



Student Military Guide

Military Pathways for Tennessee Students

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Contents

Introduction..... 3

The ASVAB and Enlistment Pathways 3

 Minimum ASVAB Enlistment Scores by Branch..... 3

 ASVAB Line Score Requirements..... 3

 Combat Arms and Operational Roles 4

 Technical and Mechanical 4

 Intelligence, Cyber and Communications 5

 Medical and Psychological Services 5

 Aviation and Aerospace 5

 Administration, Legal and Clerical..... 5

 Special Forces and Elite Programs 5

Tennessee National Guard 6

The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC)..... 7

 ROTC Prerequisites..... 7

 To Contract with ROTC (i.e., commit to a military service obligation), students must:..... 8

 Service Commitment After Graduation 8

 ROTC Scholarship Scores Comparison Table 8

 Tennessee Universities with ROTC Programs 8

Service Academies 9

 Academic Requirements 9

 Physical and Medical Requirements 10

 Receiving an Academy Appointment 10

Incentives and Bonuses for Enlisted Members 11

 Bonuses..... 11

 Education and Career Incentives..... 11

 Education Benefits..... 12

Conclusion 12

Introduction

This guide serves as reference for high school guidance counselors and career advisors who support students exploring military service after graduation.

While many students express an interest in serving, they are often presented with only one path: enlistment through a local recruiter. This limited approach can overlook alternative opportunities that may better align with a student's academic goals, leadership potential, or career aspirations. Some of these opportunities involve the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs, federal service academies, and the Tennessee National Guard.

This guide is designed to equip advisors with a comprehensive understanding of the various pathways to military service, including eligibility requirements, timelines, academic and physical standards, and associated obligations. It provides essential information to help ensure that advising is personalized, informed, and inclusive of all available options.

By offering clear, structured insights into each military pathway, this guide empowers educators to facilitate meaningful conversations, foster student readiness, and promote purposeful decision-making that honors the full spectrum of military careers available to Tennessee students.

The ASVAB and Enlistment Pathways

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is the standardized assessment used by all U.S. military branches to measure a student's aptitude for military service and job placement. The test consists of multiple subtests that evaluate skills in math, verbal reasoning, science, and technical knowledge.

Minimum ASVAB Enlistment Scores by Branch

- Army: 31 ([ASVAB Test and Preparation | U.S. Army](#))
- Air Force: 31 for high school seniors and graduates, 50 for GED holders ([ASVAB - U.S. Air Force](#))
- Space Force: 46 ([All Source Intelligence Analyst Enlisted Careers | U.S. Space Force](#))
- Marines: 31 for high school seniors and graduates, 50 for GED holders ([General Requirements | Marines](#))
- Navy: 31 for high school seniors and graduates, 50 for GED holders ([Navy Rating ASVAB Score Requirements](#))
- Coast Guard: 32 ([Get Started | United States Coast Guard](#))

ASVAB Line Score Requirements

The ASVAB measures knowledge and skills across ten subtests, which are then grouped into **composite scores**, known as **line scores**, that are tailored to each branch's classification system. These line scores reflect strength in core areas such as:

- **General Technical (GT)** – arithmetic reasoning, vocabulary, and reading comprehension;
- **Mechanical Maintenance (MM)** – mechanical comprehension, auto/shop knowledge;
- **Skilled Technical (ST)** – verbal expression, general science, mechanical comprehension, and mathematics;
- **Clerical (CL)** – word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and arithmetic reasoning;
- **Combat Operations (CO)** – a branch-specific mix often emphasizing physical readiness and basic reasoning; and
- **Verbal Expression (VE)** – combined word knowledge and paragraph comprehension.

Every military job (called MOS in the Army and Marine Corps, an AFSC in the Air Force, or a Rating in the Navy and Coast Guard) has specific minimum line score requirements based on the knowledge and abilities needed for success in that role. While hundreds of military jobs exist, they are organized into **functional categories** that share similar skill requirements and ASVAB profiles.

The following provides a practical breakdown of typical ASVAB line score ranges by **job role category**, offering a streamlined way to understand score-to-job alignment.

Note: The Air Force and Space Force simplifies ASVAB scoring into four categories: G – General (AR+WK+PC), M – Mechanical (MC+AS+EI), A – Administrative (WK+PC), and E – Electronics (AR+MK+EI+GS).

