

# VETERANS' GUIDE TO VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Updated: August 23, 2023

---

## Compare School Options

Most schools have rolling admissions and financial help so you can start your degree in a few weeks!

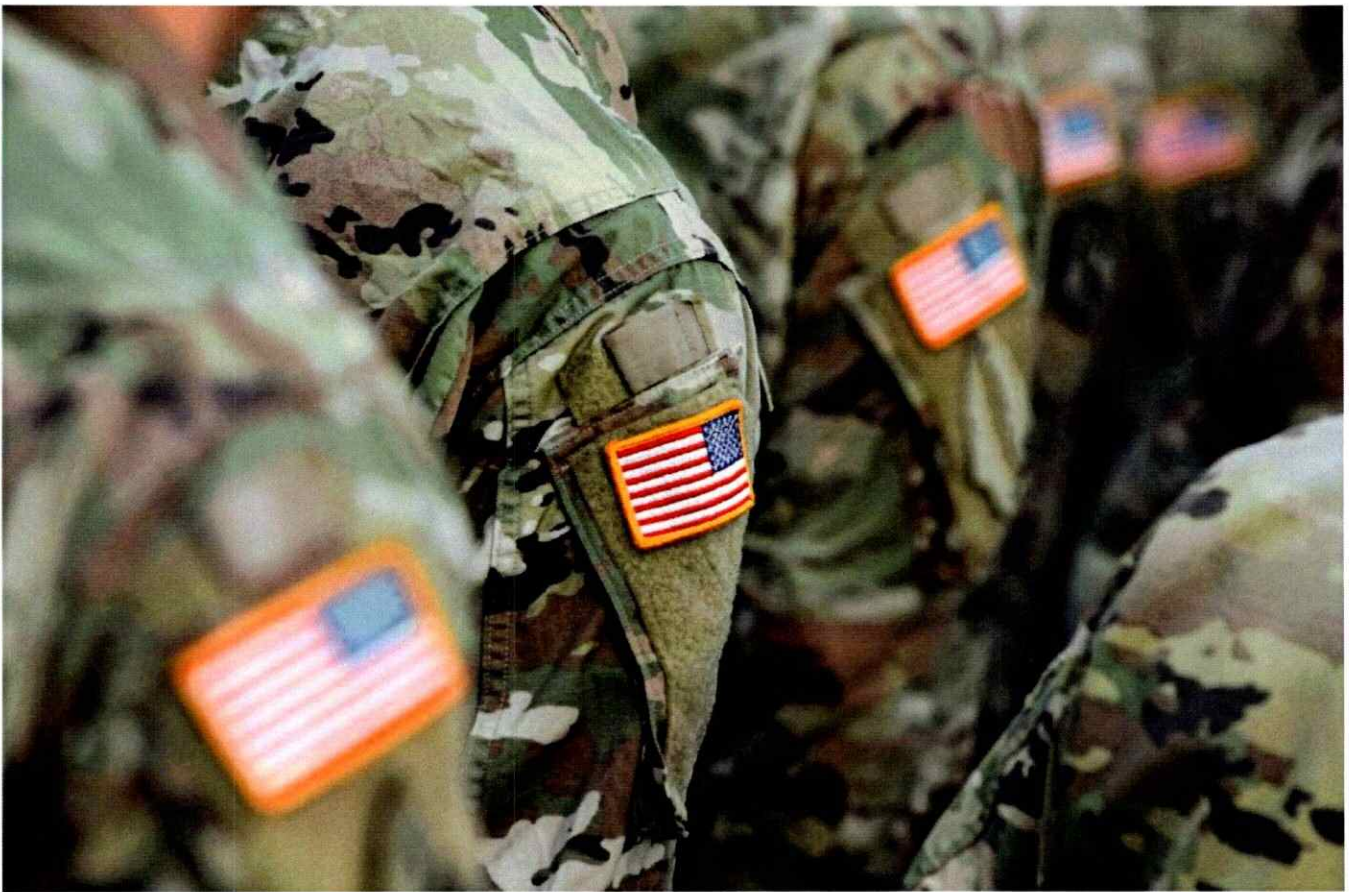
**I WANT MY**  
Select a degree

**IN**  
Select a category

**FOCUSING ON**  
Select a subject

FIND YOUR PROGRAM

Sponsors Disclosure



If you're a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, you may have access to educational benefits through the GI Bill and similar programs. In addition to helping veterans attend [traditional four-year colleges](#), these benefits can also be applied to vocational schools and apprenticeships.

