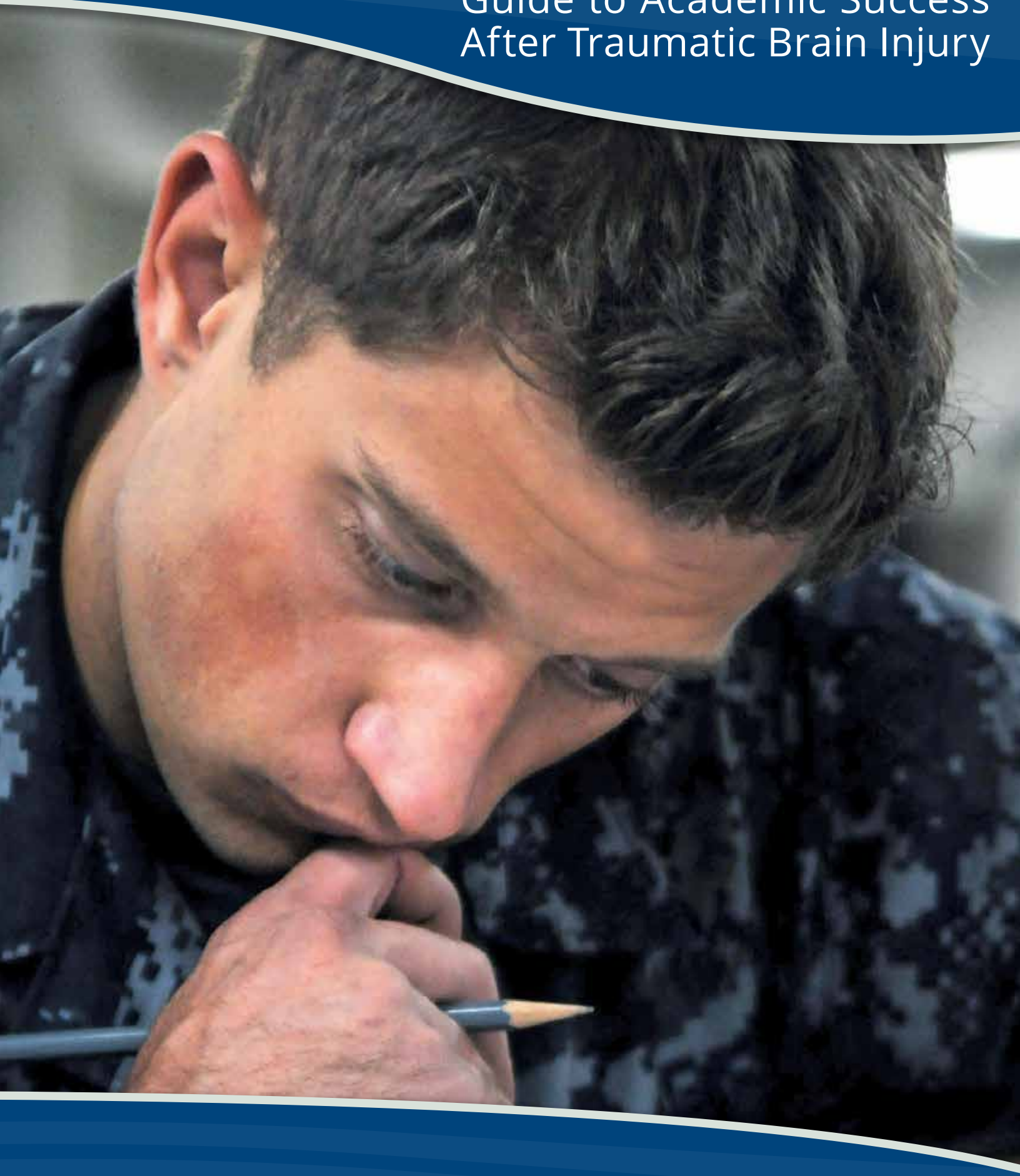
Back to School

Guide to Academic Success After Traumatic Brain Injury



Welcome

Congratulations on taking a positive step toward seeking higher education! We hope this guide helps you navigate campus life and provides tactics to overcome challenges along the way.

This guide is intended as a starting point for your journey. It should not be your sole source of information. Once you are on campus, talk to your academic adviser about what services are available to you. Take charge and advocate for yourself.

Please see your health care provider if you have not been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Many service members have other conditions that accompany TBI, such as post-traumatic stress. Your provider can help you manage these issues as you return to school.

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) is a part of the U.S. Military Health System. Founded in 1992 by Congress, DVBIC's mission is to serve active-duty military and veterans with a history of TBI through state-of-the-art medical care and care coordination, and innovative clinical research and educational programs.

DVBIC worked with a panel of experts to put together this guide. In particular, we would like to thank representatives from the following organizations:

- Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Deployment Health Clinical Center
- University of Minnesota
- Virginia Commonwealth University

The panel was composed of TBI survivors, as well as specialists from the following disciplines: counseling, neurorehabilitation psychology, occupational therapy, psychology, social work and speech-language pathology.

We hope this resource will help you take advantage of military and VA educational benefits and succeed in your new endeavors. Please visit dvbic.dcoe.mil to access this guide electronically. The website also features links to fact sheets and other material that you may find helpful. We welcome your feedback on the guide. Please email questions or comments to info@dvbic.org.

Very Respectfully,

The DVBIC Team

Front Cover: U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Kevin B. Gray

Table of Contents

Getting Started **Page 4**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):
Taking the First Step 5
Back-to-School Checklist 6

Money Matters **Page 8**

FAQs: Financial Aid and Tuition Assistance 9

Getting on Track **Page 12**

FAQs: Disability Support Services (DSS) 13
Tips for Success 16
Scheduling Template 17
Maximize Your Learning 18
Track Your Progress 21

Manage Your Symptoms **Page 22**

Make the Transition **Page 28**

Build a Success Team 34

Tech Tools **Page 36**

FAQs: Find the Right Tools 37
Work Smarter, Not Harder:
Assistive Technology 38

Student Resources **Page 42**

References **Page 49**

Getting Started

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Master Sgt. Steven Williams

Many students who have had a TBI may worry about whether they are ready to go back to school and how, or if, they can succeed. It is not only possible to go to school, but it is possible to do very well.

FAQs: Taking the First Step

How do I know if I'm ready to go back to school?

Making the decision to go back to school can be scary for anyone. You don't know exactly what to expect, and it may have been a while since the last time you were in a classroom. Some of the common problems after a TBI can make this decision even more challenging. Ask yourself how well you are managing your time and staying organized. Are you missing a lot of appointments or work deadlines? Are you having a hard time keeping yourself organized? Answering these questions may make the decision easier.

What are the most common issues that people with TBI have?

Many students have trouble with the following:

- paying attention
- staying organized
- making decisions
- managing their time
- learning and remembering new information
- staying focused

Everyone has their own challenges whether or not they have a TBI.

I have a hard time remembering and paying attention. Is it really possible for me to go to school?

There are many resources available that can help you during your college experience. Be open to using those tools and services, even if you think you will only need them for a short period of time. You may have to learn new ways to do things, such as different study or note-taking skills. You may have to use assistive technology, advocate for yourself, and discover better ways to manage or keep track of your time.

Think about your ideal learning environment. For example, if you think you need multiple breaks during lectures, online classes may be a good option. Working hard is part of being in the military — the same is true to succeed in school. This means being willing to accept support and help. If you are willing to work hard and receive support, then going back to school is possible.

Back-to-School Checklist

If you have a history of TBI, it might be difficult for you to organize tasks. The following checklist can help you develop a plan and prioritize.

❑ DO YOUR RESEARCH/WEIGH YOUR OPTIONS

Think about where you are now with your abilities and commitments in your life.

If you are on active duty, contact your on-base military education office. Counselors can help you research schools, review benefits and get credit for military experience. Find your installation adult education center via the "Looking for specific programs or services?" search field at *www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil*.

If you are a veteran, information on benefits is available on *gibill.va.gov*. More information can be found at *www.maketheconnection.net*.

More resources for each of these sections are listed in the *Student Resources* section at the back of this guide.

