



Liberty Common High School Military Information Guide

The information contained in this guide is subject to change.
All eligibility requirements and timelines should be verified independently.

United States Military

Most people join the military by enlisting in one of its branches. Enlisted members make up most of the military workforce. They receive training in a job specialty and do most of the hands-on work. Usually, you'll sign up for four years of active duty and four years inactive. After you've completed your active-duty time, you can either extend your contract or re-enlist if you want to continue serving.

To [join as an officer](#), you typically must have a four-year college degree and complete an officer program. Most officers are managers who plan and direct operations. Others are professionals like doctors and lawyers. Officers get paid more than enlisted members and enjoy certain other benefits. You do not have to join as an officer to become one though. You can join as an enlisted member and attend officer training later on.

Military Branches

The U.S. military has six branches of service: [Army](#), [Navy](#), [Air Force](#), [Coast Guard](#), [Marine Corps](#), and [Space Force](#). The requirements to join are similar for all six. The main differences are in age limits, test scores, and fitness levels. Men and women meet different fitness standards. Besides the requirements listed here, a branch may have other requirements.

[The Air Force](#) is part of the Department of Defense (DOD). It's responsible for aerial military operations, defending U.S. air bases, and building landing strips. Its service members are airmen. The reserve components are Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. [The Space Force](#) falls within the Department of the Air Force. It organizes, trains, and equips space forces to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and provide space capabilities to the joint force.

[The Army](#) is part of the DOD and is the largest of the military branches. It handles significant ground combat missions, especially operations that are ongoing. Army Special Forces are called Green Berets for their headgear. The Army's members are its soldiers. The reserve components are the Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

[The Coast Guard](#) is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It provides national security and search and rescue for America's waterways, seas, and coast. It's responsible for stopping drug smugglers and others breaking maritime law. It enforces marine environmental protection laws. Service members are Coast Guardsmen and nicknamed Coasties. The reserve component is the Coast Guard Reserve.

[The Marine Corps](#) is part of the DOD. It provides land combat, sea-based, and air-ground operations support for the other branches during a mission. This branch also guards U.S. embassies around the world and the classified documents in those buildings. Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) members are known as Raiders. All service members are called Marines. The reserve component is the Marine Corps Reserve.

[The Navy](#) is part of the DOD. It protects waterways (sea and ocean) outside of the Coast Guard's jurisdiction. Navy warships provide the runways for aircraft to land and take off when at sea. Navy SEALs (sea, air, and land) are the special operations force for this branch. All service members are known as sailors. The reserve component is Navy Reserve.

HOW TO ENLIST IN THE MILITARY

Age for Enlisting

You must be at least 17 to enlist in any branch of the active military.

Educational and Testing Requirements for Enlisting

You must have a high school diploma or a GED.

You must take the [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery \(ASVAB\)](#) test. The ASVAB is given once a year on campus and has [10 subtests](#).

- Your scores on four of those make up your [Armed Forces Qualification Test \(AFQT\)](#) score. This score determines which branch(es) you may join. Each branch has its own lowest score for joining.
- Your scores on all 10 sub-tests determine which job specialties you qualify for.
- You can [prepare for the ASVAB](#) by taking sample questions.

Health and Fitness Requirements for Enlisting

You must pass a [military entrance medical exam](#). This includes a physical exam, hearing test, vision test, and height and weight measurements. Each service has its own physical requirements and fitness standards. These depend on the demands of its mission. Even within the same branch, some jobs have tougher or extra requirements.

Steps for Joining the Military

Start by researching [your options for joining the military](#). Learn about the six active-duty branches and their part-time counterparts. Know the main differences between officers and enlisted members. And [explore the career fields](#) you can enter for each branch.

Once you know which branch you're considering, contact a recruiter. A recruiter will give you an overview and answer your questions about that service. If you're interested in more than one branch, contact a recruiter for each. If you're interested in joining as an officer, the recruiter will explain any options you may be eligible for.

If you decide to enlist, you will report to a [military entrance processing station \(MEPS\)](#). You'll spend a day or two completing pre-enlistment steps. These include taking the ASVAB, having a physical exam, meeting with a career counselor, and if you're accepted, taking the oath of enlistment. From there you'll receive orders for basic training, usually to start within a few weeks. If you enroll in a delayed entry program, you'll go home and get orders for basic training within a year.

