



A Veteran's Resume and Job Hunting Guide

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Stephanie Nishimori is a Transition and Career Counselor for service members who are leaving the military. Stephanie provides guidance and support to help them prepare for new careers in the civilian world – this includes resume reviews, mock interviews, mentoring, facilitating multiple workshops, and supporting them post-transition.

The transition from military to civilian life is harder than most people think. Veterans are expected to make a big change in their environment, responsibility, and social atmosphere. Adding a job hunt on top of that can be a lot to handle. We've got you covered with all the essential information on finding a new job as a veteran. In this guide, we will cover many of the difficulties veterans face in their job transition, the best industries for veterans, how to find the right job, and how to prepare for the application process. First, let's identify the common challenges veterans face as they journey from military service to civilian work.

Challenges Faced by Veterans Looking for a Civilian Job

- **Degree deficiencies.** In order to advance their career, most veterans will need a degree that's related to their industry. It's not impossible to land a high-salaried job without a relevant degree, but this is uncommon and usually requires a lot of professional experience. To help with this dilemma, veterans can take advantage of benefits like the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) — eligible veterans receive up to 36 months of free or discounted college tuition, fees, housing, books, and supplies. [Tuition assistance](#) is available for active duty members of the military as well.
- **Undervalued soft skills.** The military is the ultimate team-building exercise. Veterans know what it's like to be part of a team and work within that dynamic toward a goal. They are taught to uphold diligence, loyalty, and integrity. What a veteran may lack in corporate training, they make up for in adaptability. But many companies don't really take these soft skills into account when making hiring decisions.
- **Employer bias.** Hiring managers that hold negative beliefs about veterans is another real obstacle. These people may believe veterans struggle within corporate America because they lack experience working in a professional office or business environment. Employers may be hesitant to hire because they assume a veteran will have PTSD or trouble adapting to civilian life. Also, the rigid formality cultivated within the highly-disciplined world of the military may not translate well during an

interview and could be interpreted as cold. These stereotypes are harmful and can cause frustration for veterans looking for work.

- **Chronic underemployment.** Although the overall [veteran unemployment rate](#) is lower than that of nonveterans, [underemployment is an issue](#). A recent Endowment report revealed nearly [one-third of veterans](#) looking for jobs are underemployed. Veterans are more likely to be employed but are commonly overqualified for their positions. They're working jobs that don't fully utilize their skillset or pay them well for their experience. The report also suggests veterans may be more likely to take the first job available when they initially leave military service, contributing to a greater likelihood of underemployment.
- **Poor translation of skills.** The skills you've gained in the military are valuable resources you bring to the corporate world. The challenge is converting years of military experience into language a civilian can understand. For example, if a former command sergeant major notes on their resume that they were responsible for \$36 million worth of equipment and 4,000 service members to demonstrate their leadership abilities, hiring managers might not see how numbers that broad relate to a smaller-scale job. Your resume should explain exactly how your military experience prepared you for whatever job you're applying to.

Best Industries for Veterans

Veterans can thrive in any field, but the job hunt can be made easier by focusing on certain industries. For example, careers within the aerospace and defense industry require skills that many veterans already possess. Government service positions specifically seek out veteran applicants for their military experience. Private companies are interested in hiring veterans to take advantage of tax breaks and salary subsidies, making them a desirable demographic to hire. Let's take a closer look at the four of the best industries for veterans.

Aerospace and defense

A number of companies operate within the aerospace and defense sector, providing products and services to both the government and the private sector. The major production focus is on military and security equipment in aircraft, weaponry, satellites, and vehicles. Due to this close military association, these companies make a considerable effort to hire and support veterans through jobs and even charitable donations. Veterans have often already obtained the security clearances needed to work within this industry, making them more desirable and convenient to hire. For example, Boeing has its own Veteran Talent Network that assists veterans who are transitioning to civilian jobs, and nearly 15% of the company's workforce are veterans. Examples of job titles within the aerospace and defense fields include:

- Aerospace Engineer
- Quality Engineer
- Senior Systems Engineer
- Structural Engineer
- Avionics Software Engineer
- Industrial Maintenance Technician

