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Rod Powers
with Angie Papple Johnston

2017/2018 ASVAB with Online Practice

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by Rod Powers
with Angie Papple Johnston

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Introduction

If you're reading this book, there's a good chance that you want to join the United States military. Perhaps it's been your lifelong dream to drive a tank, fire a machine gun, or blow things up (legally). Maybe you've always wanted to learn how to cook for 2,000 people at a time. Possibly you were attracted to the military because of education and training opportunities, the chance of travel, or huge enlistment bonuses. In any event, by now you've discovered that you can't just walk into a recruiter's office and say, "Hey, I'm here. Sign me up!" These days, you have to pass the ASVAB.

The ASVAB (short for Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) is unlike any test you've ever taken. It covers standard academic areas, such as math and English, but it also measures your knowledge of mechanics, electronics, science, and assembling objects.

The good news is that you need to do well on some of the subtests but not necessarily all of them. The order of importance of the subtests depends on your career goals. In this book, you find out what you need to know to do well on all the subtests and then get the info to determine which subtests are important to you. I include charts and tables to help you figure out the subtest scores that individual military jobs require. You can use this information to ace the subtests that make up the ASVAB and determine which subtests are important for your military-career goals.

About This Book

The paper enlistment version of the ASVAB and the computer version of the test have nine subtests, each of which is covered in its own chapter in this book. This book shows you what to expect on each subtest, offers strategies for studying each subject area, gives you test-taking (and guessing) tips, and provides three full-length practice tests that help you determine your strengths and weaknesses. These practice tests also help you prepare mentally for taking the real test — you can use them to get in the zone. I've thrown in two extra tests that cover the four most important subtests of the ASVAB that make up the AFQT (Armed Forces Qualification Test) score at no extra cost.

Although much of the material covered on the ASVAB is taught in practically every high school in the country, you may have slept through part of the info or performed a major brain-dump as soon as the ink was dry on your report card. So you also get a basic review of the relevant subject areas to help refresh your memory, as well as some pointers on where to find more information if you need it.

Foolish Assumptions

While writing and revising this book, I made a few assumptions about you — namely, who you are and why you picked up this book. I assume the following:

- » You've come here for test-taking tips and other helpful information. You may be a nervous test-taker.

- » You want to take a few ASVAB practice tests to measure your current knowledge in various subject areas to help you develop a study plan.
- » You want the military job of your dreams, and passing the ASVAB (or certain sections of it) is of utmost importance. Or you're in a high school that takes part in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, and you want to know what to expect on the test.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you find icons that help you use the material in this book. Here's a rundown of what they mean:



TIP

This icon alerts you to helpful hints regarding the ASVAB. Tips can help you save time and avoid frustration.



REMEMBER

This icon reminds you of important information you should read carefully.



WARNING

This icon flags actions and ideas that may prove hazardous to your plans of conquering the ASVAB. Often, this icon accompanies common mistakes or misconceptions people have about the ASVAB or questions on the test.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

This icon points out information that is interesting, enlightening, or in-depth but that isn't necessary for you to read.



EXAMPLE

This icon points out sample test questions that appear in review chapters.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free, access-anywhere Cheat Sheet. No, this isn't something you can put under your shirt and sneak into the test room on the big day. This Cheat Sheet gives you quick pointers about what you need to know before taking the ASVAB. You find out how many questions are on the test and how much time you have for each subtest. You also find general test-taking tips, pointers for guessing, and some advice on answering the dreaded Paragraph Comprehension questions. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for "2017/2018 ASVAB For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

The online practice that comes free with this book contains all the practice ASVAB tests that appear in the book, as well as three additional computerized ASVAB-style tests. The tests have a timer, so you can choose to take the tests like you would take the real ASVAB. You can also find 300 flashcards to improve your vocabulary.

To gain access to the online practice, all you have to do is register. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Find your PIN access code.

- **Print book users:** If you purchased a hard copy of this book, turn to the inside front cover to find your PIN.
- **E-book users:** If you purchased this book as an e-book, you can get your PIN by registering your e-book at dummies.com/go/getaccess. Go to this website, find your book and click it, and answer the validation questions to verify your purchase. Then you'll receive an e-mail with your PIN.

2. Go to Dummies.com and click Activate Now.

3. Find your product (2017/2018 ASVAB For Dummies with Online Practice) and then follow the on-screen prompts to activate your PIN.

Now you're ready to go! You can come back to the program as often as you want — simply log on with the username and password you created during your initial login. No need to enter the access code a second time.

Tip: If you have trouble with your PIN or can't find it, contact Wiley Product Technical Support at 877-762-2974 or go to <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Your registration is good for one year from the day you activate your PIN. After that time frame has passed, you can renew your registration for a fee. The website gives you all the details about how to do so.

Where to Go from Here

You don't have to read this book from cover to cover to score well. I suggest that you begin with Chapters 1 and 2. That way, you can get a feel for how the ASVAB is organized (along with the most up-to-date changes on the test) and which subtests may be important for the military service branch and job of your choice. This plan of attack helps you set up logical and effective goals to maximize your study efforts.

You may want to start by taking one of the practice tests in Part 5. By using this method, you can discover which subjects you're strong in and which subjects you could spend a little more time reviewing. If you choose this technique, you can use the other practice tests to measure your progress after reading through and studying the subject chapters.

If you're taking the ASVAB for the purpose of enlisting in the U.S. military, you may want to skip entire chapters, depending on your career goals. For example, if the military careers you're interested in don't require a score on the General Science subtest, you may want to spend less time studying that topic and concentrate your study time on chapters focusing on knowledge or skills that are required for your particular job choices.

I wish you luck on taking this test, and if you want to join the military, I hope your journey is successful!

1

Getting Started with the ASVAB

IN THIS PART . . .

Get the details about what topics are covered on the ASVAB, how your score is calculated, and the policies on retaking the test if you didn't do so well on your first try.

Check out how line scores relate to military jobs and how each branch of the military computes those scores.

Review test-taking strategies and get some last-minute preparation tips.

- » Checking out the different versions of the ASVAB
- » Figuring out what each subtest covers
- » Computing the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score
- » Taking the ASVAB again

Chapter 1

Putting the ASVAB under a Microscope

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) consists of nine individual tests (ten for Navy applicants who test at a Military Entrance Processing Station, or MEPS) that cover subjects ranging from general science principles to vocabulary. Your ASVAB test results determine whether you qualify for military service and, if so, which jobs you qualify for. The ASVAB isn't an IQ test. The military isn't trying to figure out how smart you are. The ASVAB specifically measures your ability to be trained to do a specific job.

The famous Chinese general Sun Tzu said, "Know your enemy." To develop an effective plan of study (check out Appendix B) and score well on the ASVAB, it's important to understand how the ASVAB is organized and how the military uses the scores from the subtests. This chapter describes the different versions of the ASVAB, the organization of the subtests, how the AFQT score is calculated, and the various service policies for retaking the ASVAB.

Knowing Which Version You're Taking

The ASVAB comes in four versions, depending on where and why you take it. You'd think that after almost 50 years in existence, the test could've been whittled down to a single version by now. But don't get too confused about the different versions. Table 1-1 boils down the choices.

For people taking the enlistment version of the test, the vast majority of applicants are processed through a MEPS, where they take the computerized format of the ASVAB (called the CAT-ASVAB, short for *computerized-adaptive testing* ASVAB), undergo a medical physical, and run through a security screening, many times all in one trip. The paper-and-pencil (P&P) version is most often given in high school and, rarely, at Mobile Examination Test (MET) sites located throughout the United States. Most MET sites use computers to administer the test.