❑ FIND A SCHOOL

Start early and look for schools that have partnered with the VA to lower tuition rates for student veterans. Be careful about "military/veteran friendly" claims and make sure your prospective school is friendly to your needs. Here are some tips:

- Make sure that credits will transfer to other institutions if you need to move.
- Look for access to mental health and medical support, disability services, academic accommodations and available career services.
- Find an administration that listens to and involves veterans in student veteran programs and has a designated location for student veterans to meet up.

❑ APPLY

Each school will have different application requirements. The following tips and resources can help you during the application process:

- Visit the school's website and look at the prospective students section, or call the admissions office for information about application requirements and deadlines.
- Request that transcripts and test scores are sent directly to each school that you apply to. For information on getting your Joint Services Transcript, go to the *Student Resources* section.
- Check to see if your school accepts common applications. Filling out one document that you can send to several schools will save you time.

❑ GET CREDIT FOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

The following resources can help you determine whether you can get credit for your military training experiences (see *Student Resources*):

- American Council on Education
- College Level Examination Program

❑ GET BENEFITS

Make sure you take advantage of your military and veterans benefits. If you are a veteran, get a copy of your DD-214 so you can access them. Visit *www.ebenefits.va.gov*.

❑ APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

If the cost of your education isn't met by military benefits or your income, consider applying for federal aid and scholarships. See *Money Matters* on the next page.

❑ SEEK SUPPORT

Visit your schools counseling center or check to see if there is a veterans center on or near campus. Ask admissions office staff about TBI-related services. The following organizations will help you connect with other military service members on campus:

- GI Bill: Chapter 36 program
- VetSuccess program

❑ ACCESS HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Continue to follow up with your doctor.

- Active Duty/Guard/Reserve: *www.tricare.mil*
- Register for VA benefits: *www.va.gov* (under Health Care)
- Active-duty service members and veterans: Access your online personal health record at My HealtheVet at *www.myhealth.va.gov*

As soon as you are accepted:

❑ CONTACT DISABILITY SERVICES

Before classes start, notify the office on campus about your history of TBI; staff members can help you request accommodations that will help you succeed in your schoolwork. Don't wait until you find yourself struggling to keep up in class before seeking assistance.

❑ CONTACT ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

Your academic adviser can provide information about joining peer study groups, tutoring, selecting course schedules and registering for classes.

❑ PLAN TO ATTEND SCHOOL ORIENTATION

Get more information about your school's tutoring services, extracurricular clubs and activities, and housing options. Register for courses early if you can.

Money Matters

It is important to start the financial aid process early and find out when forms are due. Deadlines often come sooner than you expect. Review these questions below to better understand your options.

FAQs: Financial Aid and Tuition Assistance

What is financial aid?

Financial aid can help you pay for tuition, room and board, books and other school supplies. This money can come from loans, scholarships, grants or work-study agreements.

- **Loans** provide money for you to use right now, but you will have to pay them back.
- **Grants** and **scholarships** provide money that you will not have to pay back.
- **Work-study** is not a grant, loan or scholarship. It is an agreement between you and your school in which you work in exchange for money to pay your tuition. Work-study may be available through on-campus or off-campus employers. Check with your school's financial aid office to see what work-study options are available.

In addition to colleges, other sources for financial aid include:

- federal or state programs
- banks and lenders
- privately funded organizations (such as churches, civic organizations and employers)

TIP: Explore your military and veterans benefits first and then consider other financial aid sources. These benefits may cover most of your expenses. Visit *www.gibill.va.gov.*

How does it work?

Most organizations will send the payments directly to the school for you. Talk to your school's financial aid office about the process and how you will receive financial aid. If you receive loans, ask about the process for paying them back.

What can I use it for?

Financial aid for school helps cover the costs of education. This includes tuition, books, supplies (computer, paper, pens, etc.), and room and board (housing and meals).

How do I know if I qualify for financial aid?

You must apply to find out if you qualify. On your financial aid form, you must state how much money you earn and how much you expect your education to cost. (Private lenders also may consider your credit score.) This information is used to estimate how much money you will need.

The federal government is the largest source of financial aid in the U.S. To find out if you are eligible, visit the federal student aid forecaster at *studentaid.ed.gov.*

Are all courses covered by financial aid?

Ask the organization providing your financial aid if there are any courses that it doesn't cover. For example, most financial aid cannot be used for courses that are audited (not taken for college credit). In addition, many scholarships or grants require you to keep a minimum grade point average (GPA) or course load.

Could I lose my financial aid?

Contact the financial aid organization or your school's financial aid office to learn about things that could put your payments at risk. For example, you might lose your financial aid if you don't meet a minimum GPA, take a reduced course load, or withdraw from or drop a class.

How can dropping or failing a course affect my financial aid?

Each financial aid organization has its own rules. Most do not stop financial assistance if you fail a course. However, if you drop a course after the drop deadline or earn an incomplete grade, your financial aid may be at risk.

TIP: If you are thinking about dropping a class, contact your financial aid office right away to figure out your options.

If you have to drop a course for reasons beyond your control (see list below) your financial aid office, academic adviser or DSS counselor may be able to help explain the situation to the financial aid organization to keep you from losing aid. Some of these situations include:

- mental or physical illness or injury
- serious illness or death to an immediate family member
- employment changes
- family or financial obligations
- mobilization to active military service or training (Guard and reserve)
- scheduled military deployment or TDY (active duty)

These need to be serious or urgent situations. You may be asked to provide written proof of your need to withdraw from a course.

Am I eligible for financial aid as a part-time student?

Yes. Most financial aid organizations provide either full or partial financial support if you are a part-time student. The rules vary by organization. Contact your financial aid office to discuss the rules before you decide to become a part-time student. Ask about tuition and fees, book stipends and living allowances.

Do I have to report my VA education benefits as income when applying for federal aid?

No. Do **not** list your VA education benefits in the income section because they are considered a resource, according to the VA Education Service. Reporting these benefits as income could reduce the amount of financial aid you could receive.

TIP: To apply for federal aid, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by going to: *www.fafsa.ed.gov.*

Scholarships

What are scholarships?

A scholarship is money given, rather than loaned, to students to help cover the cost of education based on specific standards. Scholarships may be awarded based on your chosen field of study (teaching, medicine, etc.), special skills (sports, art), traits (ethnicity) or grades. Some are based on financial need.

How do I find out if I qualify for a scholarship?

Start by researching. Online scholarship search engines can help you find a good match for your strengths and interests. Check out scholarships geared towards service members and veterans too. Your school may offer scholarships and grants, so check with your financial aid office to see if you qualify.

Service members and veterans can access a list of scholarship opportunities by visiting *https://www.acap.army.mil,* and clicking on Benefits and then Scholarships.

Are grants and scholarships the same thing?

Grants and scholarships help pay for college and neither of them has to be paid back. In general, grants are given to students who need money the most, whereas scholarships are based on your field of study, special skills, traits or academic achievement. Some scholarships are based on financial need, but not as many.

Whom do I contact if my question was not answered here?

If you need more information about financial aid, contact your school's financial aid office and ask to speak with a financial aid counselor or adviser.

If you need more information about military educational benefits or tuition assistance, contact a VA educational benefits specialist to discuss your options. Call 888-GIBILL-1 (888-442-4551) or 800-829-4833 for the hearing impaired.

If you are active duty, visit your local military education office for help with the application processes for school and financial aid. See your local directory for contact information.

Getting on Track

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon LeFlore

If you face challenges because of your history of TBI, there are many ways to get assistance. Although you may not feel that you have a disability, you might not be aware that the Disability Support Services (DSS) office can help in other ways. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

FAQs: DSS Office

Where can I go on campus to get help?

Go to the DSS office. It might be called something else like the Office of Disability Student Services, the Learning Resource Center, the Student Access Center, Academic Support Services or the Student Success Center.

If your school doesn't have a DSS office, ask your academic adviser or registrar to help you. Another great place to get help is a veterans center, so check to see if there's one on your campus or nearby.

What does the DSS office do?

These centers work with students with all types of disabilities or challenges, to help them get the most out of college. Counselors can help with housing, assistive technology, library access, campus access and student activities. Most importantly, they can create an accommodations plan for you.

What are accommodations?

