

Service Academy General Guidelines

The U.S. Service Academies are among the most highly respected educational programs in the nation. To be admitted to an academy, a prospective applicant must meet stringent academic, physical, and medical requirements specified by public law. As a cadet/plebe at an academy, you will be provided a fully-funded four-year college education. By law, graduates of service academies are appointed commissioned officers in their respective service and are required to serve at least five years of active duty. For graduates of the United States Merchant Marine Academy, the obligation can be active duty for five years in any branch, or eight years in a reserve capacity.

1. General Guidelines

Each candidate must:

- be at least 17 years old, but have not passed their 23rd Birthday (25th Birthday for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy);
- be a citizen of the United States;
- be unmarried, not pregnant, or have any legal obligation to support children or dependents; and
- be a legal resident of Ohio's 13th Congressional District.

In addition to statutory requirements, each academy has established academic, physical, and leadership requirements for admission. Candidates for appointment to each academy must:

- demonstrate comprehensive academic preparation;
- demonstrate leadership in athletics and other extracurricular activities;
- take the SAT or ACT assessment;
- be in good physical and mental health;
- pass a comprehensive medical examination; and pass a physical aptitude examination.

2. Communication with the Academies

The academies will start your candidate file when you complete the Pre-Candidate Questionnaire. The questionnaire can be completed electronically and can be found on the website of each academy. This should be done the Spring of your junior year in high school. After you complete the questionnaire, and are considered a competitive candidate, you will receive additional forms to complete from your academy of choice in the mail. The admissions office of each academy also coordinates a nationwide network of trained Academy Liaison Officers. Once you have made initial contact with the academies, you will be able to receive assistance and guidance throughout your admissions process.

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3. Academy Admissions Office Addresses

The Department of Defense

U.S. Military Academy

606 Thayer Road

West Point, NY 10996

Phone: (845) 938-4041

Website: www.usma.edu

The Department of Transportation

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

300 Steamboat Road

Kings Point, NY 11024-1699

Phone: (516) 733-5391

Website: www.usmma.edu

U.S. Naval Academy

117 Decatur Road

Annapolis, MD 21402-5019

Phone: (410) 293-4361

Website: www.usna.edu

The Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Coast Guard Academy

31 Mohegan Avenue

New London, CT 06320

Phone: (800) 444-8500

Website: www.cga.edu

U.S. Air Force Academy

2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 200

Colorado Springs, CO 80840

Phone: (800) 443-9266

Website: www.usafa.edu

NOTE: The U.S. Coast Guard Academy does not require a congressional nomination. Appointments are considered solely on the basis of an annual nationwide competition.

4. Academic Qualifications

My office follows the academic requirements set forth by the academies when making a nomination. Certain requirements are specified by current public law; however, the academies look at the “whole person” when considering admission. Character, leadership, physical aptitude, medical fitness, goals, and motivation are key components of a favorable evaluation for admission.

The following are recommended areas of preparation and academic requirements:

Four Years: English, Mathematics (includes: Algebra, Trigonometry and Geometry)

Three Years: Social Sciences (includes: History, Economics and Government)

Two Years: Laboratory Sciences (includes: Biology, Physics, and Chemistry)

Two Years: Foreign Language

Class Rank

Each nominee should be in the top 40% of their class. However, the most successful candidates are in the top 10-20% of their class. Some high schools do not rank students.

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4. Academic Qualifications cont.

Standardized Testing

Although the academies do not establish minimums, candidates who score below the following may not be competitive:

Military, Naval and Air Force

SAT 560 Verbal, 600 Math

Merchant Marine

SAT 500 Verbal, 550 Math

Military, Naval, Air Force and Merchant Marine

ACT 22 Reading, 24 Math

5. Extracurricular Activities and Leadership

Participation and achievement in organized athletics, student body and class government, clubs and class extracurricular activities, scouting, JROTC/ROTC, Boys/Girls state, faith groups, or other community-related activities demonstrate evidence of leadership potential. The greater level of involvement/leadership, the more points are awarded in your overall admissions evaluation with an academy.