Government services

Veterans who would like to continue serving their country may find a job within government services fulfilling. Government jobs also tend to provide good benefits, such as generous vacation and sick leave policies. According to [the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), over 22% of government jobs were occupied by veterans. Open positions within the Department of Defense or Veterans Affairs may be especially desirable. The federal government's [Veteran's Preference](#) policy can give you an advantage over other applicants — Veteran's Preference applies to all [competitive service](#) positions as well as many [excepted service](#) positions, and eligibility for the different preference levels is determined by factors such as your dates of service, discharge type, medals awarded, and whether you have a service-connected disability. If you were to go into a government services career, here's a list of some common job titles:

- Security Analyst
- Public Health Representative
- Manufacturing Engineer
- Public Health Nurse
- Project Engineering Technician
- [Project Manager](#)

Information technology

Many military service members are trained to operate within the complex world of communications, making them great candidates for information technology jobs. IT work within corporate America looks like data analysis, maintaining computer systems, software engineering, and building programs. Increasing technology use in both government and corporate occupations makes work in this industry [fast-growing](#), a great indicator of opportunity. Veterans who pursue a career in IT will find high-paying positions that are constantly in demand. Here are some examples of the types of positions available within the IT industry:

- [Data Engineer](#)
- [Full Stack Java Developer](#)
- [Computer Scientist](#)
- [Cloud Engineer](#)
- [Software Engineer](#)
- [Python Developer](#)

Healthcare

Veterans who held medical roles within the military during their service would be great candidates for work within the healthcare field. However, many occupations within admin and management are available for those without direct patient experience. The military teaches its members to be strategic and work well under pressure, both essential skills for the healthcare industry. This is another workforce [expected to grow substantially](#) within the next ten years, making it a good choice for veterans who want a career they know will be in demand. The healthcare industry is full of a diverse range of career paths, but here is a list of some common job titles:

- [Certified Nursing Assistant](#)
- [Director of Nursing](#)
- [Clinician](#)
- [Orthopedic Surgeon](#)
- [Medical Records Manager](#)
- [Home Health Aide](#)

Which Civilian Industry Is Right for You?

There are plenty of civilian career opportunities available for veterans, so the most challenging part may be choosing which industry suits you. The first step in evaluating your potential career path is to take inventory of the skills you already have. What you're capable of reaches all the way back to your teenage years with your first jobs, throughout your military career, and extends into the future with endless learning opportunities. Take advantage of what you already know and consider what you'd like to learn more about.

Translating military-acquired skills to civilian careers

You have undoubtedly learned many valuable skills in the military such as team leadership, self-sufficiency, mechanical maintenance, and technology regulation. These skills can easily be carried over into the corporate world. If you're unsure of how your experience can translate, start by listing out all of your military experience and accomplishments first without trying to change anything. If you can't remember all that your military position(s) required, use the [O*NET Military Crosswalk Search](#) to get a complete list of roles and responsibilities specific to your classification(s). Then you can review your list and determine how those skills could translate into civilian work. Also, [My Next Move for Veterans](#) has a tool you can use to find civilian careers that are similar to your previous military occupation. The [Disabled Veterans National Foundation's translator](#) tool is another excellent resource that shows you how your military experience can be maximized.

Additional skills

Think about the experience you've had outside the military as well. Skills that you've gained through volunteer work, past jobs, higher education, and vocational training are valuable. These environments provided room for skill building, learning, taking on responsibility, and achieving accomplishments. Then, consider what you did or didn't like about any of your nonmilitary experiences. Identifying what kind of job you'd like to avoid can often help you determine the direction you should be going in.

Consider acquiring new skills

Veterans and nonveterans alike will have to consider that they may need more training to get the job they want. The traditional route of a college or university is always an option, but there are an increasing amount of easily accessible educational resources both online and in-person. Vocational schools,

technical skill bootcamps, affordable online courses, and internships are ways to gain new skills quickly and efficiently.

How to Find Job Openings

Once you have a good idea of the industry you'd like to enter or the position you want to apply for, it's time to start looking for job openings. One simple way to begin your search is to check in with your network of friends, family, and former colleagues. Many opportunities can be found among those who are already familiar with you and your abilities. Mentorships may also be able to open doors for your career (organizations such as [Veterati](#) and [American Corporate Partners](#) can help connect you with a mentor). Another option is to pursue a more entrepreneurial path in small business by considering your skills, interests, and hobbies and how you could transform them into your own business. However, if you would rather start out working for a company, the traditional job board is the best place to look. Our list below is a collection of online locations best suited for a veteran jobseeker.

