

Ten Points to Consider Before Signing a Military Enlistment Agreement

1. Do not make a hasty decision by enlisting the first time you see a recruiter or at a time when you are upset or feeling directionless. A recruiter is a salesperson who will give only a positive, one-sided picture of life in the military. Don't make this important decision when you are depressed, hard up for work, confused or unsure about your future, or pressured by your family. This decision affects many years of your life; don't make it lightly.

2. Take a witness with you when you speak with a recruiter. There is a lot of information to take in. A friend can take notes, offer a fresh perspective & help you ask questions.

3. Talk to veterans. Veterans can give you an honest view of military life, both good and bad.

4. Consider your moral feelings about going to war. The mission of the military is to prepare for and wage war. If you cannot in good conscience engage in war or in killing, you should not consider enlisting. If you become opposed to war after you join, you have the right to seek a discharge, but it is a long, difficult, and uncertain process and some who refuse to fight, based on their conscience, spend time in jail.

5. Get a copy of the enlistment agreement. Read the fine print carefully and repeatedly, especially the part about what the military can order you to do. You do have a right to take this home, look it over, make a copy and ask others about it.

6. There is no "period of adjustment" during which you may request and receive an immediate honorable discharge. Once you have left for basic training, you must fulfill the full number of years (usually eight, with some of these in the reserves) on your enlistment contract. You cannot leave of your own free will. The military, however, may decide you are "unsuitable" and discharge you without your consent.



7. Get all your recruiter's promises in writing but also remember that the military can change the terms (such as the promised pay, job, or benefits) of your work. Though there are no guarantees, a written statement may offer you (as a service member) some protection if promises are not met. However, the contract is more binding on you than on the military. You are ultimately responsible for information on the form, so don't tell lies, even if pressured by your recruiter to stretch the truth.



For more info, visit SPAN at www.StudentPeaceAction.org or contact:

8. There are no job guarantees in the military. The military is not required to keep you in the job you trained for on a full-time or permanent basis. In fact, most recruiters were involuntarily re-assigned to their jobs. Placements are mostly dependent on what the military perceives it needs at the time, not on what skills you most want to get. Most military jobs are in areas which account for only a small percentage of civilian jobs, so the skills you learn are often not transferable when you get out.

9. Military personnel cannot exercise all of the civil liberties enjoyed by civilians. You do not have the same constitutional rights. Your rights to free speech, assembly, petition, and exercise of individual expression (such as clothing or hairstyle) are restricted. You must follow all orders given to you, whether you agree with them and consider them right or fair.

10. Many non-military opportunities exist for you to serve your community and enhance your skills. Before you decide to enlist, check out other options that would help you "be all you can be." Travel, education, money for school, job training, public service and adventure can all be found in other ways. Your local community may even have opportunities that you hadn't considered.

Already signed an agreement? Contact the G.I. Rights Hotline www.GIrights.org