The service academies consider it more valuable to achieve distinction in a specific activity rather than to merely participate in a number of activities without any evidence of leadership. If you have a part-time job that affects your level of involvement in school activities, the academies view your work experience as a demonstration of your leadership potential.

6. Service Obligation

Graduation from a United States Service Academy obligates you to serve five (5) years of Active Duty Service. The United States Merchant Marine Academy requires five (5) years of Active Duty Service in any branch, or eight (8) years of service in a reserve capacity within the Maritime industry.

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7. Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB)

All academies require you pass a Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB). The academy to which you apply will initiate the scheduling of an examination with the Department of Defense. Once taken, the examination may be used for all service academies. A service academy medical examination must be passed before a candidate can receive an appointment.

The most frequently encountered problem areas include:

- **Visual Acuity:** All candidates accepted shall have an uncorrected visual acuity no poorer than 20/40 in either eye and must be correctable to 20/20
- **Color Vision:** Color blindness, complete or partial, can be cause for disqualification
- **Asthma:** Any history of asthma may also be cause for disqualification

The Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB)

- 8304 Edgerton Drive, Suite 132, U.S.A.F. Academy, CO 80840-2200
- (800) 841-2706 (scheduling)
- (719) 333-3562 (status)
- Website: <https://dodmerb.tricare.osd.mil/>

Service Academy Nominations Procedures

It is a tremendous honor to receive a Congressional nomination and appointment to a military academy. Only the brightest of America's youth are offered a chance to attend one of these historic institutions. An appointment comes with great responsibility as it will position you among our nation's military leaders, defending our freedoms around the world.

A nomination is required to gain an appointment to the Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Military Academy at West Point, or the Merchant Marine Academy. A Congressional nomination is not required to attend the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. All applicants interested in the Coast Guard Academy must contact this academy directly by mail or online. Those interested in serving in the Marine Corps should apply to the Naval Academy.

While you must have a nomination for an appointment, a nomination does not guarantee an appointment. An elected official may nominate you, but only the President may appoint you. You are encouraged to apply to as many nominating authorities as possible. Candidates may begin applying to the academies on April 1 of their junior year of high school. It is suggested that you start the process early to make sure you complete the requirements before established deadlines. Nominations are based on a composite of academic achievement, leadership, extracurricular activities, physical fitness, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation.

1. Nomination Procedures

Each applicant must meet the eligibility requirements highlighted in the Academy Requirements section of this packet as well as complete a nomination file with Congresswoman Sykes' office by October 16, 2026.

A nomination file consists of the following items:

- Application to Congresswoman Sykes
- ACT/SAT Official Scores
- Transcript(s)
- Resume
- Photograph. 8x10 inches, printed.
- 2 Letters of Recommendation
- Personal Statement

Service Academy Nominations

2. Application

Please complete the application included in the packet and return it and all related materials to:

Office of Congresswoman Emilia Sykes
ATTN: Service Academy Nomination
121 South Main Street, Suite 107
Akron, Ohio 44308

Be sure your entire packet of information arrives on or before October 16, 2026 at 5 p.m.

3. High School/College Transcript

A transcript is a listing of all the high school and college-level courses you have taken and the grades you received in those classes. In some instances, it may also include absences or disciplinary action, etc. You may obtain a transcript by asking your high school guidance counselor for a copy. If you are in college, you may ask for a copy of your college transcript in the registrar's office. In that case, you will need to submit a high school transcript in addition to your college transcript.

4. ACT/SAT

You are not required to take one exam over the other and you may submit scores from both tests. Your ACT/SAT decision may be determined by the school you plan to apply to for admission. The Academy Selection Board will accept your best overall composite if you take a test more than once. Historically, the best candidates have taken their test of choice multiple times. You must submit an official copy of these test scores.

5. Personal Statement

Please submit a typed personal statement, no longer than 500 words and no shorter than 300 words that answers the question: Why do you want to attend a U.S. Service Academy and serve as an officer in our military?