Contact a Recruiter or Apply Online:

[Air Force & Space Force](#)

Fort Collins: [\(970\) 286-5142](#)

Colorado Air National Guard: [\(303\) 929-7768](#)

[Army](#)

Fort Collins: [\(970\) 223-7291](#)

Loveland: [\(970\) 663-2850](#)

Colorado Army National Guard - Fort Collins: [\(720\) 527-3656](#)

[Navy](#)

Fort Collins: [\(970\) 204-1735](#)

[Marine Corps](#)

Fort Collins: [\(970\) 223-0017](#)

Loveland: [\(970\) 667-1755](#)

[Coast Guard](#)

Westminster: [\(303\) 252-0919](#)

HOW TO JOIN THE MILITARY AS AN OFFICER

Commissioned officers generally enter the Military with a four-year college degree or greater. In certain cases, enlisted service members can advance and transition to officers during the course of their military career as well. Officers are generally employed in management roles or highly specialized fields that require professional degrees (e.g., doctors, lawyers and chaplains).

An officer's education often determines which career he or she will have in the Military. In most cases, the candidate will meet with a military advisor or career counselor during college to select a potential job specialty.

If you're interested in serving as an officer, you have five options:

- Enroll at a traditional college or university with a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program
- Attend a service academy
- Attend a senior military college or maritime academy
- Attend Officer Candidate School (OCS) after graduating from college
- Receive a direct commission after earning a professional degree
- Advance through the enlisted ranks and then complete officer training

ROTC PROGRAMS

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a college program offered at more than 1,700 colleges and universities across the United States that prepares young adults to become officers in the U.S. Military. In exchange for partial to full tuition assistance, participants, or cadets, commit to serve in the military after graduation. Each service branch has its own take on ROTC.

[Army ROTC](#) is one of the most demanding and successful leadership programs in the country. The training a student receives in Army ROTC provides leadership development, military skills and career training. Courses take place both in the classroom and in the field, and are mixed with normal academic studies. Additional summer programs, such as Jump School, may also be attended. Upon completion, an Army ROTC graduate is commissioned as an officer in the Army.

As the single largest source of Navy officers, the [Navy ROTC](#) program plays an important role in preparing young adults for leadership and management positions in the increasingly technical Navy. Offered at 77 leading colleges and universities throughout the United States, Navy ROTC offers a mixture of military training and normal academic study. Courses take place both in the classroom and in the field. Upon completion, an NROTC graduate is commissioned as an officer and has the ability to choose an officer career in surface warfare, naval aviation, submarine warfare or special warfare.

The [Air Force ROTC](#) mission is to produce leaders for the Air Force and build better citizens for America. The program is offered at more than 1,100 college and university campuses throughout the United States. Air Force ROTC offers a four-year program and a three-year program, both based on Air Force requirements and led by active-duty Air Force officers. Courses are a mix of normal college classes and the Air Force ROTC curriculum, which covers everything from leadership studies to combat technique. Upon completion, a student enters the Air Force as an officer.

SERVICE ACADEMIES

These highly competitive schools are virtually free of charge for those accepted. Students are sometimes given a living stipend as well to help cover fees, a personal computer and other class supplies. In return, the student commits to serving as an officer for a set period after graduation, usually five years.

<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy & Marine Corps</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Coast Guard</u>	<u>Merchant Marine</u>
U.S. Military Academy T: 845-938-4041	U.S. Naval Academy T: 410-293-1000	U.S. Air Force Academy T: 719-333-2025	U.S. Coast Guard Academy T: 800-883-8724	U.S. Merchant Marine Academy T: 516-726-5800
<u>Applications:</u> Feb. 1 of Junior Year - Jan 31 of Senior Year	<u>Applications:</u> Apr 1 of Junior Year - Dec. 31 of Senior Year	<u>Applications:</u> Mar. 1 of Junior Year - Dec. 31 of Senior Year	<u>Applications:</u> Jul. 15 before Senior Year - Jan. 29 of Senior Year	<u>Applications:</u> May 1 of Junior Year - Feb. 1 of Senior Year
Nomination info	Nomination info	Nomination info	Nomination not required	Nomination info
<u>Admissions Per Year:</u> 1,200	<u>Admissions Per Year:</u> 1,400	<u>Admissions Per Year:</u> 1,110	<u>Admissions Per Year:</u> 300	<u>Admissions Per Year:</u> 450