Below, we break down the different benefits available to veterans for non-traditional postsecondary education and review other important details such as eligibility, costs, and making the transition from soldier to working civilian.

## GI Bill® Benefits and Eligibility

*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.*

The GI Bill is the most significant educational benefit that's available to veterans. Every year, this federal program pays for [over \\$10 billion](#) in higher education expenses.

There are currently two active laws known as “the GI Bill” — the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill. These pieces of legislation help veterans cover the costs of educational programs and degrees, including the following:

- Undergraduate and graduate degrees
- Tutorial assistance
- Vocational/technical training and non-college degree programs
- Veterans technology education courses (VET TEC)
- On-the-job training and apprenticeships
- Entrepreneurship training
- Flight training
- Test fees
- Co-op training
- Work study
- Correspondence training
- Independent and distance learning

Below we take a closer look at each of the laws that make up the GI Bill benefit program, starting with the most recent.

## Post-9/11 GI Bill

The [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) went into effect on August 1, 2009. It provides benefits to veterans who served after September 10, 2001.

## Who's eligible:

- Veterans who served at least 90 aggregate days on active duty after September 10, 2001 and remain on active duty or have been honorably discharged. (Note: Active duty includes active service performed by National Guard members under title 32 U.S.C or section 502(f).)
- Veterans who were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability after serving 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001.
- Purple Heart recipients whose award was earned during service on or after September 11, 2001 and remain on active duty or have been honorably discharged.

## Post-9/11 GI Bill Service Requirements (After September 10, 2001)

A servicemember must serve an aggregate of:	Payment percentage
At least 36 months	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and discharged due to a service-connected disability	100%
At least 30 months, but less than 36 Months	90%
At least 24 months, but less than 30 Months	80%
**At least 18 months, but less than 24 Months	70%
**At least 12 months, but less than 18 Months	60%
**At least 6 months, but less than 12 Months***	50%
**At least 90 days, but less than 6 Months***	40%



**\*\*Excludes time in basic military training and/or skill training.**

**\*\*\*Effective August 8, 2020, The Colmery Act changes the required amount of service noted above resulting in a more generous percentage of eligibility for service less than 12 months.**

**Benefits breakdown:** You can receive up to 36 months of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, which cover tuition and fees as well as books and supplies. Money for housing is available if you attend school more than half-time, but the amount of housing assistance depends on the cost of living in the area where your school is located. These benefits apply to vocational schools as well as apprenticeships.

## Montgomery GI Bill

The Montgomery GI Bill (named after its sponsor, Mississippi Rep. “Sonny” Montgomery) was initially passed in 1984 to help support Vietnam War veterans. There are two enrollment options: the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR).

### MGIB-AD

The MGIB-AD helps veterans who served for at least two years pay for higher education programs, including vocational schools and apprenticeships.

**Who’s eligible:** In addition to service length, [eligibility for the MGIB-AD](#) is determined by factors such as when you entered active duty and your current level of education.

**Benefits breakdown:** You can get up to 36 months of benefits through the MGIB-AD. These benefits are paid monthly, and the exact amount depends on factors such as your length of service and the type of educational program you choose.

## MGIB-SR

While the MGIB-AD is designed for veterans who maintained full-time active-duty status, the MGIB-SR is for members of the Selected Reserve.

**Who's eligible:** [Eligibility for the MGIB-SR](#) depends on factors such as the length of your service obligation and your current level of education.

**Benefits breakdown:** MGIB-SR and MGIB-AD benefits are distributed in the same way and can be used to cover the same expenses. But much like other Selected Reserve benefits, veterans receive less funding through MGIB-SR than they would through MGIB-AD.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill and the MGIB each provide benefits for 36 months. If you are eligible for both programs, you can receive benefits for a total of 48 months. However, you can only use one GI Bill program at a time — veterans who qualify for both programs would be eligible to use one year of benefits from the MGIB program in addition to the three years of tuition and housing assistance available through the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

## Additional Benefits for Veterans

The GI Bill is far from the only program that helps veterans access vocational schools and apprenticeships. Many other benefits are available, especially if you have a service-connected disability. The following programs stand out as being particularly helpful:

## Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment

[Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment](#) (VR&E) helps veterans with a service-connected disability prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. To be eligible, veterans must have a [VA service-connected disability rating](#) of at least 20% with an employment handicap or at least 10% with a serious employment handicap.