Accommodations are arrangements that the school may be able to make on a case-by-case basis. Here are some examples:

- extra time to finish tests or assignments
- different test formats
- approval to use tape recorders
- approval to have another student take notes for you
- assistive technology (see *Tech Tools* section)
- materials provided in a different format (for example, textbooks provided in electronic format)
- priority seating in class
- approval to wear a visor/cap or tinted prescription glasses in class
- foreign language requirement waivers, if applicable

The DSS can help you choose the most helpful accommodations.

When should I let my school know about my history of brain injury?

You aren't required to tell the DSS office or your professors about your previous brain injury; however, it might be helpful. Share this information with someone at the DSS office as soon as you're accepted to the school. DSS staff members can tell you what paperwork you might need for accommodations later. Staff members also can suggest resources that don't require any documentation.

What should I bring with me to the DSS office?

It's best to get in touch with your school's DSS office to find out what documents to bring before you meet with a counselor.

If you don't have the documentation that the school requires, discuss ways you can work around the requirements until you can get the documents you need. DSS staff members understand the delays that veterans can have getting paperwork. For more information, visit this U.S. Department of Education website: *www.ed.gov* and search for Postsecondary Education and Section 504.

Do I pay for my accommodations?

No. The school is responsible for giving you reasonable accommodations for free.

How will my professors know that I need accommodations?

The DSS counselor can send a letter to your professor with a list of accommodations that you need, if you sign a waiver. This letter will not have any information about your diagnosis.

Most students sign the waiver so that DSS can contact instructors if a situation comes up where they need to do so. If you choose not to sign a waiver, it is your responsibility to talk to your professor about your request for accommodations. Either way is OK.

How do I explain my TBI to my professors? Do I have to?

You are not required to tell anyone about your TBI diagnosis, but it can be helpful to have open communication with your professor. The more people you have on your support team the better, and your professor can be a great member of that team.

Practice rehearsing a brief script about your history of TBI, how this affects certain abilities and what strategies you use to accommodate. This puts you in the role as educator, as others may not be able to anticipate your symptoms. For example, you can say: "Since my TBI, I have had trouble concentrating. The DSS counselors recommended that I record lectures so that I can go back and listen to parts I may have missed. Do you have any other suggestions that might help?"

Will the DSS office share my diagnosis with my professors?

No. They will tell your professor that you have a disability that requires accommodations, but they will not say what type of disability. If you want to, you can talk with your professor about your accommodations.

My professor refused to give me my accommodations. What should I do?

Talk to someone at the DSS office as soon as you can. Every school is different, but all have the same goal of helping you succeed. Sometimes situations come up because of a communications issue between the DSS office and your professor. The DSS counselor can help resolve the problem by talking about the accommodations plan with your professor.

Will my college transcript state that I have used DSS?

No. This information is confidential and won't be released, unless you put in writing that you want it released.

I don't think my accommodation plan is helping me anymore. What should I do now?

Go to the DSS office to update your plan if you don't feel like your accommodations are working for you. Sometimes this is a trial-and-error process, so stick with it to find out what works for you.

I think that my difficulties from my brain injury are temporary. Should I still go to the DSS office?

Yes. The DSS office can help students with all degrees of difficulty. If you've been diagnosed with a brain injury, call the DSS office to see what resources are available. Accommodations are meant to change over time and can easily be stopped if you don't think you need them anymore.

I don't have a "disability." Should I still go to the DSS office?

Yes. If you had a diagnosed brain injury, but you haven't noticed any difficulties, the DSS office can still help you. The word "disability" can mean many different things. It doesn't necessarily mean that you can't function, just that you have some level of difficulty.

Going to school is filled with new experiences, so you may run into challenges that you haven't had in the past. Connect with the DSS office from the very beginning. This will make it easier for you to get support later if you start having problems.

U.S. Army photo by Russell Meseroll

Tips for Success

Stay organized.

You may have many books, computer files and other resources. It can be challenging for anyone to keep it all straight.

Think about using these strategies:

- Color-code and organize folders by subject area.
- Put newer assignments in the front of each section.
- Go through folders once a week to make sure you didn't forget anything. Weed out papers you no longer need.
- Use a planner or smartphone calendar to keep track of assignments and due dates.
- Look for smartphone applications that can help you stay organized. For details, see the *Tech Tools* section.

Manage your course load (time) effectively.

- Try to ease your way into school by taking a smaller course load. Keep your academic adviser informed because they control your course load.
- For your first semester, try not to register for long lectures.
- Stay connected with the DSS office and use the accommodations that they give you.
- Talk to the instructor and/or the teaching assistant to make sure that your accommodations are put into place.
- Estimate the amount of time it will take for you to finish assignments and then check yourself by keeping track of the actual time that it takes. The more you do this, the better you will become at managing your time and setting aside enough time to complete tasks.
- Keep a specific schedule that includes class times, time to study, time to read and do assignments, and time to relax. It is important to write this schedule down in either a planner or a smartphone calendar and set reminders to help keep you on track. Choose one tool (phone or planner, not both). If you keep your schedule in more than one place, you may overbook yourself or miss appointments.

Scheduling Template

Hours	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 a.m.							
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	Family Time	Drop off kids at daycare					
9 a.m.		Biology class					
10 a.m.							
11 a.m.		Biology lab					
Noon	Lunch	Lunch					
1 p.m.	Work on Paper	Economics					
2 p.m.		Study					
3 p.m.							
4 p.m.		Groceries					
5 p.m.		Get kids					
6 p.m.		Dinner					
7 p.m.		Help kids with homework					
8 p.m.		Relax					
9 p.m.							

Steps

1. Write in your weekly obligations, such as class time, job, medical appointments, family time.
2. For every one hour of class time, plan on three hours of study time. For a typical course, you are in class three hours a week. Multiply that by three hours of study time, and you will have to schedule nine hours of homework/study time.
3. Once you have allocated time for studying, look at your schedule and see how much time is left over for yourself. If you can't seem to find time, then you should think about taking fewer courses to avoid burnout.
4. Remember to add in time for exercise, meals and six to eight hours of sleep.
5. Adjust your schedule until you get the right work/life balance.

Maximize Your Learning

Many people have trouble with thinking skills, especially after a TBI. Every person is different and has unique strengths and challenges.

Do your challenges affect your school work? If so, find a solution below.

Possible Challenges and Tips for Success		
	Attention & Concentration	Organizing and Planning
Do you have trouble with...	▪ Starting and finishing tasks? ▪ Multi-tasking? ▪ Switching from one thing to another? ▪ Paying attention in class or doing homework?	▪ Planning, organizing and finishing tasks? ▪ Setting goals? ▪ Deciding what is most important to do? ▪ Making decisions? ▪ Getting started? ▪ Staying on schedule? ▪ Keeping track of time?
Tips for Success	▪ Work in a quiet space. Turn off the TV and your cell phone. ▪ Break assignments down into smaller parts. ▪ Do one thing at a time. ▪ Take breaks.	▪ Use a daily planner to write down your class schedule, homework, goals and other tasks. ▪ Use apps to stay organized. ▪ Ask your teacher for help deciding what's important. ▪ Get a study buddy. ▪ Double-check your work!
Try this:	▪ Set an alarm every 30 minutes during schoolwork to check in with yourself and make sure you're on track.	▪ Color-code tasks or assignments when entering them in your notebook or phone. (For example, tasks in red should be done first.)