- **Military.com — Veteran Jobs:** Since 1999, Military.com has served veterans and their families online by providing the latest defense news, veterans' benefits information, and employment support. The company's partnership with Monster.com has only expanded the employment opportunity available to veterans through Military.com. Unique tools like the [Military Skills Translator](#) and the [Transition Master Classes](#) are standout features on the website. Veterans can become free members of Military.com simply by registering for a free account.
- **HireVeterans:** Led by former active-duty Air Force officer Brian Reese, HireVeterans is a company dedicated to serving veterans, retirees, guardsmen, reservists, and spouses. HireVeterans has allied with military agencies and veterans organizations to provide recruiting opportunities to veterans looking for work. Job seekers can sign up to become a member of HireVeterans and apply for new positions found on the job board. The website also has a Help Desk feature full of resources for veterans and employers.
- **RecruitMilitary:** The team at RecruitMilitary is working to empower the military community by connecting employers and military job seekers. Over two million veterans, transitioning military, and military spouses have utilized the tools on the RecruitMilitary website. Veterans can create an account to track their job hunting progress, apply for positions on the job board, and work with professional recruiters. The company also hosts job fairs and provides a collection of publications: Search & Employ Magazine, VetNet Newsletter, and Veteran Hiring Insights Newsletter.
- **HireMilitary:** There are over 130 organizations that use this platform to hire veterans, military spouses, and transitioning service members. HireMilitary is also an authorized DoD SkillBridge provider — this program offers industry training, apprenticeships, and internships to active duty members of the military during their last 180 days of service.
- **ClearanceJobs:** As of this writing, over 2,000 pre-screened hiring companies are currently recruiting security-cleared professionals on ClearanceJobs. After you sign up and verify your security clearance, you'll be able to establish direct connections with recruiters and build relationships with employers in the defense and intelligence industries. You can set up alerts for when relevant job offers are published as well.
- **ZipRecruiter:** A company that had its beginnings in helping small businesses find talent, ZipRecruiter is now one of the largest online employment marketplaces. Although not specifically tailored to veteran job seekers, the company does have some unique features that assist veterans. The website's new Get Recruited tool uses AI technology to present your resume and profile to employers wanting someone with your set of skills and experience. ZipRecruiter also allows applicants to identify as a veteran, matching them up easily with employers who are actively looking to hire veterans.
- **Indeed:** Another sizable online job board is Indeed. Similar to ZipRecruiter, Indeed is a general job board that offers a few unique features for veterans. Jobseekers can search for "military veteran only" jobs and be presented with thousands of positions for applicants with military experience. Indeed also has a decent collection of resources for former military members looking for career transition information.
- **LinkedIn:** As one of the largest online professional networks, LinkedIn is a great place for veterans to look for work and expand their career opportunities. The company has a global mission to connect professionals across the globe and even provides a special offering just for veterans. Eligible current and former U.S. military service members and their spouses are granted a full year of access to [LinkedIn Premium for free](#). Members will be able to connect with hiring managers faster, see who has viewed your profile, and take advantage of over 15,000 expert-led courses.

The Basic Job Search Documents You'll Need

Document	What Is It?	Why Does It Matter?	How To Prepare?
DD-214	A certificate of release or discharge from active duty issued by the Department of Defense.	This certificate contains important information needed to verify military service for employment, retirement, benefits, and veteran organization membership.	Your DD-214 will be provided to you upon your discharge from the military. We recommend taking steps to preserve this document such as making physical copies or backing it up digitally. If you lose your original DD-214, you can get a new copy by submitting a military records request .
Resume	A formal document created by job applicants to summarize and showcase their relevant employment history, skills, and education.	Resumes show employers a snapshot of your professional background and help them determine who they should and shouldn't take the time to interview.	Your resume should be organized and concise. Translate your military skills into language that a civilian could understand, and only include information relevant to the position you're applying for.
Cover letter	A formal letter attached to a resume in which the applicant introduces themselves and explains why they would be a good fit for the position.	Cover letters give you a chance to dig deeper and provide details on key highlights of the work and educational experience you listed on your resume. It's a great way to add a personal touch to the application process and sell your skillset.	Your cover letter should be a one-page document beginning with a brief introduction. Use the next two paragraphs to give some examples of why you want the role, why you would be the best choice for the job, and how you've used your skills.