Applying to a Service Academy

Applying to a service academy is much more arduous and multi-layered than applying to other universities. While there are variations in the process, below is a general outline of what the process entails. Ideally the student will begin in the junior year. Here are the key elements, but be sure to check with each academy as these vary. **Always keep printed and digital copies of ALL paperwork.**

Summer Seminar — not a requirement but highly recommended. The student applies beginning in December of the junior year. The one-week session is essentially a boot camp in the summer between the junior and senior year and gives a snapshot of the first year at an academy.

Preliminary Application — gives enough information to an academy whereas they say, "Yes, you can apply." Then a full application is sent to the student by the academy.

Recommendations — Be sure to check with each Academy to verify the required letters of recommendation. Letters most likely are from a math teacher, one from an English teacher, and one from the school counselor. The student may sometimes be able to submit one from a principal, coach, clergyman, or Scout leader.

Congressional Nomination — submitted by a U.S. Congressman, Senator, or Vice President. The student in the spring of junior year should contact his/her congressman and senators to inquire about the process.

Standardized Tests — must submit SAT or ACT scores.

Official Application — must submit an official application. The earlier the better. The aphorism, "First come, first served," applies here.

Medical Examination — must have a physical and eye exam. DODMERB (Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board) will give you the names of doctors. Complete this as soon as possible to confirm health eligibility.

Fitness Test (Physical Aptitude Exam) — is sometimes administered by PE teachers. It usually involves such things as a one-mile run, sit-ups, shuttle run, kneeling basketball throw, and pushups/pullups. Each academy sets its own standards.

Interview — This is usually done by officers with special training for interviewing. This relationship is integral to a positive outcome. An intriguing aspect of the process at one academy is that the student could receive a "letter of assurance" in September of the senior year but still not be admitted. Another unique feature of these applications is that students may hear as early as October or as late as May of their senior year.

Nomination Process – A nomination for service academies is required for the Air Force Academy, West Point, Annapolis and/or the Merchant Marine Academy. The Coast Guard does not require a nomination. It is recommended that you apply for a nomination through both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

You can seek a nomination from:

- A member of the U.S. House of Representatives who represents the congressional district in which the student resides
- Either of the U.S. Senators from the student's state
- Directly from the Vice-President of the United States

Colorado's U.S. Senator Bennet and U.S. Senator Hickenlooper have a joint nomination process; however, each has different requirements. A student only needs to apply to one but will be considered by both.

U.S. Senator Bennet's Application Requirements and Process

<https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=academy-nominations>

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner Nomination Requirements:

<https://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov/academy-nominations/>

SENIOR MILITARY COLLEGES

Similar to service academies, senior military colleges (SMCs) offer a combination of higher education and military instruction. They are among the most prestigious and famous education institutions in the world, and they offer financial aid packages for eligible students. Every SMC cadet must participate in the [Reserve Officers' Training Corps \(ROTC\)](#) program, but only those cadets who receive an ROTC scholarship are required to enter military service following graduation.

Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets T: 979-862-2862	Norwich University T: 802-485-2000	Virginia Military Institute T: 540-464-7230	The Citadel T: 843-225-3294
Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets T: 540-231-6858	University of North Georgia T: 706-867-2918	Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership T: 540-887-7042	

MARITIME ACADEMIES

An additional option for students is a maritime academy. The United States Merchant Marine is the fleet of civilian-owned merchant ships that carry cargo and passengers on behalf of the United States. In times of war, the Merchant Marine is an auxiliary to the Navy and can be called upon to transport service members and supplies for the Military.

Maritime academies produce shipboard officers for vessels integral to shipping and transportation needs, but a service commitment is not always required.

