

Careers in the Royal Air Force

Your guide to aviation, engineering, digital and support careers

Armed Forces careers | School to service | Information checked October 2026

What Does the Royal Air Force Do?

The Royal Air Force protects UK air and space interests and supports operations worldwide. Its people fly and maintain aircraft, manage airspace, analyse intelligence, defend digital systems and provide medical, logistics and people support. Most careers are on the ground, not in the cockpit.



Service life combines specialist work with military training.

Examples of Career Areas

Area	What it involves
Engineering	Maintain aircraft, vehicles, electronics and survival equipment.
Air and space operations	Manage air traffic, mission information and operations.
Cyberspace and intelligence	Protect networks, communicate securely and analyse information.
Logistics	Run supply chains, transport and movement operations.
Medical and people operations	Support health, wellbeing, HR and administration.
Aircrew and officers	Fly or manage teams where the role and entry standards are met.

Skills and Personal Qualities

- Strong teamwork and professional communication
- Accuracy, safety awareness and attention to detail
- Confidence with technology, data or practical equipment
- Fitness, resilience and willingness to relocate
- Problem solving and learning from feedback
- Leadership potential and respect for security

Useful School Subjects

- English and Maths for communication, calculations and most technical routes
- Physics, Science, Engineering or Design and Technology for aircraft careers
- Computing for cyber, communications and intelligence roles
- Geography for operations, weather and global awareness
- PE, Business or Health and Social Care where relevant to your chosen role

◆ Main Ways to Join

Route	What to expect
Enlisted Aviator	Specialist route with basic training followed by role training; qualifications vary.
Officer	Leadership route; A levels, a degree or professional qualifications may be required.
Apprenticeship	A civilian-recognised qualification is built into training for many eligible roles.
RAF Reserve	Part-time service in selected roles alongside a civilian career or study.

◆ Typical Application and Selection Steps

1. Use the role finder and check the full eligibility tab
2. Submit an application for a chosen Regular or Reserve role
3. Complete aptitude or specialist testing where required
4. Attend interview, medical and fitness assessments
5. Complete nationality, residency and security checks
6. Begin basic training, then specialist role training

◆ Apprenticeships and Qualifications

Military apprenticeships are paid employment and training, not a separate college application. The qualification is linked to a particular service role and runs alongside initial and specialist training. Levels and entry requirements vary, so use the official role page rather than choosing by qualification title alone.

- Compare at least three roles and read every eligibility tab
- Keep English, Maths and Science options open where possible
- Ask which civilian-recognised qualification is included and how long it takes
- Check whether previous qualifications change the training or entry route
- Remember that passing a course does not guarantee selection for military service

◆ Eligibility Matters

- Regular applicants are generally aged 16 to 54, but each role has its own age range.
- Some roles need no specific qualifications; others require GCSEs, A levels, a degree or professional registration.
- RAF apprenticeship qualifications range from Level 2 to Level 7 depending on the role.
- Military life may involve shifts, relocation, time away and deployment in risky environments.

Do not make decisions from a leaflet alone. Declare medical history honestly and ask an official recruiter about your chosen role before changing study, work or medication.



◆ What Working Life Can Be Like

Area	What it involves
Training	Initial military training comes before or alongside specialist training.
Location and hours	You may move base, work shifts and serve in the UK or overseas.
Rewards	Pay, structured training, qualifications, sport and progression may be available.
Challenges	Time away, strict standards, physical demands and danger must be considered.

◆ A Practical Route from School

Stage	Action
At school	Build attendance, fitness, teamwork and study habits. Work towards the grades required by several roles.
Explore and prepare	Use the role finder; compare daily work; choose post-16 study that keeps options open. Cadets, sport, volunteering and work can help.
Check	Read the exact age, nationality, residency, qualification, medical, fitness and security rules.
Apply	Use the official website. Complete assessments honestly and continue education or work while waiting.

◆ Questions to Ask a Recruiter

- What does a normal week look like and how often might I be away?
- What qualification will I gain, and is it recognised outside the service?
- What is the minimum commitment and when can I leave?
- Which medical, fitness, nationality and security rules apply to this role?

◆ Official Sources and Useful Links

Source	Web address
Role finder	recruitment.raf.mod.uk/find-your-role
Application process	recruitment.raf.mod.uk/how-to-apply/application-process
Apprenticeships	recruitment.raf.mod.uk/apprenticeships
Career progression	recruitment.raf.mod.uk/career-progression
TAGS Careers	www.tags.careers - local careers information and support

Information checked 15 October 2026. Recruitment, pay, courses and entry standards can change. Always confirm the current details on the official role page before applying.