Please be advised your submissions will be closely scrutinized by an internal selection board. To that end, please be sure to carefully review, revise, and edit your application materials, especially your essays, knowing that they will be carefully evaluated.

Service Academy Nominations

6. Letters of Recommendation

Please select two people to write letters of recommendation on your behalf. One letter should be written by a teacher or guidance counselor and the other should be written by someone you are acquainted with that is not a teacher or guidance counselor. This could include a coach, employer, faith leader, community leader, etc. Please do not ask immediate family members such as parents, siblings, or grandparents.

Ask your references to write about how they came to know you and in what capacity. They should also define your qualities, describe an example of how you demonstrated sound character or judgment, and why they think you should receive a nomination to a service academy. There is no word count or length limit to your letters of recommendation.

Please ask your references to mail their letters directly to:

Office of Congresswoman Emilia Sykes
ATTN: Service Academy Reference
121 South Main Street, Suite 107
Akron, Ohio 44308

These letters must also arrive in my district office on or before the October 16, 2026 deadline or they will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to make sure your references drop off to the District Office or mail their letters on time. Out of courtesy to your references and consideration for their time, get started early to ensure that your letters of recommendation arrive on time and in good order.

7. Resume

The resume should be a brief account of the candidate's education, awards, volunteer service, and work experience. The resume should be no more than one page and should provide the board with an overview of the candidate's qualifications. The resume is your opportunity to show that you are a qualified candidate.

8. Personal Interview

In early November, after your file is complete, a staff member from Congresswoman Sykes' district office will contact you to arrange an interview with the Service Academy Nomination Committee. This board is comprised of several community leaders from across the 13th Congressional District who will advise Congresswoman Sykes on her nominations and offer their recommendations to her. In some cases, it is understood that you may need to miss school to attend this interview. Please let your guidance counselor know that you must interview for a military academy nomination and that you need an excused absence. Please contact Congresswoman Sykes' office if you encounter any problems.

Service Academy Nominations

9. Timeline

The following is an approximate timeline of a standard nomination and appointment process.

- October 16, 2026: Application packet deadline
- Early November: Notification of intent to interview
- Mid-November: Interview with Nomination Committee
- December 2026: Congresswoman Sykes' nominations will be announced
- January 1 – May 1, 2027: Academies begin making their appointments
- May 2027: Target date for academies to notify nominees of their application status

10. Questions

All questions concerning academy nominations made through Congresswoman Sykes' office should be directed to Dominick Crosier in the District Office. You can reach him at 330-400-5350 or Dominick.Crosier@mail.house.gov.

Service Academy Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need a nomination?

A nomination is required for the U.S. Military Academy, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, and Merchant Marine Academy. A nomination is not required for the Coast Guard Academy.

What is a nomination?

Members of Congress may nominate applicants who meet the eligibility requirements established by law. A candidate may and should seek a nomination from all the following sources:

- A member of the U.S. House of Representatives who represents the Congressional district in which the candidate resides
- Both U.S. Senators from his or her state
- The Vice-President of the United States

Presidential nominations are also available for children of: career military, POW/MIA service members, disabled service members, and Medal of Honor awardees

Can a candidate apply to more than one source?

It is encouraged that candidates apply through all the sources that they are eligible.

Do I live in Ohio's 13th Congressional District?

Ohio's 13th Congressional District contains all of Summit County, Northwest Stark County communities, and a few areas in Portage County. Visit house.gov to confirm your congressional district.

What criteria is used in selecting candidates?

Nominations are based on a "whole of person" evaluation. Factors such as academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, leadership skills, physical aptitude, character, and motivation are taken into consideration and compared with other applicants.

Service Academy Frequently Asked Questions

Who do I contact with questions about my application?

All questions concerning academy nominations made through Congresswoman Sykes' office should be directed to Dominick Crosier in the District Office. You can reach him at 330-400-5350 or Dominick.Crosier@mail.house.gov.

