

Enlisting Help

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“My son just wants to serve his country, but the recruiter is asking for all these documents and a letter telling them why I homeschooled him. Can he do that?”

This is typical of the calls we receive from Home School Legal Defense Association members whose homeschool graduates are trying to enlist in the United States Armed Forces. There is confusion among parents (and recruiters) about what homeschoolers need to do to enlist. Problems arise not because of discriminatory policies, but because too many recruiters are still not familiar with the homeschool policy instituted on June 1, 2007.

From the outset, we want to clarify that the vast majority of homeschoolers enlisting in any of the armed service branches do not encounter problems but complete the process as easily as any other enlistee. A good number of recruiters know the policy and love homeschoolers.

There are, however, those who do not understand the U.S. Department of Defense’s policy. We are writing this article for homeschoolers who are interested in joining the armed services, in order to familiarize you with the requirements and simplify the process for both you and the recruiter.

If you want to enlist as a homeschool high school graduate, there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

You must be a homeschool graduate having been homeschooled during the last 9 months of your academic year. Do not try to enlist if you have not completed your high school program as outlined by your parents. You also cannot drop out of high school your senior year and have your parents “graduate” you from homeschool. Be honest. Be wise.

You must fulfill the regular requirements, including the physical tests that all enlistees must pass.

You must provide a copy of your high school diploma. We highly recommend a professional-looking diploma, such as those available through the HSLDA bookstore. Although it carries no extra legal weight, since the enactment of the 2007 policy, we have never had a problem with a recruiter accepting a diploma in HSLDA’s format, while we have had many problems with diplomas printed off a home computer. We strongly discourage presenting a non-professional looking diploma.

You must provide a transcript. You can find templates for a homeschool transcript on HSLDA’s high school webpages. Do not be overly creative with a transcript. The most important thing is that it be clear and concise. While notarization is not required for a transcript, we recommend that you notarize it. We have not had the military question a notarized transcript.

You must provide transcripts from other institutions attended, including but not limited to community college, freshman year in a public high school, private school, etc.

You will often need to show verification that you were homeschooled legally under the laws of your state. If you are in a state that requires a notice of intent, a copy of that should suffice. This is only applicable for the high school years. If necessary, HSLDA can write a letter on behalf of members.

You must score 50 or above on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). If your score is below 50, you will be able to retake the test at 30-day intervals. There are practice tests and test-taking tips available online. Additionally, some recruiting centers offer classes and/or coaching to help recruits score well on the test.

You must take the Assessment of Individual Motivation (a.k.a. the AIM test). Although homeschoolers are required to take this test, the results do not impact your enlistment. Recruiters are not allowed to use the results to qualify or disqualify homeschool graduates.

In closing, we'll leave you with a few tips. When speaking to a recruiter, tell him or her that you are a homeschool graduate. You will only confuse the recruiter if you say that you are technically private schooled in your state. The military does not care. They call homeschool graduates, "homeschool graduates," regardless of whether your homeschool is technically a private school, umbrella school, satellite school, or any other classification in your state. It is a common misconception that homeschoolers need a GED or college credits. You are a homeschool graduate. If you want to enlist as category tier 1 (a high school diploma recipient), do not take the GED.

Lastly, it might be tempting for you to say that your diploma is from an "accredited" organization. But flee the temptation—it only leads to confusion and makes the process more difficult! To some recruiters, "accredited" means an online school, which is problematic because they do not accept online school graduates. They want someone who has had a real-life teacher. If you did do some online schooling, let them know that you did that along with homeschooling by showing them how you homeschooled under the state law.

Most of the time, you will find that the military loves working with homeschool graduates. However, if you still run into problems, please call HSLDA. We love serving our members. www.hsllda.org · Phone: (540) 338-5600 · E-mail: info@hsllda.org

Make Sure Your Transcript Includes:

- Personal information of the graduate
- School information
- Dates of each school year and grade levels
- List of courses completed for each grade level
- Credits earned for each course
- Grades given for each course
- Grade point average (GPA)
- Dates for each class (semester/quarter and year is sufficient in most cases)
- Date of graduation
- Parent/school administrator's name and phone number
- Parent/guardian's signature

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