The services offered by VR&E include skills training, resume development, and job interview practice. VR&E also partners with federal, state, and private agencies in order to provide direct job placement.

## Yellow Ribbon Program

The [Yellow Ribbon Program](#) can help you pay for out-of-state, private, foreign, or graduate school, which often isn't fully covered by the GI Bill. You must qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill's maximum benefit level to be eligible, and you'll need to go to one of the [schools that participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program](#) as well.

This program covers tuition and fees — it does not cover expenses that aren't mandatory, such as room and board, study abroad, and late registration fees.

## Why Choose a Vocational School or Apprenticeship?

Now that you know about the various educational benefits available through the GI Bill, it's important to consider whether a vocational school or apprenticeship is right for you.

Vocational schools and apprenticeships are an attractive option for veterans who intend to further their education — these programs are generally more affordable



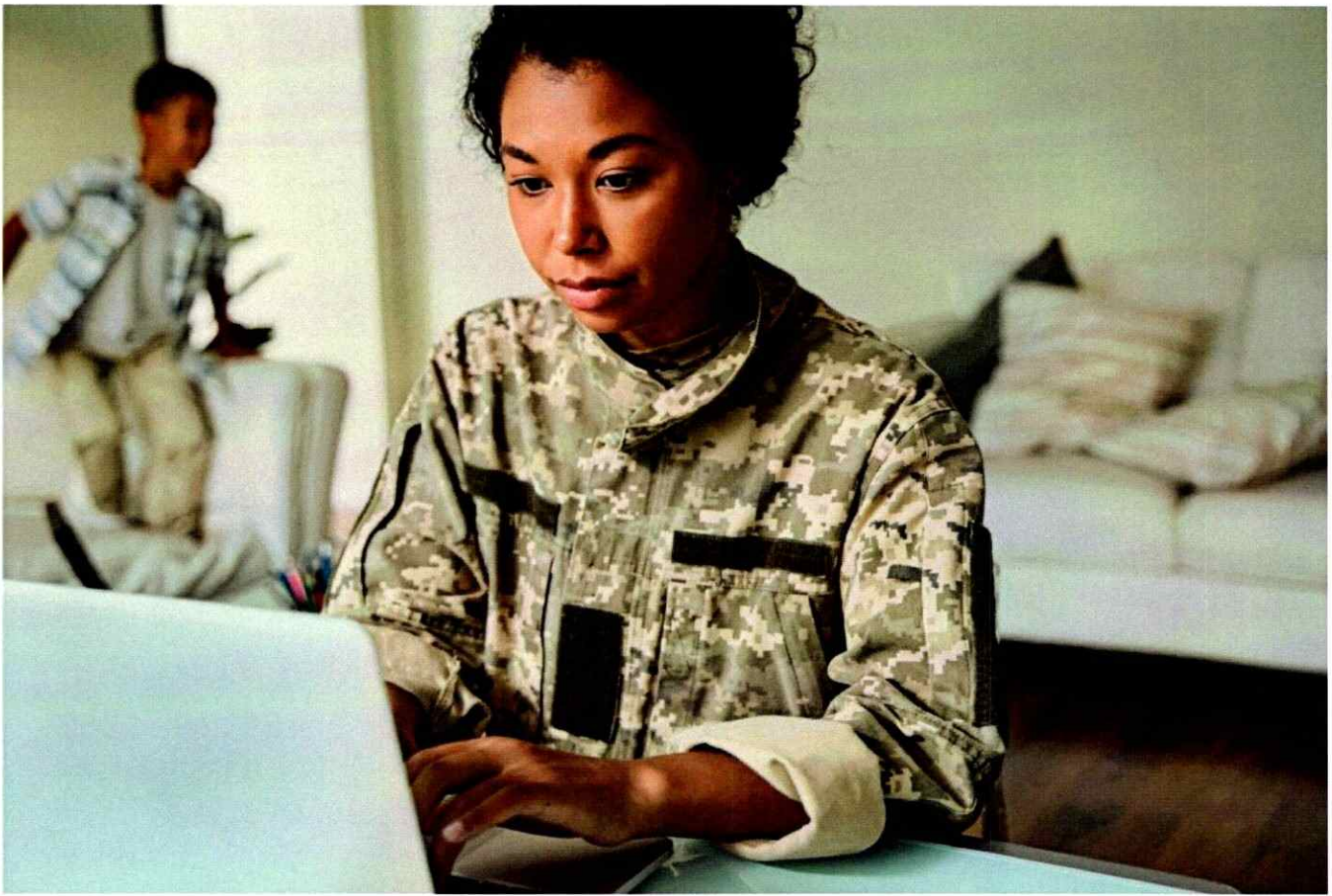
than traditional college, and yet they often offer even better career opportunities than many jobs that require a four-year degree.