Possible Challenges and Tips for Success			
	Memory	Thought Processing	Self-Awareness
Do you have trouble with...	▪ Remembering recent conversations or events? ▪ Remembering names or phone numbers? ▪ Finding your keys, wallet, phone, etc.? ▪ Remembering directions, due dates, things you need to do? ▪ Recalling new information?	▪ Doing things as quickly as you need to? ▪ Missing information because people were talking too fast (in class or at home)? ▪ "Keeping up" information overload)?	▪ Noticing problems before other people have to point them out to you? ▪ Blaming your problems on other people/things ("bad" teacher or poorly written textbook)? ▪ Taking on things that are just too hard for you right now?
Tips for Success	▪ Keep a daily routine (eating, sleeping, studying). ▪ Hang a large calendar in plain view to keep track of deadlines. ▪ Plan ahead by putting important items where you can see them. ▪ Write down highlights from conversations and lectures. ▪ Record lectures and play them back.	▪ Give yourself enough time to finish things and check your work. ▪ Ask others to speak slowly and to repeat information. ▪ Take a break when you need to regroup. ▪ Do more important tasks when you have more energy.	▪ Join study groups or get a tutor. ▪ Meet with teachers or friends regularly for feedback on how you're doing. ▪ Find a mentor.
Try this:	▪ People learn in different ways. Try reading your work out loud. Make flashcards to test yourself on new information.	▪ Recap information at the end of a conversation to make sure you didn't miss anything ("So what I understand is ...").	▪ Before you start a task, think about what may be challenging for you. Then, decide on a strategy to overcome it.

Use the chart on *Page 21* to keep track of your progress. Figure out which tips work for you.

To learn more about using the strengths that you developed in the military, go to the *Make the Transition* section.

How to connect with people who can help

Start by seeing your primary health care provider

Your primary health care provider will help you manage your symptoms and may refer you to specialists for more testing or treatment. Your health care provider also will determine whether or not you might benefit from medications. Not all patients with TBI need medications, and often they are used only for a short time.

TIP: Take charge. Stand up for yourself. Find out what you need, what services are available, and ask for help.

Speech-language and occupational therapy

A speech-language pathologist will help determine your current abilities and identify ways for you to improve. If you think you could benefit from speech-language therapy, ask your primary health care provider for a referral.

An occupational therapist can help you improve your ability to do daily activities and reach your goals. Occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists can work together to help you when you return to school. Ask your primary health care provider if you are interested in getting help.

TIP: Know your strengths and weaknesses. Speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists can help you learn what tasks may be easy or more challenging for you.

Neuropsychological testing

This type of testing can help you learn about your thinking skills and develop strategies for overcoming challenges. It can help you identify your strengths as well as areas of improvement. Test results are used to recommend what type of help you may need and how you can use your strengths to bridge those gaps. Your health care provider, speech-language pathologist or occupational therapist can help decide whether or not you could benefit from testing.

Behavioral health, counseling or emotional support

You may want to seek help from a psychologist with the VA, a counselor at the student counseling center, a peer in the student veterans center or a chaplain. For more information, go to the *Make the Transition* section.

Track Your Progress

Create a journal like the one below to track your progress and check in with yourself. What do you need to work on? What tips are helping you? What ones aren't? Most of all, use your journal to track how far you have come. Follow the example below.

Date	What am I having a hard time with?	How does it affect me?	What can I do to make it better?	Did my strategy work?
11/13/13	Attention	I keep getting distracted when I'm reading.	Take breaks every 15 minutes to stretch and refocus.	No, I need to take breaks every 10 minutes.

Manage Your Symptoms

Every brain is different, so everyone with a TBI will have a unique experience. Some of your symptoms may resolve quickly and some may last for a while. Some symptoms might not be related to your TBI at all. They could be caused by another medical issue or simply be the result of normal readjustment to student life. Please talk to your health care provider about possible treatment for your symptoms.

You can be a successful student even if you have some challenges. Learning how to manage your symptoms will help you succeed in school. Here is a list of some concerns that you may face when returning to school, and places where you can get help:

Physical Symptoms

Headaches

You may get headaches after a TBI for several reasons, such as lack of sleep, neck injury, vision changes or side effects from medication. Headaches are usually less painful and happen less often as you recover.

Not all headaches are treated the same way, and some don't even need to be treated with medications. Other treatments such as biofeedback or acupuncture might be enough.

Talk to your health care provider about treatment options that may be right for you.

To prevent headaches, avoid taking over-the-counter medication too many times per day or more than two to three days per week. Get plenty of rest and eat regularly. Keep a headache journal to help figure out what might be causing your headaches (such as caffeine or bright light). You can use free apps to track your headaches, or use a calendar.

For more information about headaches, go to:

- *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for headache)
- *maketheconnection.net* (search for headaches)

TIP: Keep a diary to track your headaches. You may find a pattern in what causes them. Try to avoid those triggers.

Sleep Disturbance

Sleep affects many things, including your memory and your ability to focus. Some common sleep problems after TBI include trouble falling or staying asleep, or feeling tired during the day or restless at night.

There are many possible causes for sleep problems, so talk to your health care provider to learn what could be causing yours. Ask your spouse or a family member if they have noticed any strange behavior or breathing while you are sleeping. If so, report this to your health care provider.

Here are some tips to help you get enough sleep:

- Avoid caffeine within six hours of bedtime.
- Stop using computers and television one hour before bedtime.
- Try to keep your body on a regular schedule: Wake up at the same time each day and go to bed at the same time each night; eat meals at the same times each day.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet and comfortable. Use the bedroom only for sleep and intimacy.
- Do not nap during the day if possible.

For more information about sleep, go to:

- *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for sleep)

Sensory Symptoms

Pain

Pain can have negative effects on your attention span, memory and other thinking skills. Pain can result from headaches, physical injuries, neck or lower back problems, and muscle aches.

Being in pain can cause other problems such as trouble sleeping, fatigue or feeling moody. All of these issues can affect your schoolwork.

Talk to your health care provider about how to deal with the pain you're having. Not all types of pain are treated the same way. Discuss how your pain medications may be affecting your day-to-day activities. There are alternatives to medication, such as physical therapy or acupuncture. Your provider can offer recommendations.

Vision Problems

If you have trouble with your eyesight after a TBI, this can cause problems in school. Some people have trouble seeing things that are beside them or have difficulty following objects with their eyes. If it is a challenge for you to focus, read a book or look at a computer screen for long periods of time, then see your health care provider. You might also need to see a vision specialist for testing and to get a prescription for glasses or contacts. Vision therapy or surgery also could be options.

For more information about vision problems, go to:

- *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for vision)

TIP: If you are sensitive to bright lights, try adjusting the lighting, sitting away from a window, wearing a visor/cap or tinted glasses prescribed by your vision specialist, or using a computer screen cover to reduce glare. Make sure your professor knows that you are sensitive to light and that these adjustments will help you focus.

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Perry M. Aston

Hearing Problems

After a TBI, you may notice changes to your hearing, such as ringing or buzzing in the ears, hearing loss or increased sensitivity to loud sounds. If your ear is damaged, you may notice dizziness or changes in your balance.

Tell your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms, so appropriate tests can be ordered. If you have trouble hearing, assistive devices (such as hearing aids, recording devices) can help.

For more information about hearing problems, go to:

- *hearing.health.mil*

TIP: Find a seat in the front of the classroom, study in a quiet area and talk to your health care provider about assistive listening devices.

Dizziness

After a TBI, you may feel off-balance, uncoordinated, light-headed, or as if the room is spinning or rocking back and forth. Dizziness after a TBI can be caused by damage to the inner ear, neck injury, medication side effects, headaches, hormone deficiencies or changes in blood pressure. Pay attention to how often – and in what situations – you are dizzy and report this to your health care provider. Once the cause is figured out, a treatment can be chosen.

Avoid getting hurt at home by making sure there's nothing you could trip over when you are dizzy. Also, avoid alcohol and nicotine use.

For more information about dizziness, go to:

- *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for dizziness)
- *www.maketheconnection.net* (search for dizziness)

TIP: A physical therapist, audiologist and your health care provider can work together to test and treat your dizziness.

Emotional Symptoms

Mood Changes

Feeling irritable or easily frustrated, worrying a lot, or feeling down or depressed are common mood changes after TBI. You might be more easily annoyed, have trouble letting things go and find that your anger goes "from 0 to 60" in a very short time. Your family and friends may say that you seem moody, distant or quiet.

Talk to your health care provider about why you are feeling this way. Together, you can figure out possible treatment options.

Take charge by walking away from arguments until you have calmed down, staying on top of your work and asking for help if you feel like you're having trouble.

Talk to a family member, friend, counselor or chaplain if you feel like things are getting out of control or life is too tough to handle. Share your feelings and ask for coping tips.