Combat Arms and Operational Roles

Examples: Infantry, Armor Crewman, Field Artillery, Security Forces, Combat Engineers, Maritime Law Enforcement

- Typical ASVAB line scores:
 - Army: CO 87+, GT 90+
 - Marines: GT 90 – 105
 - Air Force/Space Force: G 30-45
 - Navy/Coast Guard: VE + AR ~ 100+

Technical and Mechanical

Examples: Aircraft maintenance, vehicle repair, construction equipment, engineering aides, nuclear propulsion technicians

- Typical ASVAB line scores:
 - Army: MM 98 – 107
 - Marines: MM/EL 100+
 - Air Force: M 47-70
 - Navy: AR + MK + EI + GS composite ~ 200s

- Coast Guard: VE + MC + AS 170 – 190

Intelligence, Cyber and Communications

Examples: Signals Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Networking, Cryptologic Technicians, Intelligence Analyst

- Typical ASVAB line score:
 - Army: GT 105-110, ST or EI 105+
 - Marines: GT and EI composites 110+
 - Air Force: G or E 60 – 70
 - Navy: CT roles require VE + AR in mid 100s

Medical and Psychological Services

Examples: Combat Medics, Corpsmen, Behavioral Health Technicians, Aerospace Medical, Pharmacy Technicians

- Typical ASVAB line score:
 - Army: GT 107+, ST 101+
 - Marines: GT 105+ for Army 68 series equivalents
 - Air Force: G 44 – 64
 - Navy: HM (Hospital Corpsman) VE+MK+GS >150 – 165

Aviation and Aerospace

Examples: Aircraft Mechanics, UAV Operators, Air Traffic Control, Flight Engineers

- Typical ASVAB line score:
 - Army: MM or EI 100 – 110
 - Marines: MM/EI/GT 105+
 - Air Force: M or E 60+
 - Navy: AE and AT (Aircraft Electrician's Mate and Aviation Electronics Tech) AR+MK+EI > 220 – 225

Administration, Legal and Clerical

Examples: Human Resources, Legal Services, Postal Clerks, Administrative Specialists

- Typical ASVAB line score:
 - Army: CL 90 – 100
 - Marines: GT 95+
 - Air Force: A 35 – 50
 - Navy: VE+MK ~105 – 115

Special Forces and Elite Programs

Examples: Army Special Forces (18X), Navy SEAL/SWCC, Marine Recon, USAF Pararescue, Warrant Officer, Flight

- Typical ASVAB line score:
 - Army: GT 110+

- Marines: Recon not ASVAB dependent, but GT 110+ is favorable
- Air Force: G 50+, plus physical screening
- Navy: SEALs require GS+MC+EI composite ~ 200

The ASVAB line score information is not all-inclusive and may vary based on recruiting goals by branch. It is recommended to check with each branch's recruiting website to verify specific role requirements.

Tennessee National Guard

The National Guard serves as a unique dual-mission force, operating under both state and federal authority. National Guard soldiers can be mobilized by the President of the United States to support federal missions overseas or activated by the Governor to respond to state emergencies such as natural disasters, civil disturbances, or other crises.

In Tennessee, the Tennessee Army National Guard (TNARNG) maintains units and armories across the state, providing trained and ready forces to support domestic operations, assist in disaster relief, and augment the United States Army during national missions. While the Army Reserve is exclusively a federal force activated only by the U.S. President, and the Active Duty Army serves full-time in federal service, the National Guard is distinct in its community-based structure. The members typically serve part-time while working in their local communities, maintaining the flexibility to answer both state and national calls to service.

The TNARNG has **eight** major commands across the state of Tennessee.

Major Command	Number of Personnel	Location
164th Airlift Wing	897	Memphis, TN
194th Engineer Brigade	1,872	Jackson, TN
118th Wing	1,116	Nashville, TN
117th Regiment, Regional Training Institute	110	Smyrna, TN
30th Troop Command	1,366	Tullahoma, TN
35th Division Sustainment Brigade	1,756	Chattanooga, TN
134th Air Refueling Wing	1,314	Louisville, TN
278th Armored Cavalry Regiment	3,578	Knoxville, TN

With numerous commands, units, and mission sets spread across the state, the Tennessee Army and Air National Guard offer an exceptionally wide range of career paths for potential enlistees. On the Army side, options range from combat arms roles, such as infantry soldiers, armor crewmen, and field artillery specialist, to critical support MOS, including logistics, signal communications, intelligence analysis, engineering, and medical services. The TNARNG also maintains specialized units such as the 278th Armored

Calvary Regiment, which provides both reconnaissance and armor capabilities; the 35th Sustainment Brigade, which delivers supply and transportation support; and military police units tasked with security and law enforcement.