Writing Military-to-Civilian Resumes and Cover Letters

The biggest hurdle to jump as you write your military-to-civilian resume and cover letter is demilitarizing your language. This isn't about dumbing down the large responsibilities you held while in active service but about bringing out the most relevant aspects of your experience in a way that a nonveteran could understand. The best way to do this is to avoid using military abbreviations, ranks, titles, and classifications. For example:

- Use **team leader** instead of "squad leader"
- Use **employees** instead of "subordinates"
- Use **objective** instead of "mission"
- Use **data collection** instead of "reconnaissance"

Once you feel comfortable translating your skills and experience into civilian-friendly terms, the rest of the process is the same as it would be for a nonveteran. Just stick with the information that is most relevant to the position you're applying for and use an industry-appropriate template. Follow this simple list to keep your resume and cover letter organized and concise:

- **Provide a professional summary:** At the top of your resume, describe who you are, what you're capable of, and your work experience within one to three sentences. This is a bite-sized version of your resume that gives the hiring manager the essentials of your abilities and career goal. Expand on this within the introductory paragraph of your cover letter.
- **Speak to the employer's needs:** Keep your documents focused on what the employer needs. Study the job listing thoroughly and include keywords from the job description that are relevant to your experience. Your resume and cover letter are all about you, but they should be presented in a way that fulfills what the company is looking for.
- **List your experience in civilian terms:** Again, be sure to demilitarize your language as much as you can. You're doing this in order to communicate effectively with someone who may know absolutely nothing about military classifications. Expand on how your experience qualifies you for the role in your cover letter.

- **Include your educational background:** Employers want to know about your education, so be sure to provide a list of any formal training from highest degree to lowest on your resume. Internships and externships also count here. Your education should also be mentioned in your cover letter as a qualifying factor if applicable.
- **Highlight any relevant skills:** Take the time to itemize your list of skills and be sure they are written in a civilian-friendly way. You may not need to include all of the skills you possess, so keep this list relevant to the job you're applying for. Go into detail in your cover letter on how you used your skills to accomplish goals and make an impact within your previous military and nonmilitary roles.
- **Get a proofread:** Have another person take a look at your documents. Consider having someone who has no knowledge of military lingo proofread them. Can they understand what your experience and skills entail? Consider rethinking the way you convey these in your resume and cover letter if they are not being conveyed well.

Military-to-Civilian Resume Examples

Entry-level	Mid-career	Senior-level
<p>Shaun D. Wilson (959) 000-1111 wilsonmd@hotmail.com 4369 Briar Cove Dr., West Hartford, CT 06105</p> <hr/> <p>Profile</p> <p>A Security Guard with five years of military experience in the United States National Guard, specializing in conflict resolution and crisis management. A proven track record of managing security for high-risk personnel.</p> <hr/> <p>Professional Experience</p> <p>Security Guard, United States National Guard, West Hartford, CT June 2020 – Present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manage security operations for VIPs and special military events, prepare accident and incident reports, and identify potential security threats to high-risk personnel ● Lead a tactical unit of five MPs for surveillance operations, provide training, assign responsibilities, and ensure compliance with military security protocols ● Provide support for civil and criminal investigations <p>Security Guard, Connecticut Army National Guard, Groton, CT June 2017 – June 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wrote and submitted daily reports of security incidents and suspicious activities ● Patrolled site premises to maintain security and deter unlawful activities ● Monitored surveillance systems to prevent entrance of unauthorized personnel <hr/> <p>Key Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Firearm Handling and Safety ● Conflict Resolution ● Non-lethal Restraint Techniques (Baton and OC) ● Team Leadership ● Traffic and Crowd Control <hr/> <p>Education</p>		

Bachelor of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice

University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT September 2016 – June 2020

Basic Training

Connecticut Army National Guard, Groton, CT, September 2017 – November 2017

Certifications

- First Aid/CPR Certification, LifeForceUSA, Inc., 2017

Military to Civilian Cover Letter Examples

Entry-level

Mid-career

Senior-level

John Johnson

Police Officer | j.johnson@email.com | (123) 456-7890 | 444 Fourth Street, Joplin, MO 22222

January 1, 2021

Seth Smith
Human Resources Specialist
Columbia Police Department
(111) 222-2222
seth@columbiapd.gov

Dear Mr. Smith,

As a former United States Army sergeant and current officer with the Joplin Police Department, I have extensive experience calming people in difficult situations and taking appropriate action. If your department is looking for a mix of measured analysis and decisive action, I believe I fit the bill.