If you feel like hurting yourself or someone else, seek emergency care or contact one of the following resources:

- Call the **Military/Veterans Crisis Line** at 800-273-TALK (8255), send a text to 838255, or chat online at *www.veteranscrisisline.net.*

For more information about mood changes, go to:

- *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for mood)
- *www.realwarriors.net*
- *www.maketheconnection.net* (search for anger)

TIP: Avoid using alcohol or drugs to cope with mood changes as they can delay your recovery from TBI or cause more problems.

For more information about symptoms that could cause you trouble in school, as well as strategies to manage these symptoms, see the *Maximize Your Learning* and *Make the Transition* sections.

Make the Transition

Change can be exciting but also challenging.

Remember what you already know about going through change. Then ask yourself what you need in order to succeed. There is always an answer.

The culture of a new school may be very different from the military. Other students are often younger or have not had the experience of traveling outside the country. You may feel that others don't respect your rank, your values or your service. They may not understand what you have been through or may ask questions that feel intrusive or rude.

Your military experience, however, has given you advantages. Your intense physical and mental training enabled you to develop a strong work ethic and a resilience that will carry you through tough times.

Recognize your strengths:

Strengths you developed	Skills/Benefits you can use
Leadership	• identify goals quickly • delegate tasks effectively • motivate your team
Discipline	• get the job done • possess never-quit attitude
Teamwork skills	• work well on group projects
Communication	• can talk to people from all backgrounds • express your views clearly and respectfully
Determination	• know how to set goals • meet deadlines
Punctuality	• stand out as professional and prepared
Respect	• carry yourself with dignity • raise the bar for everyone
Dependability	• follow through on tasks
Mentorship skills	• tutor others to help you remember information better

Prepare for obstacles:

Feeling distracted: If you are uncomfortable or have difficulty focusing in large crowds, you may find it hard to get to or from class, join campus celebrations or athletic events, go to the cafeteria, and drive or park on crowded streets and in parking lots. You also may feel uncomfortable in small crowded rooms and narrow hallways. Here are some coping tips:

- Avoid crowds by taking classes online or in the evening.
- Go to class early and stay a few minutes later.
- Find a seat in the classroom closest to the instructor or near the end of an aisle so that you can focus better.
- Meet with someone at the DSS office to see if a seating accommodation plan is possible. Talk to your instructor about other options.

Feeling overwhelmed: In the military, you were used to routines (when to eat, what to wear). At home, there may be less structure and many more decisions to make each day.

It may feel like you have a lot more time because you are setting your own routine. However, if you don't create structure in your schedule, you will quickly fall behind in your schoolwork. A schedule will help you make time for your family and friends.

Consider starting with one or two classes for your first semester. Make a daily schedule to keep track of schoolwork and personal time. You can use the scheduling template on *Page 17*.

If you start to struggle in a class, talk to your professors as soon as possible so they can help you or connect you with a tutor. Seek out a counselor in the campus counseling center, or go see your academic adviser.

Changing your focus: Priorities may shift when you become a student. Some days, school-related tasks may feel insignificant when you compare them to the things you did as a service member. If this happens, ask yourself the following questions about your new goals:

- "What type of student do I want to be?"
- "What do I hope to achieve from my education (for myself, for my family)?"
- "What new skills do I hope to develop, personally or professionally (for example, problem-solving, becoming a leader)?"

Answering these questions can help you move forward and remind you what is important.

Feeling out of place: The transition from military life to civilian life involves a change in culture, which can be tough.

Try to keep an open mind about your peers' opinions. They may not have the same background as you, and you may not always see things the same way. Their life experiences may be different from yours, but you all have gone through difficult times.

It takes time to learn about the culture at your school, so try not to get frustrated. If you feel alone, other service members or veterans may share some of your thoughts, like the ones listed below:

- "I don't feel like I belong."
- "Civilians don't understand me."
- "I'm too old to be a college student."

It is important to connect with your college peers because they can help you with your time in school and later, your civilian life. Look for a community on campus that makes you comfortable. If there isn't already a group on your campus, start your own!

To talk to someone or get advice on dealing with your challenges, contact the DCoE Outreach Center. They will help you or connect you with other people who can. Visit *www.dcoe.mil* or call 866-966-1020.

Difficulty interacting with peers: Conversations with classmates who did not serve may be uncomfortable. You may not want to answer difficult questions about your military experience.

Other students may be curious and ask questions, not realizing that they might make you uncomfortable, such as:

- "Did you kill anyone?"
- "Are you OK (mentally)?"
- "Do you think the war was worth it?"

Your peers are probably just curious about your experiences, but you don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. It's your decision; you can share a lot, a little or nothing at all. Sometimes it's best to say, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel comfortable talking about that."

Talk with other student veterans or a family member. Find out how they have handled similar situations.

Learn new problem-solving techniques: Visit *www.StartMovingForward.org* for an online training course to help you adapt and adjust to new challenges.

Get support:

Going back to school can change many things around your home, such as family roles and finances. Luckily, many resources are available.

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) Care Coordination

This program follows and assists service members and veterans who have ongoing symptoms from a TBI. Regional care coordinators make sure that people are connected with health care and information, as they move through life changes and stages of recovery. This extra support can empower both patients and families.
For information, go to *dvbic.dcoe.mil* (search for Care Coordination).

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)

The outreach center is staffed with trained, professional health resource consultants with expertise in psychological health and TBI. They can respond to specific questions or connect you to someone who can whether that person is within the Defense Department, a federal agency or a civilian/community organization. Learn more about the center at *www.dcoe.mil/Families/Help.aspx* or call 866-966-1020.

The National Guard Bureau

This resource provides family assistance in every state for all military service members. Family assistance centers can provide services such as individual and family counseling, family advocacy programs, day care programs and legal or financial counseling. To find a center near you and learn more, go to *www.jointservicessupport.org.*

inTransition Program

If you sign up for the inTransition Mental Health Coaching and Support Program, you are assigned a personal coach who will support you as you move between health care systems or providers. This skilled counselor can coach you one-on-one as you go through your transition. Call 800-424-7877 or go to *www.health.mil/intransition*.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The VA is staffed with social workers who can help you with many issues, including financial planning, family counseling, substance abuse, and establishing connections with community resources. To see a full description about what VA social work services provide, go to *http://www.socialwork.va.gov/*. The VA also offers guides to help service members adjust to civilian life. Go to *www.ptsd.va.gov.*

On-campus support:

Campus veterans office

Some schools have programs and organizations to help service members and veterans connect with each other. Check with the campus or student life office for more information.

VetSuccess program counselor

The VetSuccess program is designed to help veterans make the transition into the school setting. Each veteran on a participating school's campus is assigned to a vocational rehab counselor, who provides career and academic counseling. To see if your school participates, go to *www.vetsuccess.va.gov.*

Support services office

Most colleges have offices, such as the DSS office, where students can get help if they have problems with their schoolwork. These offices can provide information about accommodations, such as note-taking assistance, priority registration or one-on-one tutoring.

Campus counseling center, student services office or chaplain's office

Most colleges offer a counseling center, student center or chaplain's office where students can talk with a counselor about anything that causes them stress. These services are free to students and are good places to go when you need help coping with the stress of college. Visit your school's website for more information.

Get involved:

College is more fun when you take part in social activities and put your personal strengths to use in new ways.

Join a student organization or club on campus

Most campuses have student organizations or recreational clubs. Get involved to meet new people who have similar interests.

Join an intramural athletic team or club

Find a student veterans club (or form your own if there isn't one)

Get involved within your major

Once you choose your degree, there will probably be groups within your major. They often participate in volunteering events and off-campus activities.

Volunteer in your community

There are many ways to get involved in your community, such as soup kitchens, animal adoption agencies and other nonprofits. You can do something for your community while meeting others with similar interests.

Find a local faith-based organization

Some people find it helpful to join an organized spiritual or religious group. This can be a good way to meet new people.

REMEMBER: You don't have to go it alone. Build your own team to help you succeed. Your resilience and leadership training can help you meet challenges.

Build a Success Team

Are you a "do-it-yourself-er" when you start something new?

Do you like to have a "go-to" person or buddy to help you out?

Just as a successful athlete needs coaches, experts and community supporters, you may also need your own team for success.

