



FROM BOOTS TO BOOKS Program Guide

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The program guide is intended as a rough outline for the topic and can be adapted as you see fit to meet the needs of your program, students/clients, or situation. The guide also includes copy-permissible activities as a supplement to instruction. **Please note that color handouts are copyright protected and duplication in any form is strictly prohibited.** See our website www.dreamcatchercurriculum.com for additional info, updates and new curriculum topics.

➡ **BEFORE YOU BEGIN:** This workshop requires minimal prep, however, it is strongly recommended that you read and review the program guide along with the handout before meeting with students.

FROM BOOTS TO BOOKS OBJECTIVE & INCLUDED TOPICS:

To provide veterans, as potential college students, with basic preparation information about the university experience, including critical success tips with veteran students specifically in mind, aiding in the transition to a university campus after military service; *College Admission, Degree Program/Major Selection, Military Support on Campus, Financial Aid & Benefits, Potential Challenges for the Student Veteran*

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP/SESSION:

This workshop is designed for first-time entering college students who are veterans or current military. The info provided will cover introductory concepts about college, however, even students with some college experience could benefit from a refresher on how to be successful on campus. Included with this guide are additional activities to use if conducting a group workshop, however, the information would work fine as an advisement tool when meeting with veterans individually. Make copies of the additional activities/pages included with this guide before meeting with participants.

STEP ONE TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

Before distributing the handout, start the session with an open discussion about why participants have chosen to pursue a college degree following military service. You could generate feedback with the following questions: *What do you hope to accomplish by going back to school? What challenges or obstacles do you anticipate encountering along the way? What are the most intimidating aspects about being a college student? How might your military service give you an advantage over traditional students?* Encourage dialogue. Participants should be able to see that their fears/concerns are not unique, but common to most student veterans entering college, as well as similar to the concerns of most non-traditional students. You might also share lessons you learned while in college. If you were in the military, feel free to share how you managed the transition from the military to civilian life, especially as it pertains to college. Sharing personal experiences is a great way to build trust and engage participants, just remember to keep it brief and focus on a specific narrative.

STEP TWO TIME: 10-15 MINUTES

Distribute the handout. Within the *Your Next Mission* section, highlight the common soft skills student veterans gain through military service: **work ethic, grit, motivation, time management skills, willpower, and self-sacrifice.** Provide a few minutes for participants to brainstorm other skills or attributes veterans might bring to civilian life, as well as a college campus. Answers might include: goal-oriented, mission-driven, self-sufficient, detail-oriented, hard working, respectful, etc. Facilitate discussion as time allows, then move to the inside of the handout (*Basic Training for College*), starting with *Manage Expectations*. Explain that veterans are considered non-traditional students. Read over the differences between traditional students and veteran students. Before moving on, pause to distribute the *Basic Training for College Terminology* sheet included with this guide. Instruct participants to write down definitions for each term (in their own words) as you cover the handout. This pencil-to-paper notetaking will be good practice for taking notes in class, plus it's the most brain-friendly means of learning new info. The activity will tie-in to the workshop assessment through a "drill" activity later.

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STEP THREE TIME: 20-30 MINUTES (OR AS TIME PERMITS)

Cover the remaining handout material through discussion, reading, and explanation. You could read sections aloud as you go, participants can read independently for some sections (processing aloud afterward), or partner into pairs for shared discussion. However you prefer to cover the content, be sure to emphasize the **BASIC TRAINING** terms. Participants should write down their own definitions for these terms as you proceed through the handout. Some prompting may be required. For additional details to provide for each term, **see the table below and on the following page**. Offer further explanation as you see fit, sharing any vet-specific information, services, organizations, and resources that you can, which might include:

VR&E Program—Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment/Chapter 31 through the VA, includes educational and career counseling as well as job preparation programs and access to community-based support (www.ebenefits.va.gov; www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab)

Veterans Employment Center—VEC, also through the VA, connects servicemembers, veterans, and their family to career opportunities in both the private and public sector (www.vets.gov/employment)