Massachusetts Maritime Academy T: 508-830-5000	Great Lakes Maritime Academy T: 231-995-1213	Maine Maritime Academy T: 207-326-4311
California State University Maritime Academy T: 707-654-1000	State University of New York Maritime College T: 718-409-7221	Texas A&M Maritime Academy T: 409-740-4771

Online sources and direct links:

Today's Military: <https://www.todaysmilitary.com/>

USA.gov: <https://www.usa.gov/join-military>

MyFuture.com: <https://myfuture.com/>

Liberty Common High School contacts:

Dr. Robert Robinson - rrobinson@libertycommon.org

Bob Schaffer - bschaffer@libertycommon.org

Headmaster Bob Schaffer's Advice to Applicants for U.S. Military Academies and ROTC Scholarships

If you are interested in attending a U.S. service academy or a university on an ROTC scholarship, tell your college counselor, your principal, and other school administrators now, if you haven't already. If they are good at their jobs, they will help you make advantageous course selections, and choose worthy summer programs. They will guide you towards early leadership opportunities that will be useful on your resume and application, and in practical ways of skill preparation. For example, you should be continually seeking leadership roles, athletics, clubs, jobs, community service opportunities, etc., as early as possible. Ambitious academic coursework and excellent grades are essential.

Know exactly what you are getting into. Understand you are pursuing a highly rigorous education and simultaneous physical training to prepare you for a career of leadership in the Profession of Arms. You must be at peace with the likelihood you will be responsible for taking the lives of human beings, and risk your own in order to do so. Among the first questions you will be asked is why you want to attend an academy or train in an ROTC unit in order to ultimately commission as an officer. Be 100% prepared to answer solemnly, confidently, brilliantly, succinctly, and patriotically.

Your reasons for attending an academy or getting an ROTC scholarship should be genuinely patriotic. If successful, you should absolutely expect you will be faced with combat situations even though you may know of a few warriors and veterans who never were. If you are just looking for a great government-paid education and the acquisition of some unique job skills, then your application is really all about you; and that's one way to know you are not qualified.

- Be knowledgeable about challenges the military is facing right now and describe how you would be an asset.
- Be perceptive about challenges the military is facing currently and will face in the next five to ten years and describe how you *will* be an asset.
- "Because I want to fly jets," or "Because my uncle did it," or "Because I want to kill bad guys," or "Because I think submarines are awesome," are not patriotic reasons to attend an academy or join an ROTC unit.
- Read the Declaration of Independence right down to the last line "And in support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance upon the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor." Joining the military is essentially pledging to risk your life first. Know why you are willing to do this. If you are insincere or naïve in your reasoning, you are not qualified.
- Know the U.S. Constitution. Upon entering an ROTC program or academy, you will swear allegiance to the ideals and precepts of this document, and you will pledge your life to defending it. That's hard to do if you're not particularly familiar with it. Expect that, somewhere along the line in your application process, you will be asked about the U.S. Constitution and specifically what it is you want to devote your life to defending.
- Be committed to the Republic first (citizen leadership, God and family), teammates of a specific branch of the military (or its academy, college ROTC program) next – not the other way around.
- If you come to realize you are not committed to leadership in the U.S. military, it is more virtuous and patriotic to back out of this process immediately. Sometimes parents are more driven to see their kids become an officer than the candidate actually is. Do not feel compelled for some lesser reason to go through the motions. If you do, I assure you, your experience will be thoroughly miserable. You will not succeed. You will add to the toxic leadership that already undermines the military, and you may cause good people to die. Be honest enough, courageous enough, and virtuous enough to choose a different path.

Complete and submit your application materials no later than December. Do not turn them in late. Try to take your ACT/SAT tests early and often enough so that the results can be included in your application. Start the nomination applications at the same time as the scholarship or academy applications. Remember, applying for an academy nomination or an ROTC scholarship is a very competitive endeavor. You are competing against highly qualified applicants. Your competitors will not be turning in their materials late. Their academic scores are high. Their leadership profiles are solid and proven. They are physically fit. They will not make errors in their application materials.

Military personnel and veterans who truly know you well make excellent recommendation writers. High-school teachers, coaches, and administrators are very credible recommendation writers, too. So are employers, pastors, and other community leaders who know you well. There is an advantage to having a math, English, science, and/or physical-education teacher who you trust to write a strong and truthful academic recommendation. If they don't know you well, don't ask them to write a letter on your behalf. It shows.

