

Careers in the Royal Navy

Your guide to roles, entry routes, training and working at sea

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

◆ What Does the Royal Navy Do?

The Royal Navy protects UK interests at sea and supports operations around the world. Sailors and officers work in teams on ships, submarines, aircraft, bases and specialist units. A naval career can combine practical work, technical training, responsibility and time away from home.



Service life combines specialist work with military training.

◆ Examples of Career Areas

Area	What it involves
Engineering	Maintain marine, weapon, air and communication systems.
Warfare	Navigate, monitor information and support safe operations.
Logistics and personnel	Manage supplies, catering, administration and people.
Healthcare and medical	Deliver clinical and dental care at sea and ashore.
Fleet Air Arm	Support, maintain or operate naval aircraft.
Royal Marines	A separate, physically demanding commando route within the Naval Service.

◆ Skills and Personal Qualities

- Teamwork in close living and working conditions
- Clear communication and careful listening
- Reliability, self-discipline and attention to detail
- Problem solving and confidence with technology
- Physical fitness and resilience
- Respect for safety, security and other people

◆ Useful School Subjects

- English and Maths for communication, calculations and many technical routes
- Science, Design and Technology or Engineering for technical careers
- Computing for communications, cyber and information roles
- PE for fitness, teamwork and self-discipline
- Food, Health and Social Care or Business where relevant to your chosen role

◆ Main Ways to Join

Route	What to expect
Rating	Hands-on specialist route. Entry qualifications vary; some roles need none and others require GCSEs.
Officer	Leadership and management route. Most roles require A levels, a degree or professional qualifications.
Apprenticeship	Many rating roles include recognised work-based qualifications; accelerated schemes may ask for GCSEs or Level 3 study.
Reserve	Part-time service alongside education or civilian work, subject to role availability and eligibility.

◆ Typical Application and Selection Steps

1. Explore professions and check the exact role criteria
2. Register interest and submit the online application
3. Complete the Defence Aptitude Assessment where required
4. Attend selection interview and security checks
5. Complete the Candidate Preparation Course, including medical and fitness assessment
6. Start initial training, normally at HMS Raleigh for ratings

◆ 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

- Minimum entry age is normally 16; role-specific upper ages apply. Under-18s need parent or guardian consent.
- Nationality, residency, medical, fitness and security rules apply and differ by role.
- Service can involve long periods away, shift work, shared accommodation and worldwide deployment.
- Training and qualifications can be highly transferable, but military service carries real risk and a formal commitment.

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	royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/find-a-role
Eligibility	royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/joining-process/eligibility
Joining process	royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/joining-process
Funding and study	royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/joining-options/funding-and-scholarships
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.