[Occupations that only require a certificate](#) from a vocational school include captain of water vessels, ship engineer, and aircraft mechanic, which all have a median yearly salary of \$60,000 to \$79,999. In addition to these relatively high-paying jobs, many certificate-level careers are fast-growing as well. Certificate-level occupations like medical assistant and nursing assistant are projected to add 50,000 new job openings from 2020 to 2030.

[Occupations that only require an apprenticeship](#) also offer high-paying job opportunities. For example, elevator and escalator maintenance workers earn an average yearly salary of \$80,000 or more.

## **Covering the Costs of Vocational Schools or Apprenticeships**





If you decide to attend a vocational school or pursue an apprenticeship, you'll need to figure out how much of the cost is covered by your GI Bill benefits. Depending on your situation, the cost might be completely covered, or you may still need to pay thousands of dollars per year out of pocket.

There are several different benefit levels for both versions of the GI Bill. For example, unless you were awarded a Purple Heart or discharged due to a service-connected disability, you will need to have served on active duty for at least 36 months to be eligible for the [Post-9/11 GI Bill's maximum benefit](#).

The [benefit level for MGIB-AD](#) depends on whether you served for at least 36 months as well as your training schedule (full-time, half-time, etc.) The [benefit level for MGIB-SR](#) is solely based on your training schedule.

One key difference between the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the MGIB is how they distribute their funds. With the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the money for your tuition and fees is sent directly to your school, while the housing allowance and stipend for books and supplies is sent to you. With the MGIB, all the money is sent to you rather than the school.

There’s also an important similarity between these two bills that you should be aware of – for apprenticeships, both the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the MGIB begin reducing your benefits after your first six months of training.

Below, we’ve provided details on the maximum benefits offered by both active versions of the GI Bill for vocational schools and apprenticeship programs. This information will allow you to calculate how much funding you can receive in your specific situation.

## Non-college vocational programs

The following table breaks down the maximum GI Bill benefits for vocational schools (also known as “non-college degree granting institutions”) as of [August 2022](#). To determine your monthly housing allowance (MHA), use the VA’s [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#).

GI Bill Type	Tuition & Fees	MHA	Books & Supplies
Post-9/11	\$26,381.37 per year	Generally, the same as BAH for an E-5 with dependents.	\$1,000
MGIB-AD	\$2,150 per month	N/A	N/A

<b>MGIB-SR</b>	\$407 per month	N/A	N/A
----------------	-----------------	-----	-----

## Apprenticeships

This table breaks down the maximum GI Bill benefits for apprenticeships as of [August 2022](#):

GI Bill Type	Tuition & Fees	MHA	Books & Supplies
<b>Post-9/11</b>	N/A	100% of MHA (first six months)	\$1,000
<b>MGIB-AD</b>	\$1,612.50 per month	N/A	N/A
<b>MGIB-SR</b>	\$305.25 per month	N/A	N/A

## From Soldier to Civilian: Choosing a New Career





Veterans learn a whole host of valuable skills over the course of their service that transfer to the civilian workforce. To demonstrate that fact, we used CareerOnestop's [Veterans Job Matcher](#) tool to pair common military jobs from every service branch with civilian occupations that require similar skills and knowledge. All of the civilian jobs we found require only a vocational degree or apprenticeship.

## Air Force

### [Flight Engineer \(1A1X1\)](#)

Flight engineers are responsible for diagnosing and repairing issues with military aircraft as well as monitoring performance before, during, and after flights.



Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Aircraft Mechanic	Diagnose and repair aircraft issues, adjust engines and other parts for optimal performance.	<a href="#">Lewis University</a> - Aviation Maintenance Technician License
Electronics Installer and Repairer, Transportation Equipment	Install, adjust, and maintain electronics on trains, aircraft, and other mobile equipment.	<a href="#">Pittsburg State University</a> - Electrical Technology Certificate

### [Pararescue Specialist \(1Z1X1\)](#)

When an injured pilot is in need of medical attention in a hostile or otherwise unreachable area, pararescue specialists are responsible for extracting them and treating their injuries.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	Assess injuries and provide basic emergency medical care.	<a href="#">Eastern Kentucky University</a> - Basic Emergency Medical Technician Certification
Paramedic	Assess injuries and provide medical care, including advanced procedures such as inserting IV lines and applying pacemakers.	<a href="#">UCLA Center for Prehospital Care</a> - Paramedic Program

## Cable and Antenna Systems Specialist (3D1X7)

Responsible for installing and maintaining the systems that allow operations teams to communicate with pilots from anywhere in the world.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Telecommunications Equipment Installer and Repairer	Install and maintain the communications equipment that is used to support telephone, television, and internet networks.	<a href="#">University of Denver</a> - Telecommunications Technology Certificate
Electronics Installer and Repairer, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	Install and repair electronic equipment such as transmitters and antennas.	<a href="#">Northwood Technical College</a> - Industrial Maintenance Technician Technical Diploma

# Army

## Combat Engineer (12B)

Responsible for building fighting positions, clearing obstacles, and developing other creative engineering solutions to support combat missions.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program

Brickmason	Use materials such as brick, structural tile, and concrete block to build and repair structures.	<a href="#">Hinds Community College</a> – Brick, Block & Stonemasonry Program
First-Line Supervisor of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	Coordinate the activities of firefighters and fire prevention workers.	<a href="#">American Public University</a> – Certificate in Fire Science

### [Combat Medic \(68W\)](#)

Responsible for administering emergency medical care in the field and training other soldiers in first aid courses.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Surgical Assistant	Assist with medical operations under the supervision of surgeons – depending on state law, this may include making incisions, manipulating tissues, and closing surgical sites.	<a href="#">Bevill State Community College</a> – Surgical Technology Certificate
Licensed Practical Nurse	Care for patients in settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and private homes.	<a href="#">Idaho State University</a> – Practical Nursing Program

### [Army Firefighter \(12M\)](#)

Responsible for protecting lives and property from fire as well as performing emergency response duties during hazardous material spills.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Firefighter	Extinguish fires and respond to other emergency situations.	<a href="#">Eastern Kentucky University</a> - Industrial Fire Protection Certificate
Fire Investigator	Inspect buildings to identify fire hazards, gather facts to determine the cause of fires.	<a href="#">St. Petersburg College</a> - Fire Inservice Training

## Army National Guard

### [Motor Transport Operator \(88M\)](#)

Responsible for transporting cargo and troops, loading and unloading vehicles, and reporting issues with vehicles.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Heavy Truck Driver	Drive a tractor-trailer or a truck with a capacity of at least 26,001 pounds.	<a href="#">Vincennes University</a> - Tractor Trailer Driver Training
Automotive Service	Diagnose and repair issues with vehicles.	<a href="#">Pittsburg State University</a> - Automotive Service



Technician	Technology Certificate
------------	------------------------

### Psychiatric/Behavioral Health Nurse (66C)

Responsible for providing mental healthcare services to soldiers and their families.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Psychiatric Technician	Provide care for patients with mental or emotional conditions.	<a href="#">Cypress College</a> - Psychiatric Technician Certificate
Nursing Assistant	Provide basic care, such as monitoring health status and feeding patients, under the direction of licensed nursing staff.	<a href="#">Dixie State University</a> - Nurse Assistant Program

### Carpentry and Masonry Specialist (12W)

Under the direction of combat engineers, carpentry and masonry specialists are responsible for building structures using lumber, concrete, stones, and bricks.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Carpenter	Build and repair structures using wood and comparable materials.	<a href="#">University of Montana</a> - Carpentry Certificate

Stonemason	Build stone structures such as piers, walls, and abutments.	<a href="#">Big Sandy College</a> - Stonemason Certificate
------------	---	--