TABLE 1-1 Versions of the ASVAB

Version	How You Take It	Format	Purpose
Student	Given to juniors and seniors in high school; it's administered through a cooperative program between the Department of Education and the Department of Defense at high schools across the United States	Paper	Its primary purpose is to provide a tool for guidance counselors to use when recommending civilian career areas to high school students (though it can be used for enlistment if taken within two years of enlistment). For example, if a student scores high in electronics, the counselor can recommend electronics career paths. If a student is interested in military service, the counselor then refers her to the local military recruiting offices.
Enlistment	Given through a military recruiter at a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) or at a satellite testing site	Usually computer, may be paper	This version of the ASVAB is used by all the military branches for the purpose of enlistment qualification and to determine which military jobs a recruit can successfully be trained in.
Enlistment Screening Test (EST)	Given at the discretion of a military recruiter for a quick enlistment qualification screening	Computer	These mini-ASVABs aren't qualification tests; they're strictly recruiting and screening tools. The EST contains questions similar but not identical to questions on the ASVAB. The test is used to help estimate an applicant's probability of obtaining qualifying ASVAB scores.
Armed Forces Classification Test (AFCT)	Given at installation educational centers to people already in the military through the Defense Manpower Data Center	Computer	At some point during your military career, you may want to retrain for a different job. If you need higher ASVAB scores to qualify for such retraining, you can take the AFCT. The AFCT is essentially the same as the other versions of the ASVAB.

Mapping Out the ASVAB Subtests

The computerized format of the ASVAB contains ten separately timed subtests, with the Auto & Shop Information subtest split in two. The paper format of the test has nine subtests. The two formats differ in the number of questions in each subtest and the amount of time you have for each one. Table 1-2 outlines the ASVAB subtests in the order that you take them in the enlistment (computerized or paper) and student (paper only) versions of the test; you can also see which chapters to turn to when you want to review that content.

TABLE 1-2 The ASVAB Subtests in Order

Subtest	Questions/Time (CAT-ASVAB)	Questions/Time (Paper Version)	Content	Chapter
General Science (GS)	16 questions, 8 minutes	25 questions, 11 minutes	General principles of biological and physical sciences	Chapter 8
Arithmetic Reasoning (AR)	16 questions, 39 minutes	30 questions, 36 minutes	Word problems involving high school math concepts that require calculations	Chapter 7
Word Knowledge (WK)	16 questions, 8 minutes	35 questions, 11 minutes	Correct meaning of a word; occasionally antonyms (words with opposite meanings)	Chapter 4
Paragraph Comprehension (PC)	11 questions, 22 minutes	15 questions, 13 minutes	Questions based on passages (usually a couple hundred words) that you read	Chapter 5
Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	16 questions, 20 minutes	25 questions, 24 minutes	High school math, including algebra and geometry	Chapter 6
Electronics Information (EI)	16 questions, 8 minutes	20 questions, 9 minutes	Electrical principles, basic electronic circuitry, and electronic terminology	Chapter 11
Auto & Shop Information (AS)	11 Auto Information questions, 7 minutes; 11 Shop Information questions, 6 minutes	25 questions, 11 minutes	Knowledge of automobiles, shop terminology, and tool use	Chapter 9
Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	16 questions, 20 minutes	25 questions, 19 minutes	Basic mechanical and physical principles	Chapter 10
Assembling Objects (AO)*	16 questions, 15 minutes	25 questions, 15 minutes	Spatial orientation	Chapter 12

* The Assembling Objects subtest isn't part of the student version of the test.

Deciphering ASVAB Scores

The Department of Defense is an official U.S. Government agency, so (of course) it can't keep things simple. When you receive your ASVAB score results, you don't see just one score; you see several. Figure 1-1 shows an example of an ASVAB score card used by high school guidance counselors (for people who take the student version — see “Knowing Which Version You're Taking” for details).

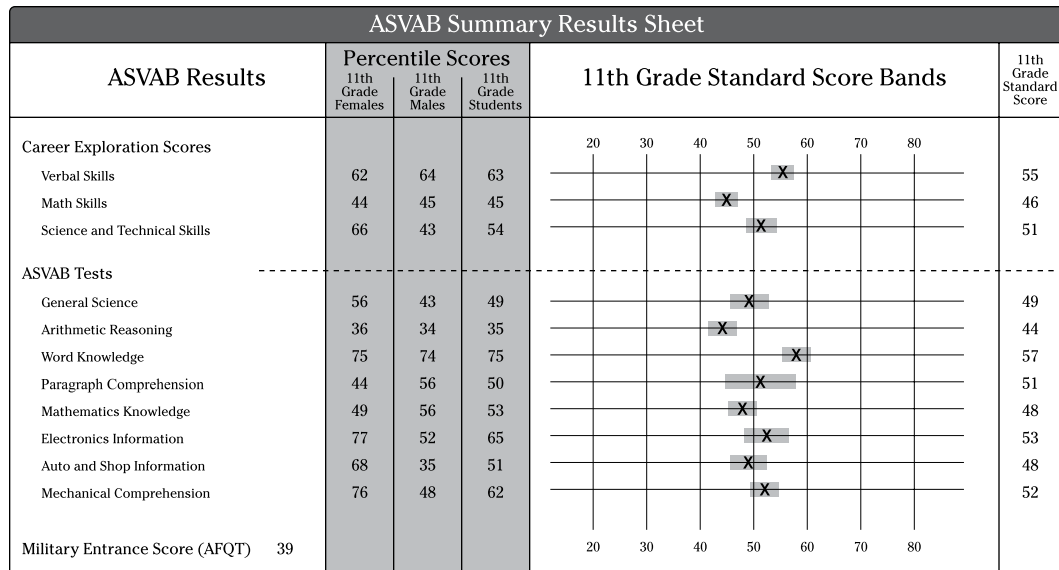
Figure 1-2 depicts an example of an ASVAB score card used for military enlistment purposes.

So what do all these different scores actually mean? Check out the following sections to find out.

Defining all the scores

When you take a test in high school, you usually receive a score that's pretty easy to understand — A, B, C, D, or F. (If you do really well, the teacher may even draw a smiley face on the top of the page.) If only your ASVAB scores were as easy to understand.

FIGURE 1-1:
A sample
ASVAB score
card used by
high school
guidance
counselors.



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FIGURE 1-2:
A sample
ASVAB score
card used
for military
enlistment
purposes.

SAMPLE CAT-ASVAB TEST SCORE REPORT										
Testing Site ID: 521342								Service: AF		
Testing Session: Date: 2013/05/17								Starting Time: 15:30		
Applicant: Jane P. Doe								SSN: 333-33-3333		
Test Form: 02E								Test Type: Initial		
Standard Scores:	GS 63	AR 59	WK 60	PC 52	MK 56	EI 81	AS 64	MC 62	AO 52	VE 58
COMPOSITE SCORES:										
Army:	GT 118	CL 121	CO 128	EL 130	FA 127	GM 132	MM 134	OF 129	SC 128	ST 125
Air Force:	M 91	A 76	G 83	E 96						
Navy/CG:	GT 117	EL 259	BEE 234	ENG 120	MEC 185	MEC2 173	NUC 235	OPS 225	HM 177	ADM 114
Army:	MM 139	GT 122	EL 134							
SAMPLE CAT-ASVAB TEST SCORE REPORT										

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In the following list, you see how your ASVAB test scores result in several different kinds of scores:

- » **Raw score:** This score is the total number of points you receive on each subtest of the ASVAB. Although you don't see your raw scores on the ASVAB score cards, they're used to calculate the other scores.



WARNING

You can't use the practice tests in this book (or any other ASVAB study guide) to calculate your probable ASVAB score. ASVAB scores are calculated by using raw scores, and raw scores aren't determined simply from the number of right or wrong answers. On the actual ASVAB, harder questions are worth more points than easier questions.

