THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND ASK YOUR NETWORK TO HELP. STARTING PRACTICING.

K3. ASK YOUR NETWORK TO HELP FIND OPPORTUNITIES AND POSITIONS OF INTEREST.

K4. DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND REALIZE THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR TRANSITION.

L1. PLAN | ALIGN | APPLY

L1. ALWAYS ADAPT YOUR RESUME TO EACH POSITION.

L2. ASK YOUR NETWORK FOR FEEDBACK AND OPTIMIZE YOUR RESUME AND INTERVIEW RESPONSES BASED UPON THE SPECIFIC POSITION.

L3. CONTINUE PRACTICING INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES WITH YOUR NETWORK.

- Ask them to give candid feedback to improve.

L4. APPLY FOR POSITIONS OF INTEREST WITH THE HELP OF YOUR NETWORK.

L5. ATTEND CAREER FAIRS (ONLINE AND IN-PERSON).

L6. APPLY FOR SKILLBRIDGE, IF APPROPRIATE.

M1. EXECUTE | NAVIGATE | MEDICAL

M1. REVIEW MEDICAL RECORDS AND ENSURE ALL ISSUES ARE DOCUMENTED.

M2. ENSURE FAMILY MEDICAL ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED BEFORE THE LOSS OF BENEFITS.

M3. SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS WITH SPECIALISTS.

M4. MAKE COPIES OF ALL FAMILY MEDICAL RECORDS.

M5. PLAN FOLLOW-ON INSURANCE (TRICARE OR OTHER) AND SEARCH FOR NEW PROVIDERS, IF NECESSARY.



NI. EXECUTE | NAVIGATE | ADMIN

NI. COMPLETE OUT-PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS (UNIT AND INSTALLATION).

N2. REVIEW LEAVE BALANCE AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY (TERMINAL AND PERMISSIVE TDY).

N3. TRANSFER GI BILL BENEFITS, IF APPROPRIATE.

N4. CHECK YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE EXPIRATION DATE AND UPDATE, IF NECESSARY.

N5. START PREPARING IF YOU ANTICIPATE ANY VA CLAIMS.

OI. EXECUTE | NAVIGATE | CLOSURE

O1. IDENTIFY YOUR REPLACEMENT AND BEGIN TRAINING (IF POSSIBLE).

O2. BEGIN PLANNING SEPARATION OR RETIREMENT EVENTS (CELEBRATION OR CEREMONY).

O3. KEEP YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED IN ALL PLANNING ACTIVITIES.

O4. READ THE BOOK CHALLENGES OF THE MILITARY TRANSITION

■ www.military-transition.org/challenges.html

P1. EXECUTE | LAUNCH | OPTIONS

P1. CONTINUE TO WORK WITH YOUR NETWORK AND EXPLORE OFFERS AND POTENTIAL CAREER OPPORTUNITIES.

P2. TALK WITH YOUR NETWORK, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS CONSTANTLY.

P3. SPEAK WITH COMPANY INSIDERS TO UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE.

P4. IF PARTICIPATING IN SKILLBRIDGE, DON'T ASSUME A JOB OFFER IS AUTOMATIC. LEARN AND CONTINUED TO EXPAND YOUR NETWORK.

Q1. EXECUTE | LAUNCH | OFFERS

Q1. CONSIDER ALL OFFERS AND TALK WITH YOUR NETWORK, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS.

Q2. NEGOTIATE WHEN POSSIBLE BUT BE CAREFUL NOT TO PUSH TOO HARD SINCE GREAT ORGANIZATIONS MAY RETRACT JOB OFFERS.

Q3. CONSIDER ALL ASPECTS OF THE OFFER, NOT JUST THE SALARY.

RI. EXECUTE | LAUNCH | DECISIONS

RI. DISCUSS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND YOUR NETWORK.

R2. CONSIDER THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES WITH EACH OPTION. ASK YOURSELF WHAT FOLLOWS THIS POSITION?

R3. ONCE YOU MAKE A DECISION, DON'T LOOK BACK AND INVEST YOURSELF 100% IN THIS OPPORTUNITY.

The transition process isn't linear and requires many concurrent activities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The first words in this guidebook are 'Take Charge' and we encourage service members to take personal responsibility for their lives and career. Don't get comfortable and complacent. Always evaluate where you're at and where you're going. Do the homework, and don't allow the momentum of today to carry you to a destination you didn't choose.

This framework is a starting point, and we encourage members to utilize these ideas, along with your network and other vetted resources, to make your future the best it can be.

Take Charge and don't look back.



DECIDE — PLAN — EXECUTE

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