Think about who you want on your team — who can answer your questions and help you take the next steps? Then, use the template below, or make new categories to build *your* success team.

Money matters: Who can help?

A financial adviser? Someone in your school's financial aid or tuition assistance office?
A VA educational benefits specialist? For active duty, your local military education office?

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE_____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE_____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

Maximize learning: Who can help?

Someone on your health care team? School Disability Support Services or Access Center?
Student Veterans Center? Your academic adviser? Your professor?

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE_____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE_____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

Physical health problems (new or old): Who can help?

Who is your doctor or other primary care provider? What other health care providers do you see? Do you need help filling out health forms? Do you think you need care but aren't sure?

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

Stress, reintegration difficulties and other behavioral health issues: Who can help?

Who can you talk to? Who is a good listener? Who can help you figure things out or help you through a tough time? Your spouse, partner, friend, family member? A behavioral health professional (counselor, psychologist, social worker)? Chaplain, other religious or spiritual person, coach, mentor?

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

I don't know where to start: Who can help?

Take a moment to brainstorm. Do you know someone who has gone through what you're going through? Is there someone in your life who usually has good ideas or good advice?

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

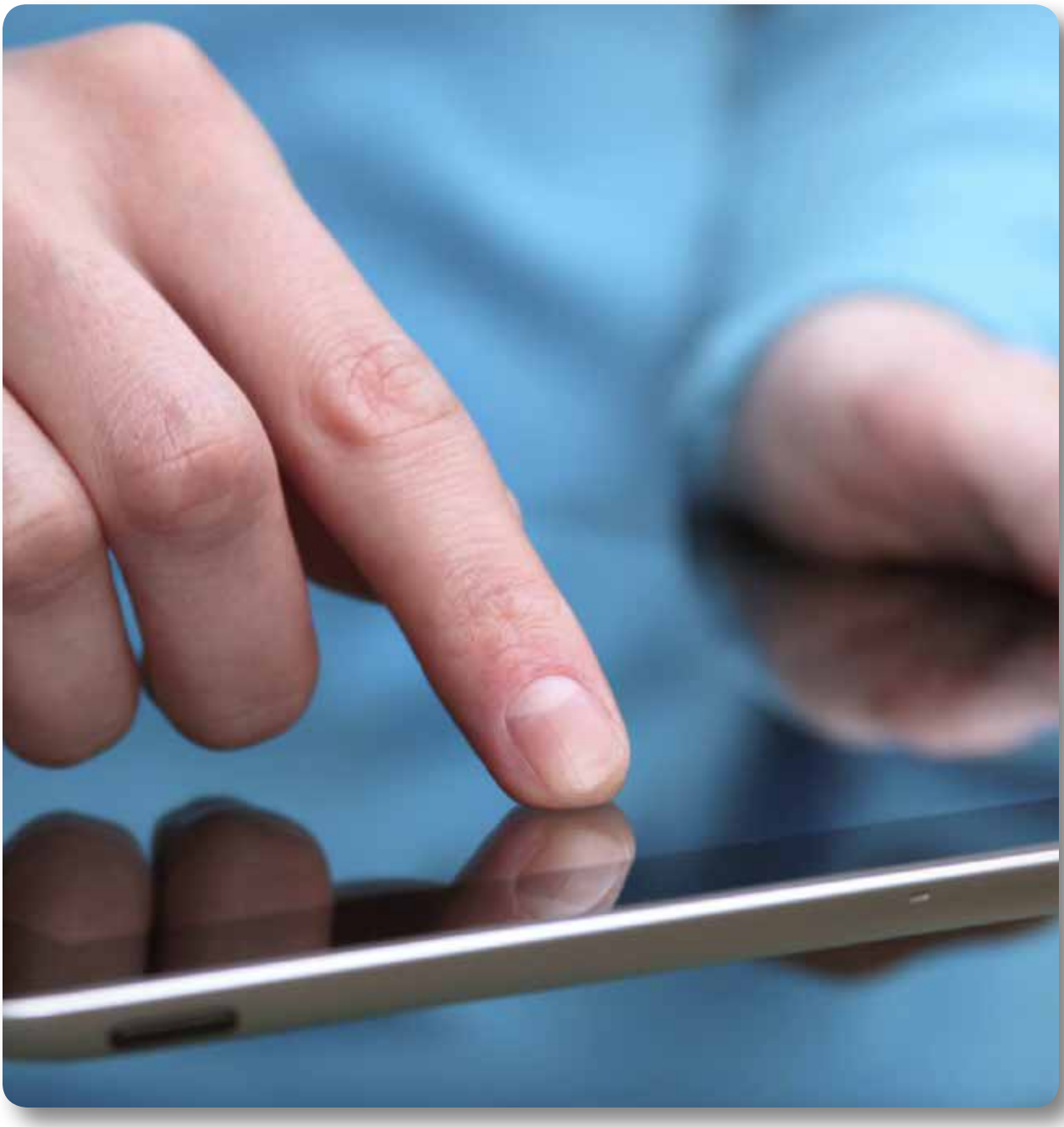
WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

WHAT THEY CAN DO _____

Tech Tools



Assistive technology includes products that help people who have difficulty speaking, writing, remembering, seeing, hearing, learning and walking. Many people use assistive technology, such as apps and smartphones, every day. These tools can help everyone.

FAQs: Find the right tools

What types of assistive technology are available?

High Tech: Electronic equipment that has advanced functions, such as:

- computers
- tablets
- smartphones

Low Tech: Electronic equipment that has fewer functions. For example:

- electronic aids to daily living, such as an alarm clock
- watches
- electronic magnifiers

No Tech: Non-electronic tools, such as:

- pencil grips
- document holder
- calendar

How do I choose the right assistive technology?

Work with your treatment team to find the best fit. Tell your team what is working and what isn't to make sure you get what you need. It will require some trial and error.

Can I benefit from technology tools if I'm not tech savvy?

Absolutely! Ask your provider to teach you how to use these new tools. That way, you can be sure that you get all the benefits.

Is assistive technology expensive?

It depends on what you need. If a device is too expensive, your care team may be able to find cheaper options. There are many free or inexpensive apps that can be used on everyday devices, such as smartphones and tablets.

What are apps?

Apps, short for applications, can run on a computer, tablet or smartphone. Millions of people use apps to manage a calendar, play games and get directions. Apps can help you track your progress on assignments, record lectures or help you view handouts — whatever you need. Ask your care team about what apps or other technology may be best for you.

Work Smarter, Not Harder: Assistive Technology

Assistive technology can be especially helpful for people who have difficulty with focus and concentration, memory or organization. Over time, you might find that you need a different type of assistance than what you need now. Check in with your health care team on a regular basis to re-evaluate your needs.

Assistive technology can help you with the following:

Accessibility

Find the easiest way for you to get information, whether it is accessing information or simply getting the right seat in the classroom. Options include:

- laptop or tablet to easily access your schoolwork
- voice recognition software
- pre-printed classroom materials so that you can focus on the lecture rather than note-taking
- wheelchair access
- specific placement in the classroom

Positioning

Make adjustments to your workspace. It can make a huge difference when you are in class. Options include:

- adapted desk/chair
- mount for tablet or laptop
- tray table

Communication

Try augmentative and alternative communication if you have difficulty speaking. Options include:

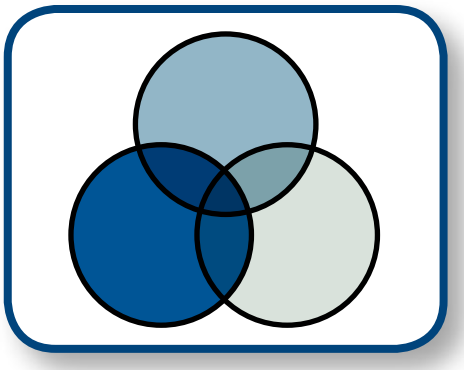
- communication boards
- text-to-speech software
- computer-based systems
- pointers
- switches

Thinking (Cognition)

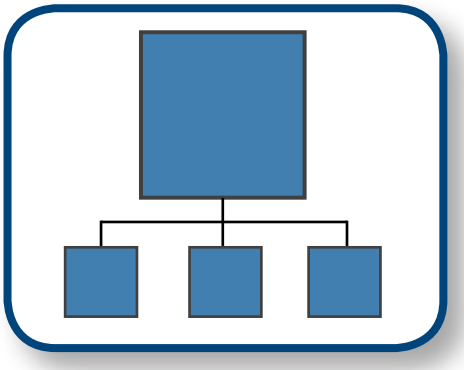
Cognitive technology helps students with mental tasks. It is often prescribed for those who have been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury.