- » **Standard scores:** The various subtests of the ASVAB are reported on the score cards as standard scores. A standard score is calculated by converting your raw score based on a standard distribution of scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

Don't confuse a standard score with the graded-on-a-curve score you may have seen on school tests — where the scores range from 1 to 100 with the majority of students scoring between 70 and 100. With standard scores, the majority score is between 30 and 70. That means that a standard score of 50 is an average score and that a score of 60 is an above-average score.

- » **Percentile scores:** These scores range from 1 to 99. They express how well you did in comparison with another group called the *norm*. On the student version's score card, the norm is fellow students in your same grade (except for the AFQT score).

On the enlistment and student score cards, the AFQT score is presented as a percentile with the score normed using the *1997 Profile of American Youth*, a national probability sample of 18- to 23-year-olds who took the ASVAB in 1997. For example, if you receive a percentile score of 72, you can say you scored as well as or better than 72 out of 100 of the norm group who took the test. (And by the way, this statistic from 1997 isn't a typo. The ASVAB was last "re-normed" in 2004, and the sample group used for the norm was those folks who took the test in 1997.)

- » **Composite scores (line scores):** Composite scores are individually computed by each service branch. Each branch has its own particular system when compiling various standard scores into individual composite scores. These scores are used by the different branches to determine job qualifications. Find out much more about this in Chapter 2.



WARNING

Understanding the big four: Your AFQT scores

The ASVAB doesn't have an overall score. When you hear someone say, "I got an 80 on my ASVAB," that person is talking about the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score, not an overall ASVAB score. The AFQT score determines whether you even qualify to enlist in the military, and only four of the subtests are used to compute it:

- » Word Knowledge (WK)
- » Paragraph Comprehension (PC)
- » Arithmetic Reasoning (AR)
- » Mathematics Knowledge (MK)

Each job in the military requires a certain combination of line scores, from the infantry to jobs in the medical field. The other subtests are used only to determine the jobs you qualify for. (See Chapter 2 for information on how the military uses the individual subtests.)



TIP

Figure out which areas to focus on based on your career goals. If you're not interested in a job that requires a great score on the Mechanical Comprehension subtest, you don't need to invest a lot of time studying for it. As you're preparing for the ASVAB, remember to plan your study time wisely. If you don't need to worry about the Assembling Objects subtest, don't bother with that chapter in this book. Spend the time on Word Knowledge or Arithmetic Reasoning. Keep in mind, though, if you don't have a desired job or aren't sure about your options, it's best to study this book and take the practice tests, focusing on all areas of the ASVAB. Doing well on each subtest will broaden your available job choices and make you a more desirable candidate.

Calculating the AFQT score

The military brass (or at least its computers) determines your AFQT score through a very particular process:

1. **Add the value of your Word Knowledge score to your Paragraph Comprehension score.**
2. **Convert the result of Step 1 to a scaled score, ranging from 20 to 62.**

This score is known as your *Verbal Expression* or VE score.

3. **To get your raw AFQT score, double your VE score and then add your Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) score and your Mathematics Knowledge (MK) score to it.**

The basic equation looks like this:

$$\text{Raw AFQT Score} = 2\text{VE} + \text{AR} + \text{MK}$$

4. **Convert your raw score to a percentile score, which basically compares your results to the results of thousands of other ASVAB test-takers.**

For example, a score of 50 means that you scored as well as or better than 50 percent of the individuals the military is comparing you to.

Looking at AFQT score requirements for enlistment

AFQT scores are grouped into five main categories based on the percentile score ranges in Table 1-3. Categories III and IV are divided into subgroups because the services sometimes use this chart for internal tracking purposes, enlistment limits, and enlistment incentives. Based on your scores, the military decides how trainable you may be to perform jobs in the service.

TABLE 1-3 AFQT Scores and Trainability

Category	Percentile Score	Trainability
I	93–99	Outstanding
II	65–92	Excellent
III A	50–64	Above average
III B	31–49	Average
IV A	16–30	Below average
IV B	10–15	Not trainable
V	0–9	Not trainable

The U.S. Congress has directed that the military can't accept Category V recruits or more than 4 percent of recruits from Category IV. If you're in Category IV, you must have a high school diploma to be eligible for enlistment. Even so, if you're Category IV, your chances of enlistment are small and mostly limited to the Army National Guard.

Depending on whether you have a high school diploma or a passing score on your state's approved high school equivalency test (such as the GED), the military has different AFQT score requirements. Check out Table 1-4.

TABLE 1-4 AFQT Score Requirements

Branch of Service	Minimum AFQT Score with High School Diploma	Minimum AFQT Score with High School Equivalency Test Certificate	Special Circumstances
U.S. Air Force	36	65	In very rare cases, if the applicant possesses special skills (such as speaking a foreign language that the Air Force considers critical), the minimum AFQT score can be waived. The Air Force allows less than 1 percent of its enlistees each year to have a high school equivalency test certificate instead of a high school diploma.
Army	31	50	Occasionally, the Army approves waivers for folks with high school equivalency test certificates and AFQT scores below 31. However, high enlistment rates and downsizing make it more competitive to get in as the Army becomes more and more selective.
Coast Guard	40	50	A waiver is possible if a recruit's ASVAB line scores qualify him or her for a specific job and the recruit is willing to enlist in that job. Very few people (about 5 percent) each year are allowed to enlist with a high school equivalency certificate.
Marine Corps	32	50	Between 5 and 10 percent of recruits can enlist with a high school equivalency certificate.
Navy	35	50	From 5 to 10 percent of recruits can enlist with a high school equivalency certificate. Those with this type of certificate must also be at least 19 and show a proven work history.

The minimum scores required in each branch can — and do — change periodically because the military has different needs at different times. For example, at the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Army accepted recruits with GEDs who scored 31 on the AFQT.

Checking out the military's AFQT requirements for special programs

Achieving the minimum required AFQT score established by an individual branch gets your foot in the door, but the higher you score, the better. For example, if you need a medical or criminal history waiver in order to enlist, the military personnel who make those decisions are more likely to take a chance on you if they think you're a pretty smart cookie than they would if you barely made the minimum qualifying score.

Individual branches of the military tie many special enlistment programs to minimum AFQT scores:

- » **Army:** The Army requires a minimum AFQT score of 50 to qualify for most of its incentive programs, such as a monetary enlistment bonus, the college-loan repayment program, and the Army College Fund.
- » **Marine Corps:** Like the Army, the Marine Corps requires a minimum AFQT score of 50 for most of its incentive programs, including the Geographic Area of Choice Program, the Marine Corps College Fund, and enlistment bonuses.
- » **Navy:** Applicants who want to participate in the Navy College Fund or college loan repayment program need to achieve a minimum score of 50.

MILITARY OPENS COMBAT ROLES TO WOMEN

Jobs that were traditionally open only to male members of the U.S. Armed Forces are now open to women — but it took 378 years for the military to change the way it does business.

The first militias in the New World began organizing in 1636, and men were the only ones who served. Even after June 14, 1775, the official “birthday” of the U.S. Army, the military denied women the opportunity to enlist. However, females sometimes traveled with the troops to act as nurses, laundresses, and cooks if they could prove their usefulness to troop commanders.

History occasionally reveals a woman who disguised herself as a man to join the fight between 1776 and 1948. (During the Civil War, a nominal number of females served as spies while others continued to fight on the front lines disguised as men.)

Congress passed the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act on June 12, 1948, which gave women the right to enlist during peacetime and to collect veteran benefits.

Sixty-seven years later, on December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter ordered the full integration of women in the Armed Forces. Under that order, all military occupational specialties are now open to women — including ground combat roles and special operations, such as Navy SEALs, Army Rangers, and Air Force Special Tactics.

New, gender-neutral job titles have replaced traditional titles such as “artilleryman” and “reconnaissance man.” Now those jobs are referred to as *artillery technician* and *reconnaissance Marine*.



REMEMBER

Enlistment programs are subject to change without notice based on the current recruiting needs of the service. Your recruiter should be able to give you the most up-to-date information.