Tennessee's aviation presence is particularly robust. The Army Aviation Support Facilities in Smyrna and Jackson operate UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, supporting missions ranging from troop transport and air assault to disaster relief and search-and-rescue operations. For those drawn to aviation, opportunities exist not only for pilots but also for aircraft maintainers, avionics specialists, and flight operations personnel.

The Tennessee Air National Guard adds an additional dimension of specialized careers. With wings based in Memphis, Knoxville, and Nashville, airmen can serve in roles tied to strategic airlift, aerial refueling, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, cyber operations, and aircraft maintenance. From operating massive C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft to performing sophisticated cyber defense missions, the Air Guard offers both high-tech and hands-on specialties that directly support national defense and state emergency responses.

The breadth of opportunities means that whether an individual is seeking a physically demanding combat role, a technical career in aviation or cyber, or a profession in logistics, medicine, or engineering, the Tennessee National Guard can offer a path that aligns with their skills, interest, and long-term goals, while allowing them to serve close to home and contribute directly to the security and resilience of their communities.

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps is a college-based program designed to prepare students to become commissioned officers in the United States Armed Forces. Offered at many colleges and universities across the country, ROTC allows students to pursue a traditional college education while also receiving military training and leadership development.

Students enrolled in ROTC take military science courses alongside their regular academic coursework and participate in leadership labs, physical training, and summer training programs. Upon graduation, students who successfully complete the ROTC program are commissioned as Second Lieutenants (or the equivalent rank) in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps, depending on the branch they chose.

ROTC offers scholarships that can cover tuition, fees, and other educational expenses in exchange for a service commitment after graduation. It is one of the most accessible and structured paths to becoming a military officer while earning a college degree.

ROTC Prerequisites

- Be a U.S. citizen (or be in the process of obtaining citizenship)
- Be at least 17 years old and no older than mid-20s by graduation (age limits vary by branch)

- Have a high school diploma or equivalent
- Meet physical fitness and medical standards
- Be enrolled (or planning to enroll) in a college or university that offers an ROTC program
- Maintain a satisfactory academic record and GPA (often a minimum 2.5 for scholarship)

To Contract with ROTC (i.e., commit to a military service obligation), students must:

- pass a Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Review Board (DoDMERB) physical;
- pass the branch-specific fitness test; and
- meet moral standards (no felony convictions, strong character references).

Service Commitment After Graduation

- **Army ROTC:** Typically, four (4) years of active duty or eight (8) years in the Army Reserve/National Guard
- **Air Force ROTC:** Four (4) years of active duty (longer for certain career fields like pilots)
- **Navy ROTC:** Five (5) years of active duty
- **Marine Corps ROTC:** Four (4) years of active duty
- **Space Force (via AFROTC):** Currently follows Air Force commitment terms

ROTC Scholarship Scores Comparison Table

Branch	GPA (min & competitive)	SAT (min & competitive)	ACT (min & competitive)	Notes
Army	2.5 & 3.5+	920 & 1200+	19 & 26+	Strong emphasis on leadership and athletics
Marine	2.5 & 3.3+	1000 & 1150+	22 composite & 24+	Physical fitness heavily weighed
Navy	3.0* & 3.5+	1100 & 1250+	21 math/22 English & 26+	STEM majors prioritized
Navy Nurse Option	3.0 & 3.5+	1100 & 1250+	21 math/22 English & 26+	Nursing prerequisites must be met
Air Force	3.0 & 3.6+	1240 & 1300+	26 & 28-32+	Academics/STEM preferred
Space Force	3.0 & 3.6+	1240 & 1300+	26 & 28-32+	Same as Air Force; STEM heavy

* Navy ROTC does not publish a hard GPA minimum but a 3.0+ is strongly recommended for scholarship applicants

Tennessee Universities with ROTC Programs

List of Tennessee Universities with an Army ROTC Program:

- Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN
- Belmont University, hosted by Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
- Bethel University, hosted by University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN
- Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, TN
- Christian Brothers University hosted by University of Memphis, Memphis, TN
- East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
- Fisk University, hosted by Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

- Freed-Hardeman University, hosted by University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN
- King University, hosted by East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
- Lane College, hosted by University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN
- Lemoyne-Owen College, hosted by University of Memphis, Memphis, TN
- Lincoln Memorial University, hosted by Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, TN
- Lipscomb University, hosted by Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
- Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN
- Milligan University, hosted by East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
- Rhodes College, hosted by University of Memphis, Memphis, TN
- Tennessee State University, hosted by Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
- Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, TN
- Trevecca Nazarene University, hosted by Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
- University of Memphis, Memphis, TN
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, hosted by University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Knoxville, TN
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Knoxville, TN
- University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN
- University of Tennessee Health Science Center, hosted by University of Memphis, Memphis, TN
- Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Service Academies

There are five U.S. service academies that offer fully funded, four-year undergraduate programs and commission graduates as officers in the U.S. military.