Options:

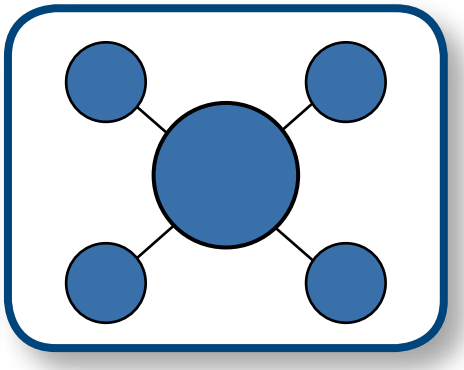
- Screen-reader: This type of software identifies and interprets written material on a computer screen and reads it out loud.
- Timers/clocks: Timers can help you stay on task and stick to a schedule.
- Reading pens: Special pens scan text on a printed page and read aloud the information. This can help a student who has difficulty reading or paying attention.
- Recorders/recording pens: These pens record and upload written notes, as well as provide audio recording of lectures. Even a basic recorder can help you by letting you listen to a lecture again.
- Charts, graphs and mind maps (also known as graphic organizers): Graphic organizing software or apps can help you organize your thoughts and ideas. Find or create visual tools that can help you see relationships and put things in order (see examples below) for projects.



Venn diagram



Hierarchical topical organizer



Bubble topical organizer

Take advantage of these apps from our fellow center, the National Center for Telehealth and Technology, also known as T2.

- Breathe2Relax
- LifeArmor
- PE Coach
- PTSD Coach
- T2 Mood Tracker
- Tactical Breather

Web and mobile apps: Technology and apps change quickly. Some apps are expensive, while others are free. To find helpful apps, search for these keywords using an Internet search engine:

- sound amplifier
- appointment reminders
- assignment manager or assignment planner
- budget
- class schedule
- dictation
- book reader
- grocery lists
- GPS locator
- mood tracker
- note taking
- manage to-do lists
- medication reminders
- recorder
- speech to text

There are many ways to get assistive technology. Please talk to your VA representative or a member of your health care team. Each VA is different; however, assistive technology services are commonly offered by the speech pathology, occupational therapy or neuropsychology departments. The VA polytrauma centers have dedicated assistive technology programs; if you do not live near a polytrauma center, your VA representative can contact one of these programs for assistance.

For information on the polytrauma centers, visit

- *http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/.*

U. S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Kosterman

Student Resources

Adjusting to academic life, especially after a TBI, can be stressful. The following resources can help you navigate from military to student life.

Getting Started

❑ DO YOUR RESEARCH/WEIGH YOUR OPTIONS

GI Bill: Chapter 36 Program: This VA program offers free one-on-one vocational and personal counseling to help you determine what educational and career opportunities are best suited for you. Services include counseling to help you decide between civilian or military occupations; develop a training program; and overcome barriers that may affect your training or employment.
For information about qualifications and how to apply, visit the VA's GI Bill website at *www.gibill.va.gov* and search for Chapter 36.

VetSuccess on Campus: The VA launched the VetSuccess program in 2009 for veterans with service-connected disabilities or a serious employment handicap. The VetSuccess program assigns each veteran to a vocational rehabilitation counselor. The counselor provides vocational testing, career and academic counseling, and referrals for more intensive health services, such as mental health treatment, VA medical treatment or community outpatient clinic treatment. To find a location go to *www.vetsuccess.va.gov.*

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB): This is a free U.S. Department of Education program designed to help veterans with academic refresher courses so they can gain the confidence and skills to succeed in higher education. The program also offers counseling, mentoring and tutoring. To find a participating school, go to *www.navub.org* and look at the top left-hand side of the page for the VUB program locator. Enter your state, and contact the person listed to see if you are eligible.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (Chapter 31): This program evaluates veterans who have service-connected disabilities to determine their abilities, skills and interests for employment. This includes training at a college, vocational, technical or business school. For information, go to *http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/* and select Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment on the left-hand side.

❑ FIND A SCHOOL

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC): The SOC is a group of colleges and universities with policies that allow service members and their families to complete degrees, despite frequent moves. SOC must agree to certain criteria, including a reasonable transfer of credit and reduced academic residency. SOC is funded by the Defense Department through a contract with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. For information about the programs offered, go to *www.soc.aascu.org*.

❑ APPLY

The Common Application: A not-for-profit membership organization for colleges and universities that hosts a common, standardized first-year application form to be used at any member institution. Both online and print versions are available for the first-year and transfer applications. For information, go *to www.commonapp.org*.

The Universal College Application: A free college admission application that has a standard application for participating colleges. This can be used at participating colleges for both first-year and transfer applicants. For information, go to *www.universalcollegeapp.com*.

❑ GET CREDIT FOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Joint Services Transcript: If you are (or were) in the Army, Coast Guard, Navy or Marine Corps, you can get your Joint Services Transcript at *https://jst.doded.mil*. This transcript replaced the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), the Coast Guard Institute Transcript and the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) in March 2013. The Joint Services Transcript provides a description of military schooling and work history in civilian language.

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) provides transcripts for airmen at *www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/*.

American Council on Education (ACE): Once you have your Joint Services Transcript (or CCAF transcript), you can search the ACE military guide to see if you can get college/university credit for any of your military training. Your transcript will have the ACE ID number so that you can easily search the database to see if your coursework qualifies. More than 2,300 colleges and universities accept these credit recommendations. You will save money by getting credit for work already done. For information, go to *www.acenet.edu* and search for Military Guide.

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP): CLEP allows you to earn college credit if you get a high enough score on its college subject exams — and your college accepts the credit. The benefit? Skip introductory classes by using what you have learned from your military training, previous coursework, internships or other experiences. For information, go to *clep.collegeboard.org/military.*

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES): DANTES sponsors examination programs that include credit-by-exam (CLEP, DSST); entrance tests (ACT, GMAT, GRE, LSAT, SAT) and others (GED, PRAXIS). For information, go to *www.dantes.doded.mil*.

Navy College Program: This program provides opportunities for sailors to earn college degrees by providing academic credit for Navy training, work experience and off-duty education. For information, go to *https://www.navycollege.navy.mil*.

❑ GET BENEFITS

DD-214 Form: This Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty form, issued when you complete active duty, is a military service record that outlines your experiences and accomplishments in the military. You will need a copy of this to access GI Bill benefits. To get a copy, visit *www.ebenefits.va.gov* and click on the "Access my documents" tab.

❑ APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Federal Student Aid: This website is an information clearinghouse on all types of questions regarding financial aid, including types of aid, eligibility requirements and information on how to apply. Federal Student Aid is part of the U.S. Department of Education. Go to *studentaid.ed.gov*.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): Through the U.S. Department of Education, this website provides an application for federally funded grants, loans and work-study programs to help you cover the costs associated with going to school. The website also offers information about application filing options and deadlines. For information or to start an application, go to *www.fafsa.ed.gov*.

Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30) and Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606): This benefit is available for active-duty service members, reservists and some veterans. It helps with education and training costs. Visit this website to see if you're eligible: *www.gibill.va.gov* and select Post-9/11 GI Bill & Other Programs.

Post 9/11 GI Bill: The VA pays benefits to eligible active-duty service members, veterans and reservists to support your continuing education goals, such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships and non-college degree programs. Learn more about the bill, how to choose a school and apply for benefits at *www.gibill.va.gov*.

Veterans

Army Career and Alumni Program: It provides transition and job assistance programs. Visit *https://www.acap.army.mil,* click on Benefits, and select Financial Aid or Scholarships from the drop-down menu.

Veterans Educational Assistance program (VEAP, Chapter 32): This program provides education and training opportunities to those who contributed to the program while on active duty. Their contributions are matched on a 2-for-1 basis. For information, go to *www.gibill.va.gov* and select Post-9/11 GI Bill & Other Programs.