TIP

If you don’t know which kind of job you want to do in the military, the ASVAB helps you and the military determine your potential ability for different types of jobs. If you’re in this situation, review all the chapters in this book, brushing up on the basic principles of everything from science to electronics, but focus on the four subtests that enable you to qualify for enlistment: Word Knowledge, Paragraph Comprehension, Arithmetic Reasoning, and Mathematics Knowledge. Following this plan ensures a relatively accurate appraisal of your aptitude for various military jobs.

Do-Over: Retaking the ASVAB

An AFQT score of less than 10 is a failing score, but no branch of the service accepts that low of a score anyway. Therefore, you can fail to achieve a score high enough to enlist in the service branch you want, even if you pass the ASVAB. This means you need to work on one (or more) of the four core areas: Mathematics Knowledge, Arithmetic Reasoning, Paragraph Comprehension, and Word Knowledge. Parts 2 and 3 of this book are specifically designed to help you improve your scores on these four subtests.

When you’re sure you’re ready, you can apply (through your recruiter) to take the ASVAB. After you take the ASVAB for the first time (taking the ASVAB in high school does count for retest purposes), you can retake the test after one month. After the first retest, you must again wait one month to test again. From that point on, you must wait at least six months before taking the ASVAB again.

You can't retake the ASVAB on a whim or whenever you simply feel like it. Each of the services has its own rules concerning whether it allows a retest, and I explain them in the following sections.



ASVAB test results are valid for two years, as long as you aren't in the military. In most cases, after you join the military, your ASVAB scores remain valid as long as you're in. In other words, except in a few cases, you can use your enlistment ASVAB scores to qualify for retraining years later.

U.S. Army retest policy

The Army allows a retest in one of the following instances:

- » The applicant's previous ASVAB test has expired.
- » The applicant failed to achieve an AFQT score high enough to qualify for enlistment.
- » Unusual circumstances occur, such as if an applicant, through no fault of his own, is unable to complete the test.



Army recruiters aren't authorized to have applicants retested for the sole purpose of increasing aptitude area scores to meet standards prescribed for enlistment options or programs.

U.S. Air Force retest policy

For the U.S. Air Force, the intent of retesting is for an applicant to improve the last ASVAB scores so the enlistment options increase. Before any retest is administered, the recruiting flight chief must interview the applicant in person or by telephone and then give approval for the retest.

Here are a few other policies to remember:

- » The Air Force doesn't allow retesting for applicants after they've enlisted in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP).
- » Current policy allows retesting of applicants who aren't holding a job/aptitude area reservation and/or who aren't in DEP but already have qualifying test scores.
- » Retesting is authorized when the applicant's current line scores (mechanical, administrative, general, and electronic) limit the ability to match an Air Force skill with his or her qualifications.

U.S. Navy retest policy

The Navy allows retesting of applicants

- » Whose previous ASVAB tests have expired
- » Who fail to achieve a qualifying AFQT score for enlistment in the Navy

In most cases, individuals in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) can't retest.

TRACING THE TESTING TRAIL

In 1948, Congress made the Department of Defense develop a uniform screening test to be used by all the services. The Defense Department came up with the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). This test consisted of 100 multiple-choice questions in areas such as math, vocabulary, spatial relations, and mechanical ability. The military used this test until the mid-1970s. Each branch of the service set its own minimum qualification (AFQT) score.

When the military decides to do something, it often acts with the lightning speed of a snail carrying a backpack. So in the 1960s, the Department of Defense decided to develop a standardized military selection and classification test and to administer it in high schools. That's where your old buddy, the ASVAB, came from. The first ASVAB test was given in 1968, but the military didn't use it for recruiting purposes for several years. In 1973, the draft ended and the nation entered the contemporary period in which all military recruits are volunteers. In 1976, the ASVAB became the official entry test used by all services.

The ASVAB remained unchanged until 1980, when the ASVAB underwent its first revision. The subtest areas remained the same, but several of the questions were updated to keep up with changes in technology.

In 1993, the computerized version was released for limited operational testing, but it didn't begin to see wide-scale use until 1996. The questions on the computerized version of the ASVAB were identical to the questions on the paper version. It wasn't until the end of 2002 that the ASVAB finally underwent a major revision. Two subtests (Coding Speed and Numerical Operations) were eliminated and a new subtest (Assembling Objects) was added to the computerized version. Also during the 2002 revision, all the questions were updated, and the order of the subtests was changed. The revised ASVAB was first rolled out in the computerized format, and the paper versions of the test were updated during the next year. The most recent update occurred in 2008. The ASVAB was revised to better sync the line score with the applicants' qualified jobs.

U.S. Marine Corps retest policy

The Marine Corps authorizes a retest if the applicant's previous test has expired. Otherwise, recruiters can request a retest if the initial scores don't appear to reflect the applicant's true capability, considering the applicant's education, training, and experience.



REMEMBER

For the Marine Corps, the retest can't be requested solely because the applicant's initial test scores didn't meet the standards prescribed for enlistment options or programs.

U.S. Coast Guard retest policy

For Coast Guard enlistments, six months must have elapsed since an applicant's last test before he or she may retest solely for the purpose of raising scores to qualify for a particular enlistment option.

The Coast Guard Recruiting Center may authorize retesting after one calendar month has passed from an initial ASVAB test if substantial reason exists to believe the initial test scores or subtest scores don't reflect an applicant's education, training, or experience.

- » Finding out there's more to life than the AFQT score
- » Making sense out of line scores
- » Discovering how each military branch uses line scores

Chapter 2

Knowing What It Takes to Get Your Dream Job

The Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) portion of the ASVAB is your most important score because it determines whether you can join the service of your choice. However, qualifying to join is only part of the picture. Unless you'd be content to spend your military career painting things that don't move, you need to understand how the ASVAB relates to various military job opportunities.

Civilian employers generally use a person's education and experience level when selecting candidates for a job position, but in the military, 99 percent of all enlisted jobs are entry-level positions. The military doesn't require you to have a college degree in computer science before you're hired to become a computer programmer. You don't even have to have any previous computer experience, nor does the military care if you do. You're going to go to military school to study how to make computers stand at attention and fly right.

Sounds like a good deal, right? So what's the catch? Well, believe me — the military spends big bucks turning high school graduates into highly trained and skilled aircraft mechanics, language specialists, and electronic-doodad repair people. In an average year, the services enlist about 175,000 new recruits. Any way you look at it, that's a lot of combat boots! Each and every recruit has to be sent to a military school to train for a job. Uncle Sam needs a way to determine whether a wet-behind-the-ears high school graduate has the mental aptitude to succeed at that job — preferably before he spends your hard-earned tax dollars.

Enter the ASVAB. The services combine various ASVAB subtest scores into groupings called *composite scores* or *line scores*. Through years of trial and error, the individual military services have each determined what minimum composite scores are required to successfully complete its various job-training programs. In this chapter, you discover how those test scores translate into finding the military job of your dreams.

Eyeing How ASVAB Scores Determine Military Training Programs and Jobs

Each service branch has its own system of scores. Recruiters and military job counselors use these scores, along with factors such as job availability, security clearance eligibility, and medical qualifications, to match up potential recruits with military jobs.



During the initial enlistment process, your service branch determines your military job or enlistment program based on established minimum *line scores*: various combinations of scores from individual subtests (see the next section for details). If you get an appropriate score in the appropriate areas, you can get the job you want — as long as that job is available and you meet other qualification factors.