## Coast Guard

### [Diver \(DV\)](#)

Responsible for sweeping waterways during security missions, conducting salvage operations, and inspecting hulls.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Motorboat Operator	Operate small motor-driven boats and assist with navigational activities.	<a href="#">SUNY Maritime College</a> - U.S. Powerboat Handling Certification

### [Health Services Technician \(HS\)](#)

Responsible for providing daily medical care to Coast Guard personnel and their families.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Medical Assistant	Perform clinical duties, such as recording vital signs and drawing	<a href="#">Concordia University Wisconsin</a> - Medical

	blood, under the direction of a physician.	Assistant Certificate
--	--	-----------------------

### Damage Controlman (DC)

Responsible for installing and repairing shipboard structures as well as operating defensive equipment.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Plumber	Install and repair pipe systems that carry liquids and gasses such as water, steam, and air.	<a href="#">Hinds Community College</a> - Plumbing & Construction Program
Boilermaker	Build and maintain steam boilers and related equipment.	<a href="#">Ivy Tech Community College</a> - Boilermaker Apprenticeship Program

# Marine Corps

### Electrical Equipment Repair Specialist (1142)

Responsible for maintaining various electrical systems, including electric motors, motor control circuits, and power generation equipment.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
-------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------

Electrician	Install and maintain electrical wiring and equipment.	<a href="#">Hinds Community College</a> - Electrical Technology Certificate
Electrical Installer and Repairer, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	Install and maintain electrical equipment at generating stations, substations, and in-service relays.	<a href="#">Pittsburg State University</a> - Electrical Technology Certificate

### [Metal Worker \(1316\)](#)

Responsible for using welding tools to repair equipment.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Sheet Metal Worker	Build and install sheet metal products such as ducts, control boxes, drainpipes, and furnace casings.	<a href="#">Bates Technical College</a> - Sheet Metal Technology Program
Structural Iron and Steel Worker	Build structures using iron or steel materials.	<a href="#">Ivy Tech Community College</a> - Ironworker Apprenticeship Program

### [Signals Intelligence \(21\)](#)

Responsible for collecting information such as email, text, and voice communications through the interception of electronic signals.



Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Audio and Video Technician	Manage equipment such as microphones, video cameras, and connecting cables.	<a href="#">Wilmington University</a> - Undergraduate Certificate in Video Production
Sound Engineering Technician	Manage equipment for recording and editing audio.	<a href="#">Berklee Online</a> - Music Production Programs

## Navy

### [Machinist's Mate \(MM\)](#)

Responsible for ensuring the operation of a ship's engines, compressors, refrigeration equipment, and air conditioning equipment.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Ship Engineer	Operate and maintain engines, boilers, deck machinery, and refrigeration equipment aboard ships.	<a href="#">The University of New Orleans</a> - Coastal Engineering and Sciences Certificate Program
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanic	Install and maintain equipment such as air conditioning units, hot-air furnaces, and heating stoves.	<a href="#">Indian State River College</a> - HVAC Technical Certificate

## Builder (BU)

Responsible for building structures such as piers, bridges, and towers.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Worker	Install iron bars and rebar mesh in order to help reinforce concrete.	<a href="#">Gateway Community College</a> - Certificate of Completion in Construction Trades, Ironworking
Insulation Worker	Install insulating materials to help control and maintain temperature.	<a href="#">American River College</a> - Insulator Apprenticeship Certificate

## Hospital Corpsman (HM)

Responsible for providing medical services such as first aid, minor surgery, laboratory work, and prescriptions.

Similar Civilian Career	Job Description	Top Educational Program
Health Information Technologist	Help design, develop, and modify computerized healthcare systems.	<a href="#">University of Utah</a> - Healthcare Information Technician Program
Phlebotomist	Draw blood for testing, transfusions, and donations.	<a href="#">Ultimate Medical Academy</a> - Phlebotomy Technician Program

# Scholarships for Veterans

Scholarships are another option for funding your education. While there are many scholarships available exclusively for veterans, not all of these awards can be used for vocational schools or apprenticeships. Below, we've highlighted some of the best scholarships for veterans that can apply to vocational schools and apprenticeships:

## [Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship](#)

Since 2013, Sport Clips has provided over 2,000 "Help A Hero" scholarships (worth a total of more than \$9 million) through their partnership with the VFW. Most veterans of the National Guard or Selected Reserve who can demonstrate financial need will qualify for this scholarship, which awards up to \$5,000.