When requesting someone to write a letter of recommendation, specify what you need in your letter – many letter writers really don't know, and they will appreciate your guidance. Copy the following statement, and paste it into your written request for a letter of recommendation, and edit accordingly and to style:

Ma'am (or Sir): In your letter, please speak to my leadership abilities, character, and community involvement. Your description of an example or two would give me an advantage in my application. Examples are stories, and stories are more powerful than simply saying something like, "**(Your name here)** is courageous and executes under pressure." I'm told that examples of applicants overcoming adversity are especially persuasive. I think it would be great if you wrote about that time when you observed me **(your story details here)**. Please know that the readers of your letter will appreciate actual demonstrated qualities. Your personal testimony could really help set me on a course to becoming a well-prepared military officer.

Seek out credible people who know these stories about you, who can retell them, who believe in you, and ask them to write your recommendation letters.

Make sure your written materials and essays are excellent, and your best work. Have a minimum of two people you trust proofread everything before submitting your application. Typos, grammar errors, bad punctuation, etc., will disqualify you. Heed good advice about content. Many applicants write absolutely stupid things in their application essays. Give your proofreaders ample opportunity to let you know if you're about to submit something detrimental to your success.

When supplying your application materials, adhere to the format given on Congressional or military-application websites and online-application portals. Do not try changing the font, adding pages, or other cute attempts to add cheap flair to your application. If your achievements, personal story, character, etc., somehow seem insufficient to you, they probably are. Playing with the font settings will further jeopardize your chances of success.

Understand the difference between an academy nomination, an academy appointment, and an academy letter of assurance. It is important to know that your initial academy-application material and your interview are the first steps in the process of obtaining a nomination from your Member of Congress. If you succeed in getting a Congressional nomination, that's a really big deal; but you still have not received an actual appointment. An appointment comes in the form of a formal appointment (or acceptance) letter. Only the military itself – an academy official – can tell you that you have been appointed. Simple rule: Politicians nominate. Military officials appoint. You are not "in" until you receive an official notice of appointment on military letterhead.

Do not hesitate to ask questions if you do not understand the application process, or if you need more information. Contact your congressman's staff, your college advisor, your recruiter, your ROTC-unit staff, as appropriate.

In your application, do not include a copy of every award you have won since kindergarten. At 17 years of age, it is not expected your accomplishments will even fill one page. Overkill can kill your chance of getting a nomination.

Although it is desirable to meet the Member of Congress before the interviews, most have a nomination committee made up of volunteers and congressional staff. Most Members rely on scores and recommendations that come from these committees in determining which candidates they will nominate. So, don't think you will receive a nomination because you happen to know the Member of Congress personally. It is far more important to simply prepare yourself for the panel interview.

Never offer to support a Congressman – with your volunteer time, a favor, your vote, a campaign donation, etc., – in exchange for consideration of an academy appointment. If you even hint at linking the two – intimating a *quid pro quo* – a conscientious Member of Congress (believe it or not, there are several of them), will disqualify you on the spot. This goes for parents trying to influence their kids being nominated. Plus, it can be a felony.

Do not have your parents contact Congressional offices or manage your application on your behalf. You are proposing to become an officer in the world's most competent military, and to lead others into battle. If you need your mom to manage your application, you are not qualified. Demonstrate you are self-reliant, and tenacious. Do all the legwork yourself. Rely upon your parents only for advice, proofreading, and prayers.

Be prepared for your interview.