For active duty, the Army is the only service that looks at the scores and offers a guaranteed job for all its new enlistees. In other words, every single Army recruit knows what his or her job is going to be before signing the enlistment contract. The other active duty services use a combination of guaranteed jobs or guaranteed aptitude/career areas:

- » **Air Force:** About 40 percent of active duty Air Force recruits enlist with a guaranteed job. The majority enlists in one of four guaranteed aptitude areas, and during basic training, recruits are assigned to a job that falls into that aptitude area.
- » **Coast Guard:** The Coast Guard rarely, if ever, offers a guaranteed job in its active duty enlistment contracts. Instead, new Coasties enlist as undesignated seamen and spend their first year or so of service doing general work ("Paint that ship!") before finally applying for specific job training.
- » **Marine Corps:** A vast majority of Marine Corps active duty enlistees are guaranteed one of several job fields, such as infantry, avionics, logistics, vehicle maintenance, aircraft maintenance, munitions, and so on. Each of these fields is further divided into specific subjobs, called Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs). Marine recruits usually don't find out their actual MOSs until about halfway through basic training.
- » **Navy:** Most Navy recruits enlist with a guaranteed job, but several hundred people each year also enlist in a guaranteed career area and then *strike* (apply) for the specific job within a year of graduating boot camp.

All enlistment contracts for the reserve forces (regardless of branch) contain guarantees for a specific job. Why? Because reserve recruiters recruit for vacancies in specific reserve units, usually located within 100 miles of where a person lives.

Understanding How Each Branch Computes Line Scores

A *line score* combines various standard ASVAB scores to see which jobs or training programs you qualify for. The *standard scores* are your scores on the individual ASVAB subtests (with Word Knowledge and Paragraph Comprehension combined as a Verbal Expression score):

- » General Science (GS)
- » Arithmetic Reasoning (AR)

- » Auto & Shop Information (AS)
- » Mathematics Knowledge (MK)
- » Mechanical Comprehension (MC)
- » Electronics Information (EI)
- » Assembling Objects (AO)
- » Verbal Expression (VE), the sum of Word Knowledge (WK) and Paragraph Comprehension (PC)

Each of the military services computes its line scores differently. Some calculations even include *dummy scores* — average scores received by thousands of test-takers — for Numerical Operations (NO) and Coding Speed (CS), subtests that are no longer part of the ASVAB. The following sections outline how each branch comes up with its line scores.

Line scores and the Army

To compute line scores for job qualification, the Army combines the various scores into ten separate areas by simple addition of the ASVAB standard scores. Table 2-1 shows the line scores and the ASVAB subtests that make them up.

TABLE 2-1 The U.S. Army's Ten Line Scores

Line Score	Standard Scores Used	Formula Used
Clerical (CL)	Verbal Expression (VE), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), and Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	$VE + AR + MK$
Combat (CO)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Coding Speed (CS), Auto & Shop Information (AS), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$AR + CS + AS + MC$
Electronics (EL)	General Science (GS), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Electronics Information (EI)	$GS + AR + MK + EI$
Field Artillery (FA)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Coding Speed (CS), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$AR + CS + MK + MC$
General Maintenance (GM)	General Science (GS), Auto & Shop Information (AS), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Electronics Information (EI)	$GS + AS + MK + EI$
General Technical (GT)	Verbal Expression (VE) and Arithmetic Reasoning (AR)	$VE + AR$
Mechanical Maintenance (MM)	Numerical Operations (NO), Auto & Shop Information (AS), Mechanical Comprehension (MC), and Electronics Information (EI)	$NO + AS + MC + EI$
Operators and Food (OF)	Verbal Expression (VE), Numerical Operations (NO), Auto & Shop Information (AS), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$VE + NO + AS + MC$
Surveillance and Communications (SC)	Verbal Expression (VE), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Auto & Shop Information (AS), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$VE + AR + AS + MC$
Skilled Technical (ST)	General Science (GS), Verbal Expression (VE), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$GS + VE + MK + MC$

Line scores and the Navy and Coast Guard

The Navy and Coast Guard use the standard scores directly from the ASVAB: the individual subtest scores and Verbal Expression (VE) score, which is the sum of Word Knowledge (WK) and Paragraph Comprehension (PC).

Although the Navy and Coast Guard don't use their line scores for officially determining jobs, the scores provide recruiters, job counselors, and recruits with a snapshot of which broad career areas recruits may qualify for. For example, the Navy regulation that lists the qualifications to become an Air Traffic Control Specialist, states that an ASVAB score of $VE + AR + MK + MC = 220$ (or higher) is required for that job.

Table 2-2 shows the Navy and Coast Guard line scores that show up on the ASVAB score sheet.

TABLE 2-2 The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard's Line Scores

Line Score	Standard Scores Used	Formula Used
Engineman (ENG)	Auto & Shop Information (AS) and Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	$AS + MK$
Administrative (ADM)	Mathematics Knowledge (MK) and Verbal Expression (VE)	$MK + VE$
General Technical (GT)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) and Verbal Expression (VE)	$AR + VE$
Mechanical Maintenance (MEC)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Auto & Shop Information (AS), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$AR + AS + MC$
Health (HM)	General Science (GS), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Verbal Expression (VE)	$GS + MK + VE$
Mechanical Maintenance 2 (MEC2)	Assembling Objects (AO), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$AO + AR + MC$
Electronics (EL)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Electronics Information (EI), General Science (GS), and Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	$AR + EI + GS + MK$
Nuclear Field (NUC)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Mechanical Comprehension (MC), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Verbal Expression (VE)	$AR + MC + MK + VE$
Engineering and Electronics (BEE)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), General Science (GS), and two times Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	$AR + GS + 2MK$
Operations (OPS)	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) and Mathematics Knowledge (MK)	$AR + MK$

Line scores and the Marine Corps

The Marine Corps computes its three line scores for job qualification by adding scores from various ASVAB subtests, as Table 2-3 shows.

TABLE 2-3 The Marine Corps's Line Scores

Line Score	Standard Scores Used	Formula Used
Mechanical Maintenance (MM)	General Science (GS), Auto & Shop Information (AS), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Mechanical Comprehension (MC)	$GS + AS + MK + MC$
General Technical (GT)	Verbal Expression (VE) and Arithmetic Reasoning (AR)	$VE + AR$
Electronics (EL)	General Science (GS), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Electronics Information (EI)	$GS + AR + MK + EI$

Line scores and the Air Force

The U.S. Air Force uses standard scores from the ASVAB subtests to derive scaled scores in four aptitude areas called MAGE (mechanical, administrative, general, and electronics). The Air Force MAGE scores are calculated as *percentiles*, ranging from 0 to 99, which show your relationship to thousands of others who've taken the test. In other words, a percentile score of 51 indicates you scored better in this aptitude area than 50 percent of the testers who were used to establish the norm.

Table 2-4 lays out the four areas, the subtests used, and the formula used to calculate the score for each particular area. After calculating the score for a particular area, the test-scorer converts that score to a percentile.

TABLE 2-4 The U.S. Air Force's MAGE Scores

Line Score	Standard Scores Used	Formula Used
Mechanical	General Science (GS), Mechanical Comprehension (MC), and two times Auto & Shop Information (AS)	$GS + MC + 2AS$
Administrative	Numerical Operations (NO), Coding Speed (CS), and Verbal Expression (VE)	$NO + CS + VE$
General	Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) and Verbal Expression (VE)	$AR + VE$
Electronics	General Science (GS), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Mathematics Knowledge (MK), and Electronics Information (EI)	$GS + AR + MK + EI$

SCORE! SPEAKING THE LINGO

When you sit down with your recruiter to discuss your ASVAB scores and what you qualify for, you may think he suddenly decided to speak in a foreign language. For job-qualification purposes, remember three key terms and their definitions:

- **Standard score:** A standard score refers to individual ASVAB subtest scores (that is, Verbal Expression, Arithmetic Reasoning, Mathematics Knowledge, and so on).
- **Line score:** A line score combines various standard scores and is used by the services for job qualification purposes.
- **AFQT score:** Calculated from the math and English subtests of the ASVAB, the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score is used by the military to determine overall enlistment qualification. Chapter 1 explains exactly how this critical score is computed.