Academy	Location	Branch	Commission Upon Graduation
U.S. Military Academy (USMA)	West Point, NY	Army	Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army
U.S. Naval Academy (USNA)	Annapolis, MD	Navy/Marine Corps	Ensign, U.S. Navy or Second Lieutenant, USMC
U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA)	Colorado Springs, CO	Air Force/Space Force	Second Lieutenant, USAF or USSF
U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA)	New London, CT	Coast Guard	Ensign, U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA)	Kings Point, NY	Merchant Marine/Navy Reserve	Multiple options (see below)

Academic Requirements

- **GPA:** Typically, 3.75+ unweighted is competitive

- **Course Rigor:** Must include four (4) years of English, four (4) years of math (through pre-calc or calculus), 2+ years of lab sciences (including chemistry and physics), U.S. history, and a foreign language.
- **Standardized Tests (SAT/ACT):**
 - SAT: Competitive scores ~1300–1450+ (Math-heavy)
 - ACT: 28–33+ composite, strong math/science emphasis
- **Class Rank:** Top 10 percent preferred
- **Leadership:** Student government, sports captain, club officer, or significant leadership roles expected

Physical and Medical Requirements

The Candidate Fitness Assessment (CAF) is a required physical test for applicants to USMA, USNA, USAFA, and USMMA. It measures strength, agility, speed, and endurance to ensure candidates are physically prepared for military training. The CFA events are the (1) Ball throw, (2) Pull-ups, (3) Shuttle Run, (4) Modified Sit-ups, (5) Push-ups, and (6) One-mile run.

The Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB) is an exam that includes vision, hearing, orthopedic, and cardiovascular checks. Medical disqualifications may include a history of asthma past age 13, significant vision problems (like nearsightedness or color blindness), hearing loss, ADHD requiring medication past age 14, depression or anxiety disorders, certain orthopedic conditions (like scoliosis or joint instability), and chronic medical issues such as diabetes or seizures. **While many conditions can result in an initial disqualification, applicants may request a medical waiver, which is reviewed based on the needs and standards of the specific service branch.** Students should contact a DoDMERB representative or the admissions office of the specific academy or ROTC program they are applying to for the most accurate and up-to-date guidance.

Receiving an Academy Appointment

The path to receiving an appointment to a U.S. service academy begins early and requires consistent effort across academics, leadership, and physical preparation. Ideally starting in grades 9 or 10, students should focus on excelling academically and athletically while building a strong leadership resume through programs like Civil Air Patrol, Scouts, JROTC, or by serving as a team captain or club officer. Early exposure to academy life, such as visiting academy websites and attending outreach events, can also be beneficial.

During junior year, candidates should apply to each academy's summer seminar programs such as the Summer Leaders Experience (SLE) at West Point, the Naval Academy Summer Seminar (NASS), or the Air Force Academy Flight Screening Program (AFASS), take the SAT or ACT as early and often as needed to reach competitive scores, and officially open a candidate file through each academy's admissions portal. This is also the time to begin serious preparation for the CFA.

Another crucial step is securing a nomination, which is required for USMA, USNA, USAFA, and USMMA. Applicants can seek nominations from both U.S. Senators, their U.S. Representative, the Vice President, or

through specific military-affiliated channels if eligible. Since each office sets its own fall deadline, it's important to apply to all sources early. Notable, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy does not require a nomination.

By senior year, candidates should finalize their application, which includes submitting transcripts, essays, recommendations, CFA results, and completing the required medical evaluation through DoDMERB. All materials are typically submitted by January 31. Throughout the process, it is important to remain competitive, continue excelling in school and leadership roles, stay in touch with your admissions liaison, and be prepared for nomination interviews or academy outreach calls.

