



CLUBFOOT FORWARD

Built on discipline. Backed by experience.

Considering Military Service

With Clubfoot or Altered Mechanics

What to know before you start the process

A pre-MEPS decision guide for people with clubfoot, prior surgery, limited ankle motion, altered gait, fusion, flat feet, or structural asymmetry.

Created by Heath | ClubfootForward.com

Before We Begin

This guide stops before MEPS. That is intentional.

The point of this guide

This is not a waiver guide. It is not a MEPS guide. It is not paperwork strategy. This is the moment before all of that: the point where you slow down and ask whether military service is actually a road you want to walk.

I served nearly nine years on active duty after being born with bilateral clubfoot. I am glad I served. I do not regret it. But looking back, I did not fully understand what military life would ask from a body that already moved differently.

I joined because I needed direction. I needed something different. I needed an escape from being a dead-end twenty-year-old who was not doing much with his life. That reason was real. It mattered. But I did not stop and ask what boots, standing, formation movement, schedule control, and repeated physical stress would do to my mechanics over time.

This guide exists for that exact moment. Before you talk yourself into or out of military service, work through the questions. Be honest. Not dramatic. Not scared. Honest.

Bottom line: The first question is not whether the military will let you in. The first question is whether you understand what you are trying to step into.

The Pre-MEPS Decision Framework

Five checkpoints before the process becomes real.

1

WHY

Why do I want to serve?

2

REALITY

Am I chasing the image or the actual life?

3

CONTROL

What happens when I lose my normal workarounds?

4

BODY

How does my body handle repetition?

5

DECIDE

Do I still want to move forward?

Use this as a filter

If a recruiter conversation, job option, or training expectation does not fit your reason, your body, or your long-term goals, that matters. The goal is not fear. The goal is clarity.

1. Why Do You Want To Join?

There is no perfect answer. There is only your honest answer.

People consider military service for different reasons: structure, benefits, education, service, adventure, family history, career opportunity, a way out, or the need to become someone different than they are right now.

Structure

Education

Benefits

Service

Career

Escape

Challenge

Adventure

Reflection: Why are you considering military service?

Reality check: If your reason is escape, that does not make it invalid. It does mean you should be extra honest. Escaping a bad situation and stepping into a demanding one are not the same thing.

2. Reality vs. The Idea

The brochure is not the whole job.

The idea

Uniform
Purpose
Pride
Graduation
Camaraderie
Challenge
A clean new start

The reality

Boots
Waiting
Standing
Walking
Repeating
Being told when to move
Being told when not to

Your turn: What part of military service are you picturing most clearly right now?

3. What Happens Before MEPS?

This guide ends before the medical-processing conversation begins.

1

Thinking about service

You are here. This is the decision stage.

2

Recruiter conversation

You learn jobs, branches, benefits, timelines, expectations.

3

ASVAB preparation

You improve your options before choosing a direction.

4

Job and branch research

You compare daily realities, not just titles.

5

Physical reality check

You test whether your body can handle repeated training basics.

6

Decision point

You decide whether to continue toward MEPS and the next guide.

Stop point

MEPS, medical standards, waivers, and documentation strategy belong in the next guide. This guide is about the decisions before you get there.

4. Questions To Ask Your Recruiter

Do not only ask if you can join. Ask what life actually looks like.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
What does a normal duty day look like?	Daily life matters more than the highlight reel.
How much time is spent in boots?	Boots can expose pressure, gait, and skin problems.
How much standing and walking is common?	Static standing can be brutal for altered mechanics.
What does training after basic look like?	The routine after the shock often tells the truth.
What jobs involve more field time or load carriage?	Job choice affects physical exposure.
What should I study for the ASVAB?	Better scores create more options.

My must-ask questions:

5. When Your Body Loses Voting Rights

Altered mechanics often survive by controlling the environment.

Civilian life lets you quietly manage your body. You pick shoes. You choose surfaces. You rest when something feels wrong. You adjust pace. You avoid the terrain that cooks your joints. Military life can remove those choices for long enough that the loss of control becomes the real test.