**Deadline to apply:** April 30, 2023

## [Army Women's Foundation Legacy Scholarship](#)

Female veterans can receive \$1,000 to help pay for a certificate program with this scholarship. To qualify, you will also need to have a high school GPA of at least 2.5 and be enrolled in an accredited certificate-granting institution.

**Deadline to apply:** January 21, 2023

## [American Legion Auxiliary Non-Traditional Student Scholarship](#)



Every year, the American Legion Auxiliary provides a \$2,000 Non-Traditional Student Scholarship to one dues-paying member in each of their [five geographic divisions](#). This award can be applied to certificate-level programs.

**Deadline to apply:** March 1, 2023

## [Imagine America Foundation Military Award Program](#)

Veterans of any military service branch who can demonstrate financial need will qualify for this \$1,000 scholarship. This award can be applied to the [500+ vocational schools](#) that are partnered with the Imagine America Foundation.

**Deadline to apply:** Varies by school

## [Fleet Reserve Association Education Foundation Scholarships](#)

The Fleet Reserve Association distributes over \$90,000 in total scholarships every year. Awards of up to \$5,000 are available, and the only qualification is that you must be affiliated with the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard.

**Deadline to apply:** April 15, 2023

# Additional Resources for Veterans

There are some other helpful resources for veterans who are interested in vocational school or an apprenticeship that we haven't yet mentioned in this guide. Take a look at them below:



- [eBenefits](#). This service, which is maintained by both the DOD and the VA, provides you with all the tools you need to apply for and manage your military benefits.
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). The Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics collects information, such as the average compensation and growth outlook, for hundreds of different occupations. Few decisions are more important than choosing your career — this resource will help you make the most informed decision possible.
- [Veterans Upward Bound](#). This organization helps veterans prepare for postsecondary education programs through their counseling, mentoring, and tutoring services.
- [VetSuccess on Campus \(VSOC\)](#). The goal of this program is to help Veterans, servicemembers, and eligible dependents succeed at completing their education and preparing for the labor market. It does this by offering a coordinated delivery of on-campus benefits assistance and counseling services.
- [VetJobs](#). Once you've completed your education, this job board for veterans can help you find employment quickly.

# Ask an Expert: Educational Advice From the Field



## **Jim Bivens**

Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Advisor and  
retired Master Sergeant of the Marines

### **What advice do you have for a veteran going back to school?**

It's important to explore all of your options. Seek advice and information on potential career paths or employment opportunities from a subject matter expert in Veteran's benefits. You should be able to find someone at your local VA office. Then, apply for all of the benefits that apply to the field you want to go into. This ensures that you're not only making the right choice for you and your family, but maximizing your earned benefits as well.

### **How should a member of the armed forces go about choosing which version of the GI Bill to use?**

### **Do GI Bill benefits ever expire?**

## Will GI Bill benefits cover most vocational degree or apprenticeship expenses?

# Interested in a degree instead?

Learn more about online degrees, their start dates, transferring credits, availability of financial aid, and more by contacting the universities below.

Advertisement

EXPLORE ALL ONLINE PROGRAMS

### Southern New Hampshire University

You have goals. Southern New Hampshire University can help you reach them. Whether you need a bachelor's degree to get into a career or want a master's degree to move up in your current career, SNHU has an online program for you. Explore popular programs or choose from 200+ affordable and accredited online Associate, Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

[Learn More](#)



[Visit Site](#)

EXPLORE ALL ONLINE PROGRAMS

### University of Maryland Global Campus

For 75+ years, UMGC has transformed lives by offering adults the opportunity to expand their skills and earn the credentials they need to succeed again. UMGC offers 125+ degrees and

certificates, financial resources and lifetime career services.

[Learn More](#)



[Visit Site](#)

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)

**University of Miami**

Able to be completed in as few as 16 months, the online MBA program from Miami Herbert Business School prepares professionals to transform global business and build deep connections within Miami's thriving ecosystem. No GMAT is required to apply. Experience the multicultural and future-focused program that reflects the city of Miami.

[Learn More](#)



[Visit Site](#)

[View More Programs](#)



---

# Intelligent

Enabling smarter  
choices to produce the  
greatest advantage,  
utility, and  
satisfaction.



© 2024 Intelligent.com

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)