- » Choosing your weapon: Pencil or keyboard
- » Developing multiple-choice strategies
- » Making educated guesses
- » Getting some studying and test tips
- » Preparing down to the last detail

Chapter 3

Getting Acquainted with Test-Taking and Study Techniques

How many times have you heard someone say (or even said yourself), “I just can’t take tests”? Well, of course you can’t do well on tests if you keep telling yourself that! In basic training, your drill sergeant will convince you that the words “I can’t” simply don’t exist in the military. If you don’t believe me, try telling your drill sergeant, “I just can’t do push-ups.” You’ll find that with sufficient practice (and your drill sergeant will ensure you get a lot of practice), you can do push-ups just as well as the next person. (Actually, I don’t recommend testing this, for reasons that should be obvious.) The truth is that those who do well on tests are those who’ve figured out how to study efficiently and how to use a dash of test-taking psychology.

This chapter includes information on how to prepare for the test — how you study and how and why you should take the practice exams. In addition, you get some inside info, such as secrets for guessing when you don’t know the answer to a question (although if you study for the test, that will never happen, right?). The tips and techniques provided in this chapter can help you get a jump on the ASVAB and your military career.

Taking the Test: Paper or Computerized?

Many versions of the ASVAB exist (although you probably won’t get a choice of which one to take), but they primarily boil down to two basic differences: the paper version and the computerized version. Each version has advantages and disadvantages, which I discuss in the following sections.

If you're taking the ASVAB as part of the student program in high school, you'll take the paper version of the test — the one that doesn't include the Assembling Objects subtest.

If you're taking the ASVAB to enlist in the military, you'll take the enlistment ASVAB. This version comes in two formats: paper-and-pencil (P&P) and computerized. There's a great chance that you'll take the computerized version (CAT-ASVAB), because to save time and money, recruiters often accompany their applicants to the nearest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) for testing, medical examination, and enlistment (one-stop shopping). MEPS uses only the computerized version, and the P&P version is offered only at Military Entrance Test (MET) sites that aren't near enough to MEPS for recruiters and recruits to travel to easily. There are 65 MEPS in the United States and in Puerto Rico, and MET sites are located in each state (often at National Guard Armories).

Writing on hard copy: The advantages and disadvantages of the paper version

The questions on the paper-and-pencil version of the ASVAB are the same questions you'll get on the computerized version. Some people feel that the P&P ASVAB provides certain advantages:

- » **You can skip questions that you don't know the answer to and come back to them later.** This option can help when you're racing against the clock and want to get as many answers right as possible. You can change an answer on the subtest you're currently working on, but you can't change an answer on a subtest after the time for that subtest has expired.
- » **You may not make any marks in the exam booklet; however, you may make notes on your scratch paper.** If you skip a question, you can lightly circle the item number on your answer sheet to remind yourself to go back to it. If you don't know the answer to a question, you can mentally cross off the answers that seem unlikely or wrong to you and then guess based on the remaining answers. Be sure to erase any stray marks you make on your answer sheet before time is called for that subtest.

Killing trees isn't the only disadvantage of the paper-based test. Other drawbacks include the following:

- » **Harder questions are randomly intermingled with easier questions.** This means you can find yourself spending too much time trying to figure out the answer to a question that's too hard for you and may miss answering some easier questions at the end of the subtest, thereby lowering your overall score.
- » **The paper answer sheets are scored by using an optical mark scanning machine.** The machine has a conniption when it comes across an incompletely filled-in answer circle or a stray pencil mark and will often stubbornly refuse to give you credit, even if you answered correctly.
- » **Getting your scores may seem like it takes forever.** The timeline varies; however, your recruiter will have access to your score no later than 72 hours (3 days) after you finish the test (not counting days the MEPS doesn't work, such as weekend days or holidays).

Going paperless: The pros and cons of the computerized test

The computerized version of the ASVAB uses *computerized adaptive testing* to make sure each applicant gets questions tailored to his or her ability level. This version, called the CAT-ASVAB, presents test questions in a different format. It adapts the questions it offers you based on your level of proficiency (that's why it's called *adaptive*). Translation: The first test item is of average difficulty. If you answer this question correctly, the next question may be more difficult. If you answer it incorrectly, the computer will most likely give you an easier question. By contrast, on the paper ASVAB, hard and easy questions are presented randomly.

The CAT-ASVAB also has significantly fewer questions than the paper-and-pencil version of the test — the people who designed it did that on purpose. With this type of testing, the computer can tell how much you know more quickly because the questions range in difficulty from very easy to very hard.



REMEMBER

Maybe it's because people today are more comfortable in front of a computer than with a pencil, but military recruiters have noted that among applicants who've taken both the paper-based and computerized versions of the ASVAB, many applicants tend to score slightly higher on the computerized version of the test.

You don't have to be a computer guru to appreciate the advantages of the computerized version of the ASVAB:

- » **It's impossible to record your answer in the wrong space on the answer sheet.** Questions and possible answers are presented on the screen, and you press the key that corresponds to your answer choice before moving on to the next question. Often, only the A, B, C, and D keys are activated when you take the test.
- » **The difficulty of the test items presented depends on whether you answered the previous question correctly.** On the two math subtests of the ASVAB, harder questions are worth more points than easier questions are, so this method helps maximize your AFQT score.
- » **You get your scores right away.** The computer automatically calculates and prints your standard scores for each subtest and your line scores for each service branch. (For more on line scores, see Chapter 2.) This machine is a pretty smart cookie — it also calculates your AFQT percentile score on the spot. You usually know whether you qualify for military enlistment on the same day you take the test and, if so, which jobs you qualify for.

On the downside, you can't skip questions or change your answers after you enter them on the CAT-ASVAB. Instead of being able to go through and immediately answer all the questions you're sure of, you have to answer each question as it comes. This can make it difficult to judge how much time to spend on a difficult question before guessing and moving on. Also, if you have a few minutes at the end of the test, you can't go back and make sure you marked the correct answer to each question.

Tackling Multiple-Choice Questions

Both the paper-based and the computerized versions of the ASVAB are multiple-choice tests. You choose the correct (or most correct) answer from among the four available choices. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you tackle the choices:



WARNING

» **Read the directions carefully.** Most ASVAB test proctors agree — the majority of the time when there's an issue with an applicant's scores, misreading directions is a prime offender. Each subtest has a paragraph or two describing what the subtest covers and instructions on how to answer the questions.

» **Make sure you understand the question.** If you don't understand the question, you're naturally not going to be able to make the best decision when selecting an answer. Understanding the question requires attention to three particular points:

- **Take special care to read the questions correctly.** Most questions ask something like, "Which of the following equals 2×3 ?" But sometimes, a question may ask, "Which of the following does not equal 2×3 ?" You can easily skip right over the word *not* when you're reading, assume that the answer is 6, and get the question wrong.
- **On the math subtests, be especially careful to read the symbols.** When you're in a hurry, the + sign and the ÷ sign can look very similar. And blowing right by a negative sign or another symbol is just as easy.
- **Make sure you understand the terms being used.** When a math problem asks you to find the product of two numbers, be sure you know what finding the product means (you have to multiply the two numbers). If you add the two numbers, you arrive at the wrong answer.

» **Take time to review all the answer options.** On all the subtests, you select the correct answer from only four possible answer options. On the ASVAB, you're supposed to choose the answer that is most correct. (Now and then you do the opposite and choose the answer that's least correct.) Sometimes several answers are reasonably correct for the question at hand, but only one of them is the best answer. If you don't stop to read and review all the answers, you may not choose the one that's most correct. Or if you review all the answer options, you may realize that you hastily decided on an incorrect answer because you misread it.



REMEMBER

Often, a person reads a question, decides on the answer, glances at the answer options, chooses the option that agrees with his or her answer, marks it on the answer sheet, and then moves on. Although this approach usually works, it can sometimes lead you astray.

