



Veteran Transition Timeline

PREPARING FOR SEPARATION

**18-24
Months Out**

Start the Conversation

- ☐ Decide your general direction: school, certification, employment, or entrepreneurship.
- ☐ Start saving — a 2–3 month expense buffer makes every later decision easier.
- ☐ Begin documenting: awards, evaluations, training certificates, medical records.

**12
Months Out**

Build the Plan

- ☐ Attend the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) — go early enough to actually use what you learn.
- ☐ Request your Joint Services Transcript and Certificate of Eligibility (va.gov).
- ☐ Research schools with the GI Bill Comparison Tool; visit campuses and their veteran centers if you can.
- ☐ Considering SkillBridge? Start the conversation with your commander 8–10 months before separation.

**6
Months Out**

Execute

- ☐ Apply to schools or training programs (community colleges accept applications late — don't panic).
- ☐ File your VA disability claim through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program (180–90 days out).
- ☐ Update LinkedIn and your resume (use our Resume Checklist); start building your civilian network.
- ☐ Post-9/11 with a service-connected disability? Consider starting SOF's Bridge for Education program or reach out with any questions.

SOFT TIP

Sentinels of Freedom walks this entire timeline alongside post-9/11 wounded and injured veterans — from education planning through graduation and into career. [sentinelsoffreedom.org/transition-assistance](https://www.sentinelsoffreedom.org/transition-assistance)





Veteran Transition Timeline

PREPARING FOR SEPARATION CONTINUED

**90
Days Out**

Tie It Down

- ☐ Complete final TAP requirements and out-processing checklists.
- ☐ Get certified copies of medical and dental records; schedule final appointments.
- ☐ Confirm where you'll live and how the first three months are funded (remember: first GI Bill housing payment can take 4–8 weeks).

Separation

Protect the Paperwork

- ☐ Safeguard multiple copies of your DD-214 (Member 4 copy) — digital and physical.
- ☐ Enroll in VA health care; transfer any prescriptions.
- ☐ Register on VA.gov and confirm your benefits are active.

BUILDING YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

**0-6
Months After**

Rebuild the Unit

- ☐ Plug into community fast: campus veteran resource center, student veteran org, local veteran groups. The loss of military community is the transition's hardest part — replace it on purpose.
- ☐ Find a mentor (SOF, ACP, or campus programs).
- ☐ Start school or training; meet your School Certifying Official the first week.
- ☐ Set your monthly budget (use our GI Bill Budget Planner) and track the gaps between benefit payments.

**6-12
Months After**

Adjust Fire

- ☐ Reassess: is the plan working? Changing direction early is cheap; changing late is expensive.
- ☐ Grow your network — one new professional conversation a month compounds fast.
- ☐ Check on your own wellbeing honestly, and use the resources you've earned.
- ☐ Doing well? Reach back and help the next veteran through. The mission continues.