Moreover, I would jump at the chance to join an organization with a storied history like the Columbia Police Department. I believe my record of success shows that I am ready to help continue your department's record of excellence:

- My two years of service with the Joplin Police Department include zero disciplinary infractions and several commendations.
- I have responded to and helped resolve over 30 domestic violence calls.
- Among my military awards are an Army Achievement Medal and a Silver Star, and I also received a Distinguished Service Award for my work as a police officer.

I eagerly anticipate the chance to tell you more about my background and what I can do for your department going forward. I am glad to talk at a convenient time for you.

Kind regards,

Sgt. John Johnson, U.S. Army (Ret.)

P.S.—Another topic I'd love to discuss is the community outreach program I set up for Joplin's police department!

Ace the Interview

If you are a veteran who has recently completed active duty, it may have been some time since you last interviewed. Don't worry. We will catch you up on the basics. Approach your interview with the same attitude you used to write your resume and cover letter. Determine how to communicate your unique military experience in a way that is easy to understand. Keep these things in mind:

- **Do your research.** Collect all the information you need on when, where, and with whom your interview will be conducted. Take time to learn about the company so you can speak to why you want to work for them. Learn the company mission statement and find a way to relate to it during your interview.
- **Practice answering questions.** Mock questions are a great way to get your mind ready for questioning. Think about how you could answer questions such as: "Describe your process of handling an unexpected situation on the job. Have you ever personally led a team of people? Why do you want this job?"
- **Prepare your own questions.** It's always a good idea to come to your interview with questions for the hiring manager. After collecting data, you should have some good questions. Try asking your potential employer things such as: "Can you describe what a typical day looks like in this position? What does success look like six months from now? What metrics do you use to determine employee performance?"
- **Have a post-interview plan.** After you've had an interview, make a plan to follow up with the hiring manager. Sending a thank you note is a great way to do this. You should send your note within 48 hours after the interview, and using email rather than a physical message ensures that the manager will actually receive it. You can also plan a follow-up call or email to keep in contact and stay on their radar — just don't go overboard, as pestering the hiring manager with too much communication may ruin your chances of getting the job.









Job Hunting for Workers in the National Guard or Reserves

Reservists and national guard members are able to keep up their military training and have the chance to continue to serve, all while working a regular job. Unfortunately, due to the nature of being affiliated with a military reserve unit, employers may be hesitant to hire you. They may be worried you could be gone without a warning one day. Outweigh any negative aspects of being a reservist with all the positives. Use your veteran status to your advantage and highlight the benefits of hiring a reservist: good work ethic, self-discipline, advanced military skills, leadership, and employer tax breaks.

Employers who don't like the regular training required of reservists may avoid hiring them or come up with creative ways to let them go. Having a more flexible job may be the best way to avoid scheduling issues and job security concerns. Consider becoming a freelance independent contractor and performing jobs that allow you to stay home and work remotely or for yourself. It's also worth noting that the [federal government](#) has many job opportunities available for those in the National Guard or Reserves. Here are some occupations that may suit reservists:

- [Technical Consultant](#)
- [Support Specialist](#)
- [Data Analyst](#)
- [Outreach Specialist](#)
- [Account Manager](#)
- [Bookkeeper](#)
- [Accountant](#)

Employment Resources for Veterans by State

Alabama		Alaska		Arizona		Arkansas	
California		Colorado		Connecticut		Delaware	

Florida	⌵	Georgia	⌵	Hawaii	⌵	Idaho	⌵
Illinois	⌵	Indiana	⌵	Iowa	⌵	Kansas	⌵
Kentucky	⌵	Louisiana	⌵	Maine	⌵	Maryland	⌵
Massachusetts	⌵	Michigan	⌵	Minnesota	⌵	Mississippi	⌵
Missouri	⌵	Montana	⌵	Nebraska	⌵	Nevada	⌵
New Hampshire	⌵	New Jersey	⌵	New Mexico	⌵	New York	⌵
North Carolina	⌵	North Dakota	⌵	Ohio	⌵	Oklahoma	⌵
Oregon	⌵	Pennsylvania	⌵	Rhode Island	⌵	South Carolina	⌵
South Dakota	⌵	Tennessee	⌵	Texas	⌵	Utah	⌵
Vermont	⌵	Virginia	⌵	Washington	⌵	West Virginia	⌵
Wisconsin	⌵	Wyoming	⌵				



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