Current workarounds

- Specific shoes
- Insoles/orthotics
- Rest days
- Controlled terrain
- Flexible pacing
- Limited load

Military pressure points

- Boots
- Standing
- Marching
- Scheduled PT
- Less recovery control
- More repetition

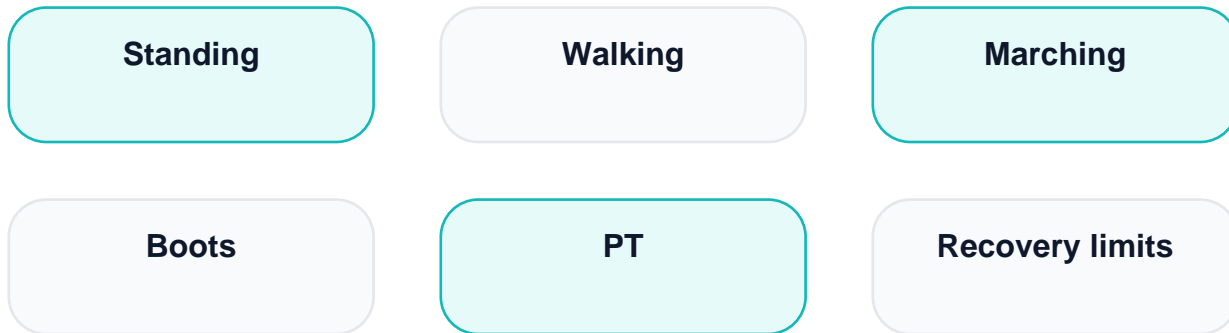
Which workaround would be hardest for you to lose?

6. Repetition Is The Real Test

One hard day is not the same as weeks of repeated exposure.

The accumulation problem

For altered mechanics, the issue is often not whether you can survive one run, one workout, or one long day. The issue is what happens when you repeat the demand before your body fully resets.



Your turn: What usually pays the bill first when your body gets overloaded?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feet/ankles | <input type="checkbox"/> Knees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hips | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower back |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opposite side | <input type="checkbox"/> Skin/blisters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Notes:

7. Do Not Ignore The ASVAB

More options can mean more control over your future.

It is easy to focus entirely on your body and forget that the ASVAB can shape the path in front of you. A stronger score may open more job options. More job options may help you choose a better fit for your goals and your body.

ASVAB planning

- I have taken a practice ASVAB
- I know which jobs interest me
- I know what score range I need

Jobs or branches I want to research:

8. Altered Mechanics Self-Assessment

No drama. No excuses. Just honest inventory.

Rate each area from 1 to 10. This is not a medical clearance. It is a personal reality check before you move deeper into the process.

Standing tolerance

1 10

Walking tolerance

1 10

Running tolerance

1 10

Boot tolerance

1 10

Recovery capacity

1 10

Current conditioning

1 10

Long-term durability confidence

1 10

What low scores mean

A low score does not automatically mean military service is impossible. It means that area deserves attention before you let momentum carry you forward.

9. Final Decision Page

Do you still want this after looking at the reality?

Reasons I still want to serve

Questions I still need answered

Concerns I need to take seriously

My next step:

- Talk to a recruiter
- Study for the ASVAB
- Research jobs
- Keep evaluating
- Not ready yet



Where To Go Next

If you still want to move forward, the next guide begins where this one stops.

Can You Join the Military With Clubfoot?

Military eligibility overview

Can You Pass MEPS With Clubfoot?

The medical processing guide

Military Medical Waivers

Documentation, standards, and review realities

Basic Training With Altered Mechanics

The accumulation and recovery problem

AIT With Altered Mechanics

Why repetition after basic matters

Military Boots and Load Bearing

Why boots change the equation

Clubfoot Forward

Practical guidance, lived experience, military perspective, and patient-led research for clubfoot and altered mechanics.

www.clubfootforward.com