- Before your interview, prepare ten pre-written thank-you notes – handwritten, neat, legible. You will give these to your interview panelists at the end of your interview. You will give one to each Congressional staff member organizing the interview session and to the Congressman whose nomination you are seeking. For ROTC interviews, you will give them to the ROTC staff. The notes should express sincere thanks for giving you the opportunity to be considered. State clearly in one line that it is your highest desire to serve your country as an officer of the U.S. military and that you are completely devoted to the cause. Take these notes with you to the interview.
 - Dress appropriately. This is the interview for the education and opportunity of a lifetime. A suit and tie, or sharp business suit/dress is essential. If you don't have one, buy or borrow one for the interview. Thrift stores sell very inexpensive, very presentable, used suits, in your size. If you already wear a uniform (prior enlisted, Cadet prep-school, Civil Air Patrol, etc.) it is to your advantage to wear it to the interview. No jeans. No high-school letterman jackets. No short skirts. No gym shoes. No hats.
 - Do not chew gum during the interview.
 - Mind your personal appearance and grooming. Men with long, shaggy, unkempt hair, or unshaven faces, tend to get low marks from interview panelists. Women's hair should be neat. Makeup should be moderate, professional, and non-distracting. No unnatural hair colors. No facial piercings, hardware protruding from your face, bones through your nose, fishing lures dangling from your ears, etc. You are proposing to become an officer in the most lethal military force in the history of human civilization. Look the part. Present yourself at your interview in the same way a competent officer is expected to appear.
 - Shake hands with everyone you meet. Introduce yourself. Say, "It's an *honor* to meet you (Sir or Ma'am)."
 - Answer all questions with Sir or Ma'am. Proper manners are expected always in the military.

In addition to your personal appearance, be aware of your other non-verbal communications. Do not fidget. Do not let your hands become a distraction. Look your interviewers in the eyes and speak directly. Do not appear nervous, or stunned (deer-in-the-headlights). Breathe, relax, smile.

Be prepared for extremely difficult ethical questions during the interview. These questions typically have no right or wrong answer, but are designed to test your moral and ethical fortitude and decision-making ability. You may even want to have a principal, coach, advisor, warrior, veteran, etc., conduct practice interviews with you. Be prepared to respond to hypothetical situational questions. For example,

Suppose you are the captain of your high-school basketball team. The night before the championship game, you discover your high-scorer teammate lied about his physics test score in order to remain eligible for the big game. As captain, what would you do?

Familiarize yourself with the values and ethics codes of the military. They are stated differently in each branch, but are fundamentally similar. For example, Army Values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage (LDRSHIP). Practice responses to interview questions about these virtues. For example,

Prompt: *Give an example of a mistake you have made and tell us how you dealt with it and learned from it.*

Response: *As a kid, I lacked a sense of loyalty when I did _____; but, I overcame it by doing _____, and I have come to understand how vitally important loyalty is in life. As a result of that hard lesson, I can assure you that, today, I completely recognize and embrace the value of loyalty, and I would be eager to teach these values to others.*

Be prepared for questions about leadership, commitment, adversity, etc. Having a few situations and example responses prepared or rehearsed in advance can greatly improve your delivery. Be able to give solid examples of how you have provided leadership. Be able to give solid examples of how you have projected moral integrity. Be able to tell a story about how you triumphed over adversity.

Know the West Point honor code, the Naval Academy honor concept, or the Air Force Academy honor code by heart.

Be prepared to discuss your physical abilities. Consult the Internet and look up the physical-fitness standards of the various military branches. Know the maximums and minimums for the Army physical-fitness test. You can take the test on your own beforehand. Your high-school physical-education instructor, anyone serving in active military, and veterans can help test you. When asked about this in an interview, showing you are knowledgeable of the standards, and being able to discuss them is an advantage. Being able to say you can already meet the physical standards, is a huge advantage.

Be healthy. Stay healthy. It is crucial for you to be aware that, prior to being accepted into an academy or an ROTC unit, your health and physical condition will first be assessed by The Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB). In 2018 in Colorado, around 30% of military-academy nominees (people who succeeded in securing nominations from their senator or Congressman) were next determined ineligible for academy acceptance due to medical disqualifications.

- Visit the DoDMERB website to review a general description of the military's medical criteria, and to see if there are any obvious reasons you might be physically disqualified.
- There is an appeal process. If relevant to you, learn about it.
- Stay off skis, skateboards, horses, etc. Don't engage in thrilling health risks that could end up denying your admission, a scholarship, or a patriotic career as a U.S. military officer. Torn ACLs, severe head/neck injuries, drug abuse, etc., are typical nonstarters.

Be prepared to discuss your experience and successes working in groups. The military thrives on teamwork. Becoming a proficient leader entail knowing how to be a dependable follower. Interviewers are wary of lone wolves, prima-donnas, recluses, know-it-alls, high-maintenance types, loud mouths, control freaks, etc. Proven experience participating on, and contributing to the success of teams, work groups, organizations, etc., is a big plus.