What are the basic eligibility requirements?

Each applicant for a nomination must meet the following eligibility requirements as of July 1st of the year of admission to an academy:

- **Age:** Be at least 17 years old, but not have passed their 23rd birthday
- **Citizenship:** Must be a U.S. citizen
- **Marital Status:** Must be unmarried, not pregnant, and without legal obligation to support children or other dependents
- **Residence:** Must reside within the boundaries of the 13th Congressional District of Ohio
- **Skill / Fitness:** Must meet the medical, physical, and academic requirements of the Academy

When do I apply for a nomination?

The nomination application period is open now for those candidates who will graduate high school in 2027 or who have already graduated.

What is the deadline for completing a nomination file?

The deadline for submitting a nomination packet to my District Office is October 16, 2026 at 5 p.m. Late applications will not be accepted.

What must be included in my nomination file?

- High school transcript
- American College Testing Program (ACT) results and/or Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) results
- Resume of extracurricular activities
- An essay stating why you want to attend a service academy (300-500 words)
- Minimum of two letters of recommendation

What happens after I have completed my nomination file?

Applicants who submit a completed nomination file and are selected for an interview will be contacted in early November 2026 to set up an interview with the Service Academy Nomination Review Committee.

Service Academy Frequently Asked Questions

How many academies are there?

There are five service academies. Three reside within the Department of Defense:

- U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York
- U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland
- U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs

One resides within the Department of Transportation:

- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York

One resides with the Department of Homeland Security (nomination not required)

- U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut

Are the requirements the same for all the service academies?

No. Although many of the qualifications are similar, each academy operates under its own admissions guidelines. Visit the academy of your choice via the websites noted for each academy's particular admissions qualifications. It is not necessary to seek a nomination to the Coast Guard Academy, as it accepts candidates based on their own testing criteria.

Who should I ask to write me a letter of recommendation?

Please select two people to write letters of recommendation on your behalf. One letter should be written by a teacher or guidance counselor and the other should be written by someone you are acquainted with that is not a teacher or guidance counselor. This could include a coach, employer, faith leader, community leader, etc. Please do not ask immediate family members such as parents, siblings, or grandparents.

Along with seeking a nomination, do I have to apply to the academy?

Yes, the academy application is separate from the nomination process. Our office only uses the candidate's information to select individuals for nomination. Each candidate is required to apply at their desired academy and meet the requirements for acceptance. Each student must complete academy applications for each of the academies they wish to pursue and will only be given nominations to academies that they have begun an application with at the time of the interview in mid-November.

Service Academy Frequently Asked Questions

Will I automatically be selected by the academy after I receive a nomination?

No. Congressional Offices are just one of several authorized nominating sources, and Congressional Offices can nominate several applicants for one open spot at an academy. Once an applicant receives a nomination from an authorized nominating source, all appointments to a Service Academy are chosen by the President. Congressional nominations account for approximately three-fourths of all appointments.

What if I choose more than one academy? Will I be limited to a single nomination?

No. You can be nominated to multiple academies depending on how well you have competed among this year's pool of candidates. It is also possible to win multiple appointments. However, my office will only nominate individuals to academies that they have begun an application with at the time of the interviews in mid-November.

What academy is best for me?

Each academy is different. Just like other colleges and universities, the academies have different sizes and different programs. A candidate should look at class size, location, degree programs, and future intent when deciding. For example, the Merchant Marine academy has a smaller class size and allows individuals to commission into any branch of service or serve on merchant vessels while in the Naval Reserve. However, the Merchant Marine Academy does not pay a monthly stipend.

When will I know if I have been offered an appointment by an academy?

Academies will begin to notify candidates of their admission status in January 2027. Most offers of appointment are generally sent out by May 2027.

Any other questions?

Contact my office for any questions or assistance with this process. You can stop by in-person at 121 South Main Street, Suite 107, Akron, Ohio 44308, call us at 330-400-5350, or email Dominick.Crosier@mail.house.gov.