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Tips for Returning to School as a Military Veteran

As military veterans settle back into civilian life, many feel unsure about their next steps. This is understandable—the options can be overwhelming! Going back to school could be an excellent opportunity to pursue your dream career or chase a passion for entrepreneurship. Whatever your goals, there are numerous online resources, such as the [VFW Department of Rhode Island](#), where you can access education and find information about thriving in society as a veteran. Keep reading to learn more about returning to school after your service!

Why Go Back to School?

Veterans have several great reasons to pursue a higher education. Transitioning from military to civilian life is tough, but enrolling in a college program can provide structure and direction to ease your transition. Through your educational program, you can meet new people, access social support, and find a replacement for the [sense of camaraderie](#) that you experienced in the military.

Of course, education will also improve your job opportunities. As the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics explains, obtaining a certificate, diploma, or degree in your field of interest can help you land a job that you love and even receive a [higher salary](#) over the course of your career. College-bound veterans can even help further the academic field! We can always use more veterans in academia to drive military research and expand on our knowledge of the veteran experience.

Pursue an Online Degree

Today, there are many different ways to receive an education. Attending an online university is a great option for veterans who are looking to cut costs, save time, and earn a degree on the side of a day job. Online class is also ideal for veterans with disabilities, since [disabled students](#) typically face several barriers in higher education. Through online schools like WGU, you can pursue all kinds of career paths, from business to teaching. For example, [you could earn](#) a master's degree in education, a degree in marketing, or a master of business administration (MBA)—all online!

Access Financial Assistance

Another thing to consider before going back to school is how you plan to pay for your education. Fortunately, veterans have several options for financial assistance. The [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#), for example, can help you cover your tuition, access money for housing, and receive additional benefits to help with the cost of books, supplies, and moving expenses.

DSST exams are another beneficial program for veterans. [DSST exams](#) can help you earn college credits for your military experience, so you can save time and money while fast-tracking your education. You also have access to a number of military scholarships, grants, and loans designed to help veterans receive an education.

Use Your Military Skills to Thrive in School

Nervous about going back to school? Don't be! As ClearanceJobs notes, the [soft skills](#) you picked up in the military will come in extremely useful during your time in school and your subsequent job search. For example, military members have a lot of experience in leadership settings which can give you confidence to speak up in class discussions and lead group activities. Similarly, veterans have hands-on experience overcoming challenges and facing setbacks, which can help you persevere through long study nights and difficult assignments.

Your time in the military has given you an ability to thrive in unfamiliar environments, so you should be well-equipped to face university life! That said, it's completely normal to feel [out of your element](#) as you assume a new role and adapt to this new phase of your life. Joining social groups and leaning on the support of other student veterans can help you feel at home more quickly, whether on campus or online.

Going back to school is a great first step in paving the way for your post-military career. Veterans like you have all kinds of options when it comes to education and financial assistance, so be sure to take advantage of all the resources out there as you pursue your schooling. Don't let anything stop you from chasing your career goals and receiving the education you want!

Connect with the [VFW Department of Rhode Island](#) for ideas, events, and other opportunities to stay connected and strong in your journey.