Be prepared to answer questions about your long-term goals. If a cover letter is required in your application materials, include at least one paragraph about your long-term life goals, even just the next ten years will be incredibly valuable. Your interviewers will have your application materials in front of them, and are likely to ask you to elaborate on your essays or other information you have submitted.

Though patently unfair, women should be especially prepared to answer questions about family goals. Women applicants have reported being asked how they would handle having a family and serving in the military – something to which most 17-year-olds haven't given much thought. These kinds of questions are considered off-limits in civilian job interviews. They are technically off-limits in academy/ROTC interviews, too. Nonetheless, female officers consulted for the composition of this document advised these kinds of questions are common in the context of military interview panels. They urged female applicants be forewarned in order that they might be better prepared.

Keep an open mind about other paths to becoming a commissioned officer. After all, in every case you'll be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant or an Ensign. You may be asked why you're applying for ROTC instead of an academy, or vice versa. Why Army instead of Navy? You get the idea. Read the materials about all academies and be prepared to answer questions about why you would or would not like to attend one of the other academies or serve in another branch. Also, be thinking about your response if you are not selected by an academy, but qualify for an academy prep school.

Learn to be politically astute (Welcome to the military).

- For academy nominations:
 - Know something about the Congressman from whom you are asking for a nomination. If he backed Clinton, do not dwell on how much you admire Trump.
 - Search for statements your Congressman has made on defense, the military, or the academies. If you have similar viewpoints, mention a point or two of agreement. If you have opposing views, talk about something else.
 - Learn as much as you can about your Congressman's application process. Who's on the interview committee? What can you learn about them beforehand? Does the Congressman get involved in the process, or is he/she hands-off?
- For ROTC interviews:
 - Learn as much as you can about the ROTC unit you're hoping to join. Does it have a reputation? What is it particularly good at?
 - Learn about your Cadre. Learn their names. Read their bios on the unit's website. Figure out how you would be their dream-team member. Orient yourself wisely. Articulate your ambitions accordingly.

Take a few seconds before answering questions. Think through what you want to say before you start spouting off. Thoughtfulness is an admirable trait in the military officer corps. Listen carefully to the question. Take a deep breath. Take a sip of water (interview panelists often provide candidates a bottle of water). Then, give a thoughtful, articulate, impressive answer.

Don't take too long responding to questions. Interviews have time limits, and panelists have a battery of prepared questions for you. If you take 20 minutes to answer a question, you may be precluding yourself from addressing other insightful questions that your more succinct competitors find time to answer. Managing your time so as to answer more questions is better than over-answering only a few. Remember: You will not get to re-do this interview. It's your one shot. Don't miss your target.

At the end of your interview, thank your interview panelists and those who organized the process. Typically, interview panelists are community volunteers. Give each one of them one of your pre-written thank-you notes. Restate verbally, how honored you are to have had the opportunity to meet with them and to be considered for a nomination. Ask them for business cards. Write down as many of their names as you can remember.

After your interview, send additional follow-up thank-you notes to the Member of Congress, to the specific staff members who coordinated your interview, and to your interview panelists. Do this immediately via post mail. If you do not have mailing addresses for your interview panelists, you can send them to the Congressman's office and ask the staff there to forward the notes along. For ROTC interviews, you should be able to find all your contacts and mailing addresses at the unit's website.

Pray about every aspect of the application, nomination, and appointment process; and about your eventual service in the military. If you think this last piece of advice is irrelevant to the country and to battlefield success, then you fail to understand your Declaration of Independence, and the history of American warfare. Service in the Armed Forces should only be considered within the context of your proper duties to God and family (as those outweigh any allegiance to state and nation). If serving in the U.S. armed forces presents to you any such conflict, do not pursue military service as a way of life. Appeal to the Almighty for the rectitude of your intentions. Ask for God's blessings upon the country, upon yourself, your family, your future colleagues, and upon everything you do in pursuit of an officer position in the Profession of Arms – just like General Washington did.

Very truly yours,



Bob Schaffer

Headmaster, Liberty Common School & Liberty Common High School



Chairman, Colorado State Board of Education (2006 – 2013)

Member of Congress from Colorado (1997 – 2003)

Colorado State Senator (1987-1997)

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