» **If you're taking a paper test, mark the answer carefully.** A machine scores the paper-based ASVAB answer sheets. You have to mark the answer clearly so the machine knows which answer you've selected. This means carefully filling in the space that represents the correct letter. You've done this a million times in school, but it's worth repeating: Don't use a check mark, don't circle the answer, and don't let your mark wander into the next space. If you must erase, make sure all evidence of your prior choice is gone; otherwise, the grading machine may credit you with the wrong choice or disregard your correct answer and give you no credit at all.



WARNING

Incorrectly marking the answer sheet — answering Question 11 on the line for Question 12, Question 12 on the line for Question 13, and . . . you get the idea — is a very real possibility. Be especially careful if you skip a question that you're going to return to later.

Incorrectly marking the answers can cause a real headache. If you fail to get a qualifying score, the minimum amount of time you must wait before retaking the ASVAB is one month. Even then, your journey to military glory through ASVAB torment may not be over. If within six months of a previous test, your retest AFQT score increases by 20 points or more, you'll be required by MEPCOM regulation to take an additional ASVAB test, called a *confirmation test*. (Confirmation tests can be taken only at MEPS facilities, by the way.) So if you're not careful, you'll be taking three ASVABs when all you really needed to take was one. Sound fun? Chapter 1 discusses how and when you can retake the ASVAB.

When You Don't Know an Answer: Guessing Smart

On the ASVAB, guessing is sometimes okay. Guessing can help you on the paper-and-pencil version because of how the test is scored. Here's how the point system breaks down:

- » If you choose the correct answer, you get one point (or more, depending on how the question is weighted).
- » If you don't answer a question, you get nada.
- » If you guess on a question and get the question wrong, you get nada — no worrying about losing points or getting any sort of penalty!



WARNING

You should try not to guess your way through a bunch of questions at the end of a subtest if you're taking the CAT-ASVAB. You're likely to do this when time is running out. If you answer a bunch of questions incorrectly at the end of a subtest, you may be penalized for mismanaging your time, and that penalty can hurt your score.

It's rare that the ASVAB's computer system has to penalize a test-taker. Most people have enough time to finish (or at least come very close to finishing) the test.



TIP

Because ASVAB questions have four possible answers, you have at least a 25 percent chance of guessing correctly, which means you have chances to increase your score. There's nearly always at least one answer that isn't even close to the correct answer, so by using simple deduction, you can often narrow your choices down to two answers or fewer. Here are some things to keep in mind when eliminating answer choices:

- » Don't eliminate an answer based on how frequently that answer comes up. For example, if Choice (B) has been the correct answer for the last five questions, don't assume that it must be the wrong answer for the question you're on just because that would make it six in a row.
- » An answer that has *always*, *all*, *everyone*, *never*, *none*, or *no one* is usually incorrect.
- » The longer the answer, the more likely that it's the correct answer. The test-makers have to get all those qualifiers in there so you can't find an example to contradict the correct answer. If you see phrases like "in many cases" or "frequently," that's a clue that the test-makers are trying to make the answer most correct.
- » If two choices are very similar in meaning, neither of them is probably the correct choice. On the other hand, if two answer options contradict each other, one of them is usually correct.



WARNING

If you have to guess, never, ever go back and change the answer, unless you're absolutely, 100 percent, positively convinced that you're changing it to the correct answer and you answered incorrectly only because you had sweat in your eyes and didn't read the choices properly. The United States Air Force Senior NCO Academy conducted an in-depth study of several Air Force multiple-choice test results, taken over several years, and found that when students changed answers on their answer sheets, they changed from a right answer to a wrong answer more than 72 percent of the time!

In each of the chapters in Parts 3, 4, and 5, you find more hints for making educated guesses that are specific to those topics.



TIP

If you guess on more than one question throughout the test, choosing the same answer for every guess is a smart way to go. For example, all your guesses could be Choice (B). This technique slightly increases your chances of getting more answers correct. However, if you can eliminate Choice (B) as a wrong answer, then, by all means, choose a different answer option for that question.

Studying and Practicing for the ASVAB

The practice tests that come with this book are valuable study aids. Before you begin studying, take one of the tests. Try to duplicate the testing environment — take the entire exam at one time, time yourself, and don't allow interruptions.



TIP

The military has a saying, “Train as you fight.” The same is true of the ASVAB. If you plan to take the paper-and-pencil version of the ASVAB, concentrate most of your efforts on the written practice tests in this book. If you'll be taking the CAT-ASVAB, spend most of your time practicing with online tests.

Get a sense of how long it takes you to complete each subtest so you know how much time you have to spend on educated guessing. After you complete the first practice test, check your answers to see where you need improvement.



TIP

When you study for the ASVAB, fall in line with these study habits to make the most of your time:

- » **Focus on the subtests that matter to you.** If you have a clear interest in pursuing a career in electronics, the Electronics Information subtest should be at the top of your list to ace. Although you'll want to make sure all your line scores are good (in case your desired job isn't available or you want to retrain later in your career), focusing on your expertise in certain areas of interest makes you a more desirable candidate. (See Chapter 2 and Appendix A for lists of the subtests that affect your acceptance into the job areas you're pursuing.)
- » **Concentrate on subject areas that need improvement.** It's human nature to find yourself spending your study time on subject areas that you have an interest in or that you're good at. If you're a whiz at fixing cars, don't waste your time studying auto information. You're already going to ace that part of the test, right? On the other hand, if you had a hard time in math during your high school years, you need to spend extra time brushing up on your arithmetic skills.
- » **Be a loner.** You may want to study with a partner now and then so the two of you can brainstorm answers and quiz each other, but most of your studying should be done on your own.
- » **Try to reduce distractions.** Always study in a well-lit, quiet area away from pets, screaming babies, and the TV.

- » **Study in long blocks of time.** Studying for an hour or two once or twice a day is much more effective than 15 minutes six times a day.
- » **Keep study breaks short.** A few minutes every hour is sufficient. Don't ignore breaks completely, however. Studies show that taking short breaks improves how well you're able to remember information.
- » **Practice the actual act of test-taking.** Practice marking answers correctly on the answer key and time yourself to see how long it takes you to answer questions.



TIP

If you're unsure of how to begin studying for the ASVAB, check out the 12-week study strategy in Appendix B. If you don't have 12 weeks left before you take the test, you can accelerate the schedule and zero in on what's most important.

After you do some additional studying, take the second practice exam. Again, try to duplicate testing conditions. Check your answers. Compare your scores to the scores from your first test. Have you improved? If so, continue studying as you have been. If not, reconsider how you're studying or whether you're setting aside enough time to study. A school counselor or teacher can give you additional study pointers. Continue practicing with the next few tests.

A couple of weeks before the ASVAB, take the next-to-last practice test. Brush up on any of those nagging areas that still give you fits. Check to see which areas you need help with and spend more time studying those areas.

A week before your test date, take the last test. This test helps you calm your nerves before taking the ASVAB — how the test works will be fresh in your mind.



REMEMBER

Don't waste time memorizing the practice questions in this guide or any other ASVAB study guide. You won't see the same questions on the ASVAB. Use this guide and the sample tests for two purposes:

- » **To determine the subject areas in which you need to improve:** Use the tips and techniques, along with standard study materials (like high school textbooks), to improve your knowledge of each specific subject.
- » **To familiarize yourself with the types of test questions and the way they're presented on the test:** Getting a good idea of what all the subtests look like will improve your test-taking speed. You won't have to spend time trying to figure out how a question looks. You can spend your time answering the question.

