

# Transitioning from Military to Civilian Employment

## Objectives

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1. To identify skills which may be transferred from military service to civilian employment.
2. To locate civilian occupations which utilize similar skills and knowledge.
3. To describe the military experience in civilian terminology on a résumé or in correspondence.
4. To identify issues that may accompany the career transition.

## Navigating the Transition

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Transitioning from a military occupational environment to a civilian environment can be both exciting and challenging. The world of civilian work may feel different from military organizational culture with different unspoken rules, vocabulary, and expectations of behavior. While this new world of work may seem unfamiliar at first, it is possible to transform your military experiences into satisfying civilian employment. The purpose of this guide is to give you some ideas and tips for approaching your transition. If you feel you require more personalized assistance, visit The Career Center. You may also want to connect with the FSU Student Veterans Center ([veterans.fsu.edu](http://veterans.fsu.edu)).

## Translating Your Experiences

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Your military tenure has most likely given you skills and experiences that civilian employers will find valuable! What you must do is learn how to communicate these marketable skills, qualities, and experiences in a way that civilian employers will understand. To do this, you will need to:

### Identify Your Skills

Skills are things that you can do. Reviewing your performance evaluations, efficiency reports, award citations, and other documents will help you remember tasks you completed while you were in the military and the skills needed to perform those tasks. Think about other jobs you have had and classes you have taken where you developed skills. These may include specific technical skills like operating equipment and software, planning and executing projects, and performing specific tasks. You may also consider transferable skills like communicating effectively, creative problem solving, teamwork, and leadership.



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Do not be hesitant to include skills that may have seemed elementary in the military. Things you took for granted while you were serving could be in high demand with civilian employers. Meet with a career advisor and ask about using a computer-assisted career guidance system, such as SIGI<sup>3</sup> or FOCUS 2, to help you identify your skills if you are experiencing difficulty. You may also consider taking a class or training program to update existing skills or acquire new ones.

### Research and Match Civilian Occupations

To help you understand how your skills and experiences translate, it is necessary to familiarize yourself with the industries, occupational titles, and job-related skills the civilian world of work uses to classify employment options. You can use online tools such as the O\*NET Military Crosswalk ([www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/](http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/)) to perform a search that translates your military occupation to its civilian equivalent or similar occupation. This will help you get an idea of the types of titles that might be a good fit. Look at The Career Center's Library page for ideas on other websites that can help you locate civilian occupations (see the Additional Resources section at the end of this guide).

Learn more about civilian occupations using Career Center resources, such as the Chronicle Guidance Briefs and print resources. The Occupational Outlook Handbook and O\*NET websites can also be helpful in learning about the skills, knowledge, abilities, values, environments, and qualifications civilian occupations require ([www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco); [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)). As you view these occupations, consider how each one matches with your personal values, interests, and skills. This will help you to generate a list of potential employment options that both utilize your military background and match your future career goals. Once you have an idea of which industries and titles you are interested in targeting, you can narrow and prioritize your potential employment options.

### **Articulate Your Experiences**

After narrowing and prioritizing your list of options, it is time to work on executing a plan for interacting with employers. To network and interview effectively, you will need to describe your relevant skills and experiences in civilian terms. This articulation should come through in how you write your civilian résumé, speak to networking contacts, interview with employers, and present yourself overall as a professional. The key is to highlight skills and accomplishments in ways that civilians can understand their value.

For instance, you may have typed a monthly “duty roster” while in the military. To a civilian, “duty roster” is not necessarily a term they understand. To help the civilian see the value in your skill, break down, in laymen’s terms, what creating a duty roster entailed. Creating a duty roster actually requires several skills including coordination, conflict resolution, organization, and people management. Thinking about the task this way, you might describe the skill as “designing a work schedule that coordinated 30-plus people in order to ensure coverage for essential ongoing operations.” This language is more familiar to civilians and helps them to see how they might apply your previous skills. In general, try to avoid acronyms or jargon when articulating experiences and use language that civilians use to describe occupational duties.

Another thing to remember when articulating skills and experiences is to try not to sell yourself short. Former military members may be tempted to over-simplify or downplay their accomplishments. Military culture tends to promote a team-oriented environment and a commitment to the greater good

over personal gain — two admirable and worthy values! However, the job search is one of the few times when taking full credit for all you have done is especially important. Ask for input from a career advisor about how best to describe your experience if you find this challenging.

### **Summary**

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Moving into the civilian workforce can be both an exhilarating new opportunity and a challenging transition. Taking the time to self-assess, explore options, narrow and value your options, and create a plan may assist you in making the employment part of the transition easier.

Securing civilian employment is only one aspect of the transition from military to civilian life. Many veterans experience challenges in other aspects of life as they navigate this transition, such as financial concerns, healthcare needs, the impact of the change in lifestyle, and various emotional reactions to changing paths for both you and your important others. These challenges are a normal aspect of experiencing a major transition. If you are experiencing other transitional challenges and feel you might benefit from additional resources, speak with a career advisor about FSU and community resources that may be helpful. The Career Center is here to support you through this transition.

## **Additional Resources**

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### **Select Career Center Library Resources**

Looking for more information on transitioning from military to civilian employment? Visit The Career Center Library for books and other resources on this topic.

### **Select Online Resources**

#### **Identify Skills**

- FOCUS 2 (ask a career advisor for password)  
[www.focuscareer2.com](http://www.focuscareer2.com)
- SIGI<sup>3</sup> (ask a career advisor for a password)  
[www.sigi3.org/](http://www.sigi3.org/)

#### **Research Civilian Occupations**

- O\*NET  
[www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/](http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/)
- Occupational Outlook Handbook  
[www.bls.gov/oco/](http://www.bls.gov/oco/)
- FOCUS 2 (ask a career advisor for password)  
[www.focuscareer2.com](http://www.focuscareer2.com)

#### **Selected Government Agency Resources**

- Veteran Affairs  
[www.va.gov/jobs](http://www.va.gov/jobs)
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
[www.fedshirevets.gov/](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/)
- Transition Assistance Program  
[http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap\\_fs.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap_fs.htm)

#### **FSU Resources**

- Student Veterans Center  
[veterans.fsu.edu](http://veterans.fsu.edu)
- Collegiate Veterans Association  
[veterans.fsu.edu/Collegiate-Veterans-Association](http://veterans.fsu.edu/Collegiate-Veterans-Association)

#### **Other Resources**

- U.S. Department of Labor List of Governmental Veterans Resources  
[www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-veterans.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-veterans.htm)
- TA Online  
[www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)
- Career One Stop  
[www.Careeronestop.org/Militarytransition/](http://www.Careeronestop.org/Militarytransition/)
- G.I. Jobs  
[www.gijobs.com](http://www.gijobs.com)
- Troops to Teachers  
[www.proudtoserveagain.com](http://www.proudtoserveagain.com)
- Military.com  
[www.military.com/military-transition](http://www.military.com/military-transition)

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