Incentives and Bonuses for Enlisted Members

Bonuses

Depending on a variety of factors, including service branch job specialty (MOS/AFSC/Rating), education level, and the evolving needs of the military, qualified enlistees may be eligible for enlistment bonuses. These incentives are used to fill high-demand roles or encourage longer initial service commitments.

Historically, enlistment bonuses have ranged significantly across branches and career fields. Examples:

- Up to \$50,000 for Army recruits entering high-demand jobs like Special Forces, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), or select cyber and medical specialties.
- \$25,000–\$35,000 for Air Force recruits committing to roles in linguistics, cryptologic analysis, or aircraft maintenance.
- \$30,000+ for Navy recruits entering nuclear propulsion or submarine electronics fields.
- \$20,000+ for Marine Corps positions with extended commitments in technical or infantry roles
- \$10,000–\$20,000 for Coast Guard recruits with critical certifications or those entering hard-to-fill billets.

Bonus amounts may also vary based on:

- the length of the enlistment contract (e.g., 4 years vs. 6 years),
- timing (e.g., mid-year bonuses to address shortfalls), and
- prior service status (e.g., prior service bonuses for returning veterans).

These incentives are subject to frequent updates based on recruiting needs and federal funding levels. Students interested in pursuing enlistment are encouraged to consult directly with a recruiter to verify current eligibility and bonus offerings.

Education and Career Incentives

In addition to potential enlistment bonuses, military service provides a wide range of non-monetary incentives that can significantly benefit a service member's education, career development, and long-term financial health. These programs are among the most compelling reasons students choose to serve.

Education Benefits

- **Post 9/11 GI Bill:** Covers full tuition and fees at public colleges and universities, or a capped amount for private institutions. Includes a monthly housing allowance and an annual book stipend. Benefits can often be transferred to spouses or children after meeting service requirements.
- **Tuition Assistance (TA):** Each service branch offers TA for active-duty service members, typically covering up to \$250 per credit hour and a maximum of \$4,500 per year toward college or vocational coursework taken while in service.
- **Credentialing Assistance (Army COOL, Navy COOL, etc.):** Pays for civilian-recognized certifications and licenses related to military occupational specialties (e.g., welding, cybersecurity, EMT, logistics, etc.).
- **Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP):** Available in select roles and branches, this program repays qualifying federal student loans, up to \$65,000 in some cases.

Career and Transition Support

- **Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training (OJT):** Programs allow service members to earn industry-recognized credentials while serving in technical roles.
- **SkillBridge (DOD):** Allows service members nearing the end of their service obligation to participate in internships or fellowships with civilian employers for up to 180 days, while still drawing military pay.
- **VA Home Loan Eligibility:** After completing a qualifying period of service, veterans are eligible for a VA-backed home loan with no down payment and no private equity mortgage insurance.
- **Healthcare and Insurance:** Service members receive comprehensive healthcare coverage through TRICARE during service, with continued VA healthcare eligibility after separation.

Conclusion

Military service offers a broad spectrum of career opportunities, educational benefits, and personal growth pathways for Tennessee students. Whether a student is seeking to enlist directly after high school, pursue a college education through ROTC, or earn a commission via a federal academy, each route provides a unique and rewarding experience shaped by individual goals, values, and readiness.

This guide is designed to equip educators, counselors, and career advisors with the tools and knowledge necessary to support informed, personalized conversations about military service. By understanding the diverse options available and the academic, physical, and character requirements of each, advisors can help students align their aspirations with the military pathways best suited to their strengths.

Ultimately, the goal is not to steer every student toward military service, but to ensure that those who are called to serve do so with clarity, purpose, and a complete understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities ahead.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, educators and students should maintain open lines of communication with official military recruiters, ROTC programs, and service academy offices.

Branch	Official Website	General Recruiting Phone Number
U.S. Army	goarmy.com	1-888-550-ARMY (1-888-550-2769)
U.S. Navy	navy.com	1-800-USA-NAVY (1-800-872-6289)
U.S. Air Force	airforce.com	1-800-423-USAF (1-800-423-8723)
U.S. Marine Corps	marines.com	1-800-MARINES (1-800-627-4637)
U.S. Space Force	spaceforce.com	Recruited via Air Force; use USAF contact
U.S. Coast Guard	gocoastguard.com	1-877-NOW-USCG (1-877-669-8724)
Army National Guard	nationalguard.com	1-800-GO-GUARD (1-800-464-8273)
Air National Guard	goang.com	1-800-TO-GO-ANG (1-800-864-6264)