Making Last-Minute Preparations: 24 Hours and Counting



TIP

You want some good advice? On the night before the test, get some sleep — at least eight hours. Don't drink alcohol the night before — headaches, dehydration, and the ASVAB don't work well together. And don't pull an all-night cram session. If you don't know the material the night before the test, it's too late. Staying up all night only guarantees that you'll do poorly on the test, because you'll be too tired in the morning. Here are some other suggestions:

- » **On the morning of the test, eat a light meal.** Anything too heavy will make you drowsy, but not eating enough will make it hard for you to concentrate.

Try to avoid eating a breakfast high in carbohydrates and sipping energy drinks. Although the carbs and caffeine will initially make you feel energetic, a couple of hours into the test, you may come crashing down. Select foods high in protein instead.

- » **Get exercise the day before and even the morning of the test.** Doing so gets your blood pumping and helps you remain mentally sharp.
- » **If you're sick, upset, or injured, consider rescheduling the test.** Right before the test starts, the proctor will ask if there's anything, such as sickness or injury, that may affect your test performance. After the test actually starts, it's considered an "official test," and you'll have to wait a certain time period before any possibility of a retest. See Chapter 1 for details.
- » **Don't bring personal supplies to the test.** Your test administrator will provide you with pencils and scratch paper. Don't bring calculators, personal electronic devices (smartphones, tablets), backpacks, or a cooler of munchies to the testing site. You won't be allowed to have them with you. (But if you wear eyeglasses, bring them.)
- » **Bring a watch to help you keep track of time if you're taking the paper version.** The computerized version has a clock on the screen.
- » **Don't drink a lot of liquids just before the test.** You don't want to waste valuable test time in the restroom!
- » **Make sure you arrive at the test site with plenty of time to spare.** In the military, arriving on time means you're 5 minutes late. You should plan to be in your seat at least 15 minutes before the scheduled testing time. Unless your recruiter is driving you (which is often the case), you may want to do a test run a day or two before your testing date to make sure you know where the test is, the availability of parking, and how to find the testing room.



Words to Live By: Communication Skills

IN THIS PART . . .

Brush up on vocabulary lessons that will help you ace the Word Knowledge subtest. Review prefixes, suffixes, and roots, and distinguish between synonyms and antonyms.

Get help tackling the Paragraph Comprehension subtest, and check out the different types of questions you'll encounter.

Work some practice questions at the end of each chapter to help you determine where you excel and where you could use some more review.

- » Being well-spoken in the military
- » Seeing some example questions from the ASVAB
- » Keeping a word list
- » Knowing the difference between synonyms and antonyms
- » Improving your overall vocabulary

Chapter 4

Word Knowledge

To make it to basic combat training, you'd better know how to spell it (along with an army of other words) to score well on the Word Knowledge subtest of the ASVAB. Not only do you have to know how to spell to some degree (so you can differentiate among words), but you also need to know what the words on the test mean. Word Knowledge just means *vocabulary*, which means *hard words no one uses in ordinary conversation*. (Well, not really.) If you're on a military base and you're hungry, don't bother looking for a sign that says Chow Hall. Instead, you need to find the Enlisted Personnel Dining Facility. If you want to work out after your big lunch, forget about the Base Gym. You're looking for the Fitness and Wellness Center.

So what if you don't know the difference between a carbine and a carbon? Never fear — I'm here to give you a helping hand (bestow upon you inestimable guidance and encouragement — that's Word Knowledge speak). With the help of this chapter and a little brow-sweat on your part, your word-knowledge skills will whip right into shape. And then at the end of the chapter, you can check out the practice questions to test those skills.

Grasping the Importance of Word Knowledge

Word Knowledge isn't part of the ASVAB just because the military likes to use big words. It's included because words stand for ideas, and the more words you understand, the more ideas you can understand (and the better you can communicate with others). A decent vocabulary is essential in the military if you want to get ahead. The military operates on paperwork, and whether you're trying to get more supplies (submit necessary logistical requisitions) or get the assignment you want (via application for personnel career-enhancement programs), you need to develop a good vocabulary. The military considers clear communication so important that it's taught and graded at all levels of leadership training, including at the Army, Navy, and Air Force War Colleges, which are requirements to be promoted to General officer equivalent rank (Admiral in the Navy).



The Word Knowledge subtest is one of the four most important subtests on the ASVAB (along with Paragraph Comprehension, Mathematics Knowledge, and Arithmetic Reasoning). This subtest makes up a significant portion of the AFQT score — the score that determines your eligibility for military service. You also need to do well on the Word Knowledge subtest to qualify for many military jobs, such as air traffic controller, military intelligence, and even firefighting.

Table 4-1 shows the military job qualification line scores that are calculated by using your Word Knowledge subtest score.

TABLE 4-1 Military Line Scores That Use the Word Knowledge Score

Branch of Service	Line Score
U.S. Army	Clerical, Combat, General Technical, Operators and Food, Skilled Technical, and Surveillance and Communications
U.S. Air Force	Administrative, General, and Mechanical
U.S. Navy/ Coast Guard	Administrative, General Technician, Hospital, Nuclear, and Operations
U.S. Marine Corps	Clerical and General Technician

Chapter 2 has more information about military line scores. Check out Appendix A for more information on the scores you need to get the job you want.

Checking Out the Word Knowledge Question Format

The Word Knowledge portion of the ASVAB measures your vocabulary. The questions usually come in one of two flavors:

- » The first type asks for a straight definition.
- » The second type gives you an underlined word used in the context of a sentence.

When you're asked for a straight definition, your task is quite simple: Choose the answer closest in meaning to the underlined word. Look at the following example:



Abate most nearly means

- (A) encourage.
- (B) relax.
- (C) obstruct.
- (D) terminate.

Abate means to suppress or terminate. In this case, the correct answer is Choice (D).

When you see an underlined word in a sentence, your goal is to choose the answer closest in meaning to the underlined word. **Remember:** *Closest in meaning* doesn't mean *the exact same thing*. You're looking for similar or related words. For example:



EXAMPLE

His house was derelict.

- (A) solid
- (B) run-down
- (C) clean
- (D) inexpensive

Here, the answer is Choice (B).

When you take the Word Knowledge subtest on the paper version of the ASVAB, you have 11 minutes to answer the 35 questions, which means you have slightly less than 20 seconds to answer each question. On the computerized version, you luck out. You have 8 minutes to answer only 16 questions (or 30 seconds for each question). These days most candidates take the computerized version of the ASVAB. Either way, it's plenty of time, as long as you stay focused and don't waste time thinking about last night's date (sorry, I mean social encounter).



TIP

Keep in mind that although you may know the word in the question, you may not know one or more of the words in the multiple-choice answers. If this is the case, use the process of elimination to help you narrow down your choices. Eliminate the words that you know aren't correct and guess which of the remaining words is most likely correct.

Building Words from Scratch: Strategies to Help You Decipher Word Meanings

Webster's New World Dictionary lists more than 170,000 primary English words and who knows how many derivatives of those words. Wow! Any way you look at it, that's a lot of memorization. Fortunately, you don't need to study all those words. It's possible to decipher English word meanings even if you've never heard a particular word before.

Developing a large vocabulary takes time — often years. However, just because you have a limited amount of time to study doesn't mean you should give up hope. Instead, focus on the tips throughout this section to help you improve your Word Knowledge score.

From beginning to end: Knowing prefixes and suffixes

Prefixes, roots, and suffixes are the main parts that make up words. Not every word has all three, but most have at least one. A word's *prefix* — the first syllable — affects its meaning. A *suffix* is the last syllable in a word, and it, too, affects the word's meaning. *Roots* are the parts that lie in the middle of a word. Think of roots as the base of the word and prefixes and suffixes as word parts that are attached to the base to modify its meaning. (Check out the section "Determining the root of the problem" later in this chapter for more info on — you guessed it — roots.)

These basic word parts generally have the same meaning in whatever word they're used. For instance, the prefix *pro-* means *in favor of*, *forward*, or *positive*, whether you use it in the word *proton* or the word *proceed*.