Veterans' Employment and Training Service—VETS, through the Department of Labor, prepares servicemembers for careers and provides employment resources (www.dol.gov/vets)

Vet Center—through the VA, provides a variety of services, including readjustment counseling, benefits assistance and referral, marital and family counseling, bereavement counseling, community education, and more (www.vetcenter.va.gov)

Sheep Dog Impact Assistance—SDIA, connects servicemembers with continued service opportunities in the community, including Disaster Response Missions, Outdoor Adventures, and Holiday Assistance (www.SheepDogIA.org)

COURSE SYLLABUS	Each instructor provides their own syllabus unique to their class; it should include contact info, required textbooks, additional reading requirements, test dates, and more.
ATTENDANCE POLICY	If you have to miss class for any reason, communicate with your instructor as soon as possible. Be concise and do not make elaborate excuses. It's best NOT to miss class.
OFFICE HOURS	Even if you do not require help with the course, stop by during office hours for a quick meeting at least once during the semester, even if it's only to introduce yourself.
ACADEMIC ADVISOR	Student veterans have a tight schedule to complete courses according to a benefits schedule (usually 36 months); stay in constant communication with your advisor on selecting classes
CAREER SERVICES* <small>*not on handout, but worth a mention</small>	Along with investigating your career, this office on campus helps with creating a resume, preparing for job interviews, and investigating internship opportunities.
MAJOR	Majors are also called "concentrations" and indicate a specific subject area focus, which comprises about 1/3 to 1/2 of your coursework. Choose wisely, as changing a major could cost precious time and money.
DEGREE	The most common type of degree is a bachelor's degree (or baccalaureate) which takes about 4 years to complete; there are also associate (2-year), master's (6-year), and doctoral degrees.
JOB SHADOW	Job shadowing means spending time with a professional in the field to see if you'd enjoy that line of work. Also an option: conducting an informational interview with prepared questions.
VETERANS ADMINISTRATOR	Official who works specifically with student veterans on campus. Some colleges have a designated VETERANS SERVICE CENTER, which can help with a variety of vet-specific services.
COLLEGE CREDIT	Credit is broken into "hours" for each class on your degree plan. The average class is worth 3 hours of credit (meeting 3 hours per week for class). Most degrees require approx. 120 hours to finish.
COLLEGE ADMISSIONS	Before visiting the Office of Admissions, consider meeting with a VUB advisor, Veterans Administrator, or Veteran Service Center on campus to get support through the admissions process.
TRANSFER CREDIT	Another reason to visit with a veteran official on campus: potentially getting college credit for your military training! Also, if you've previously taken college classes, those credits may transfer.
FEE WAIVER	Many colleges waive the application fee for veterans or active-duty military personnel. You may need to complete a waiver form to qualify, but it's worth asking if available.

ACCUPLACER TEST	A series of tests evaluating your skills in reading, writing, and math to help college admissions place you into the appropriate courses matching your skill level.
CLEP EXAM	If you can pass the exam, you'll earn college credit in one of 33 subject tests available, covering coursework typically taken during first two years of college. As of 2020, exams cost \$85.
REMEDIAL COURSEWORK	You may be required to build up your skills in reading, writing, or math by taking these refresher courses either before or concurrently with college-level coursework.
GRANTS/PELL GRANT	Free (often state or federal) money based on need. You do not have to repay grants. The most common grant, the federal PELL GRANT, provides up to \$6,345 per year as of 2020-2021.
LOANS	Must be repaid. Subsidized loans = gov't pays the interest while you're in school; unsubsidized = you pay interest starting immediately and throughout your college education.
WORK-STUDY	Federal aid that helps you secure a job on (or off) campus to help pay for your college expenses. You earn a paycheck just like any other job.
SCHOLARSHIPS	Money for your college expenses based on merit, skills, expertise, ability, or otherwise earned.
FAFSA	Federal application for grants, loans, and work-study; must complete the application each year in college.

DreamCatcher Tip: At this point in the workshop, it would be helpful to provide a short break. If you can offer refreshments (or even water), that can help wake up and refocus the brain. Upon return from the break, conduct a brief brain exercise to help with focus for the next activity. Ask workshop attendees to bring their palms together and rub hands vigorously while taking three deep, slow breaths (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth). Connecting the two sides of the body increases alertness. Next, participants should shake their hands as if they've just washed and don't have a towel to dry. This easy exercise recalibrates the mind-body connection and does wonders for refocusing attention.

STEP FOUR TIME: 10-15 MINUTES (OR AS TIME PERMITS)

Since you finish the handout with the *Expect Some Challenges* section, this is a perfect transition to addressing concerns and potential roadblocks common for student veterans. Distribute the *From Boots to Roadblocks* cards (photocopy and cut cards in advance of the workshop or session; make certain you have enough cards for each participant to have one). Instruct attendees to read the potential roadblock listed on their card. Provide 1 minute of quiet think time for processing the obstacle, then ask participants to partner with someone whose card had a different road block listed. Allot about 5 minutes for partners to read aloud the obstacles and provide their response or solution with time to discuss.

Time permitting, facilitate discussion/brainstorm session about potential challenges veterans may encounter. A brain-healthy exercise to start the process: ask attendees to turn to the blank back page of their terminology sheet. Provide 2 minutes to write down every possible fear, worry, concern, frustration, and foreseen roadblock they might have when it comes to college. Participants won't be required to share their concerns individually (unless voluntarily) so that they feel more comfortable venting their concerns on paper. This process is a research-proven technique to clear the brain of "worry clutter." Studies have shown great success with journaling before events, tests, and even as a daily habit to improve the function of the brain, releasing stress and anxiety. Follow this activity with group discussion about potential roadblocks. Concerns might include: **financial stress (especially given that benefits are usually paid in arrears or significantly delayed), academic anxiety, transitioning to civilian life, military stigma (assumptions made about vets), difficulty self-advocating (used to placing the safety of their teammates above their own safety), having an open-ended/independent schedule or lack of routine (compared to a regimented military schedule), how to find a mentor on campus, finding out where to go for help, etc.**

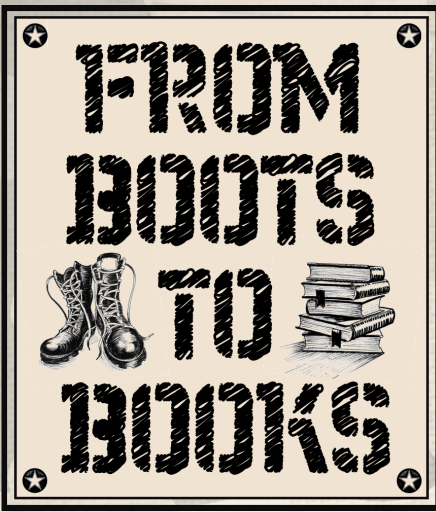
Try to work through the roadblocks and concerns, providing advice and suggestions as you go. You might work through a "script" for asking questions on campus or how to best respond to situations.

FINAL STEP & ASSESSMENT TIME REMAINING

Provide participants with the *Basic Training for College DRILL TIME* sheet to see how well they learned the info covered during the workshop. You can use this sheet as the assessment, or conduct an informal poll using the questions.

BASIC TRAINING FOR COLLEGE TERMINOLOGY

As you cover the BASIC TRAINING terms on the *From Boots to Books* handout, take a moment to write down (in your own words) what you understand the definition to be for each term. Ask questions as needed to clarify. Writing down newly learned concepts is critical to long-term memory. Keep this in mind when taking notes in college classes! Pencil-to-paper notetaking is critical to memory and comprehension, according to brain science.



COURSE SYLLABUS _____

ATTENDANCE POLICY _____

OFFICE HOURS _____

ACADEMIC ADVISOR _____

CAREER SERVICES* _____

MAJOR _____

DEGREE _____

JOB SHADOW _____

VETERANS ADMINISTRATOR _____

COLLEGE CREDIT _____

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS _____

TRANSFER CREDIT _____

FEE WAIVER _____

ACCUPLACER TEST _____

CLEP EXAM _____

REMEDIAL COURSEWORK _____

GRANTS _____

LOANS _____

WORK-STUDY _____

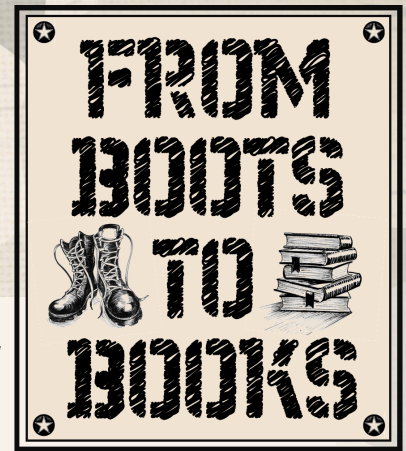
SCHOLARSHIPS _____

PELL GRANT _____

FAFSA _____

*This term isn't on your handout, but you should still be aware of this service on campus.

BASIC TRAINING FOR COLLEGE DRILL TIME



While in college, you must learn and remember vast amounts of info. To improve learning, incorporate brain-friendly study habits into your routine. Include a variety of sensory study methods such as VISUAL (read and reread info), AUDITORY (read or recall info aloud), and TACTILE (take notes or work hands-on). You need to revisit learned information *multiple* times before it becomes long-term memory. Research shows the most effective means of learning is by teaching fresh concepts to someone else. Try "instructing" newly learned info to a classmate, friend, spouse, child, etc. Also effective: quizzing yourself over and over on terms, facts, dates, and more. Start now by taking this "drill" quiz on the BASIC TRAINING FOR COLLEGE TERMS and college-prep concepts you've learned so far.

What information can usually be found on the **COURSE SYLLABUS**?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How many months (max) of military education benefits are provided with the GI Bill®?

What does **FAFSA** stand for? _____

List 6 things you need to apply for college admission:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

NO PEEKING AT THE HANDOUT

What are the types of financial aid you might qualify for with the FAFSA application?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Put a ★ by the type of financial aid above that allows you to earn a paycheck to help pay for college expenses.

Circle the types of aid above that do not require repayment.

If you need support when you get to college, where can you go for help or advice? List at least 3 resources who can provide assistance.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What type of financial aid is based on merit, skill, or other qualifying factors?

Does this type of aid have to be paid back? (circle below)

YES

NO

FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

Adjusting to going back to school, after years away from an academic setting, is much harder than you expected it to be. You failed a test!

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

You don't know where to go on campus for certain services, offices, or classrooms. You can't seem to figure out campus life.

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

Attending class with students who are younger than you, with different life experiences and responsibilities, feels rather awkward.

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

Working together with classmates on group projects may challenge your sense of self-sufficiency.

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

Balancing your coursework with a job and family responsibilities is proving to be a challenge. Managing time is difficult with so much to do.

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

You aren't accustomed to asking for help when needed; seeking support is outside your comfort zone.

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FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

You have financial concerns and find money management to be stressful, given your added responsibilities along with pursuing a college degree.

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Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

You have difficulty asking for help on campus and feel like it might be a sign of weakness, compared to traditional classmates.

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FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

It turns out you aren't getting as much college credit for your military experience as you'd hoped, which means more class time for you.

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FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

The professor doesn't provide clear instructions or lectures, leaving it ambiguous about what material will be included on the test.

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FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

You have a disability to deal with in addition to responsibilities at home and in class. It is a lot to handle and you may need support.

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FROM BOOTS TO ROADBLOCKS

Read the potential obstacle (below) for student vets pursuing a college degree. Consider how you'd respond to the situation and how you feel about it in general. When prompted, you will have 2 minutes to share the obstacle and your response with a partner.

People on campus (and off) may not appreciate your military background. You may encounter insensitivity or be treated disrespectfully.

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