Yellow Ribbon Program: Schools participating in this program help pay for tuition and fees that are larger than what the Post-9/11 GI Bill will cover. To find schools by state or to see if you qualify, visit *www.gibill.va.gov* and select Post-9/11 GI Bill & Other Programs.

Reserve Components

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP, Chapter 1607 of Title 10, U.S. Code): This program provides benefits to reservists who were activated in response to a war or national emergency. This allows reservists who were active for at least 90 days after Sept. 11, 2001, to be eligible for educational benefits or to receive an increase in current benefits. For information, go to *www.gibill.va.gov* and select Post-9/11 GI Bill & Other Programs.

Active Duty

GoArmyEd: This provides eligible active-duty, Guard and Army Reserve soldiers a way to request tuition assistance online. They also can manage their education records, including college classes. Visit *www.goarmyed.com*.

Coast Guard Institute: This website provides information for Coast Guardsmen on paying for college. *www.uscg.mil* and search for Coast Guard Institute.

❑ SEEK SUPPORT

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vet Center Programs: The Vet Centers are a system of community-based counseling centers that are staffed by small multidisciplinary teams of providers, many of whom are combat veterans themselves. Vet Center staff members provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all returning troops and veterans. For information, go to *www.vetcenter.va.gov*.

Military/Veterans Crisis Line: This service connects veterans and active-duty service members who are facing a crisis, as well as their families and friends, with qualified VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 800-273-8255 and choose option 1. They also can chat online or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support. Calls can be referred to local Suicide Prevention Coordinators and other VA providers who specialize in TBI. For information, go to *www.veteranscrisisline.net*.

AfterDeployment.org: A behavioral health resource that was created to support service members, their families, and veterans with common post-deployment challenges. Contributors include leading behavioral health experts from the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. For information, go to *www.afterdeployment.org*.

CEMM Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): This website was developed by the Center of Excellence for Medical Multimedia (CEMM) and provides information about TBI for patients, family members and caregivers. Topics include TBI diagnosis, symptoms, treatment and recovery. You also can find information about the potential long-term effects of TBI, and what you or your loved ones can do to help. For information, go to *www.traumaticbraininjuryatoz.org*.

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) Care Coordination: This program follows and assists service members and veterans who have ongoing symptoms from a TBI. Regional care coordinators make sure that people are connected with health care and information, as they move through life changes and stages of recovery. This support can empower patients and families. Go to *dvbic.dcoe.mil* and search for care coordination.

Military OneSource: Sponsored by the Defense Department, Military OneSource provides resources to help military families face everyday challenges. The support services offer 24/7 personal non-medical counseling services online, via telephone or face-to-face. For information, call 800-342-9647 or go to *www.militaryonesource.mil*.

National Resource Directory: This online directory provides wounded warriors, service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers a way to connect to specialty programs and services. The directory provides a listing of national, state and local resources. For information, go to *www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com*.

Warrior Care Blog: The blog is a portal for various resources and programs to support military members of all branches and their families. The office was established to ensure wounded, ill, injured and transitioning service members receive high quality care and seamless transition support through proactive leadership, responsive policy, effective oversight and interagency collaboration. To access the blog, go to *warriorcare.dodlive.mil*.

❑ ACCESS HEALTH BENEFITS

OEF/OIF Program Managers: OEF/OIF veterans may contact program managers at VA Hospitals to find more information on specific health care services and service-connected disabilities. For information, go to *www.oefoif.va.gov*.

Veterans Integrated Service Network: This is a network of medical centers, veteran centers and outpatient clinics offering primary and specialized care. Veterans can contact these facilities for additional support during the return to school transition. The VA maintains lists of contact information by region. To find a site near you, go to *www.va.gov* and select Hospitals and Clinics under Health Care.

Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL): A joint effort between the VA and participating colleges and universities, VITAL was created to ease the transition from being a service member to being a student. Contact your local VA to see if there is a VITAL representative working with your school. For information, visit *www.mentalhealth.va.gov* and search for student veteran.

TRICARE: TRICARE provides health care benefits and resources for military personnel, veterans, and their dependents through networks of civilian health care professionals, institutions, pharmacies and suppliers. TRICARE aims to provide access to high-quality health care services while supporting military operations. For information, go to *www.tricare.mil*.

T2WRL - Telehealth and Technology Web Resource Locator (“twirl”): This website provides information on military, VA and community resources on TBI. It supports discharge planning and ongoing care for service members, veterans and their families with TBI and associated psychological health issues. The website was created by T2 with DVBIC and DCoE. Go to *dvbic.dcoe.mil* and enter “T2WRL” in the search box at the top of the page.

❑ AS SOON AS YOU’RE ACCEPTED

In addition to the offices already mentioned in this guide, here are some other places you should go for information:

Academic advising office: Each student is assigned an academic adviser from this office to help them choose classes, keep track of their credits and make sure they meet graduation requirements.

Campus counseling center, student services office or chaplain’s office: These offices provide a place for students to talk with a counselor.

Registrar’s office: The registrar is responsible for academic records and handles registration, withdrawals and transcript requests. The office will often have an appointed veterans representative or a VA certifying official to address the needs of veterans on campus.

Ombudsman: The ombudsman investigates complaints to help those within the university’s community, which includes students, staff and faculty.

References

FAQS: How to Pay for School

1. Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.) *Basic eligibility criteria*. Retrieved from *http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/basic-criteria*
2. Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.).*Grants and scholarships*. Retrieved from *http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/grants-scholarships*
3. Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Regaining eligibility*. Retrieved from *http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/regain*
4. Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Staying eligible*. Retrieved from *http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/staying-eligible*
5. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Education Service. (n.d.). *FAFSA and VA education benefits*. Retrieved from *http://www.gibill.va.gov/training/Presentations/FAFSA_and_VA_Education_Benefits.pdf*

FAQS: Disability Support Services

1. Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. (1998). *Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities*. Retrieved from *http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html*
2. Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities.* Retrieved from *http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html*

Maximize Your Learning

1. AfterDeployment.org. (n.d.). Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. Retrieved December 24, 2012 from *http://www.afterdeployment.org/sites/default/files/library/mtbi/index.html#/26*
2. CogSMART Program, VA San Diego Healthcare System. *Traumatic Brain Injury: A Guide for Patients*. Department of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved from: *http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/tbi.pdf*
3. Department of Veterans Affairs & Employee Education System. (2010). *Traumatic Brain Injury*. Veterans health Initiative. Retrieved January 24, 2013 from *http://www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/vhi/traumatic-brain-injury-vhi.pdf*
4. Head, D., Griffiths, D.B., Molesky, J.E., Richins, D., Romesser, J. (n.d.). *From Combat to Classroom: Understanding student-veterans and servicemembers*. George E. Wahlen Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved Oct. 8, 2013, from *http://www.brainlinemilitary.org/content/2013/04/from-combat-to-classroom_pageall.html*
5. The Defense Health Board, The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, & The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine. (2010). Understanding the effects of traumatic brain injury and what you can do to help. *Traumatic Brain Injury: A Guide for Caregivers of Service Members and Veterans* (Module 2). Retrieved January 28, 2013, from the Center of Excellence for Medical Multimedia Web site: *http://dvbic.dcoe.mil/module-2-understanding-effects-tbi-and-what-you-can-do-help*
6. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2011). What VA social workers do: How social workers help veterans. Retrieved from *http://www.socialwork.va.gov/socialworkers.asp*
7. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Make the Connection. (2013). *Student veterans/higher education*. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from *http://maketheconnection.net/events/students-higher-education*
8. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Make the Connection. (2011). *Transitioning from service*. Retrieved from *http://maketheconnection.net/events/transitioning-from-service*

Manage Your Symptoms

1. AfterDeployment.org. (n.d.). *Mild Traumatic Brain Injury*. Retrieved December 24, 2012 from *http://www.afterdeployment.org/sites/default/files/library/mtbi/index.html#/26/zoomed*.
2. Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. (2012). *Assessment and Management of Dizziness Associated with mTBI*. Retrieved January 26, 2013, from *http://www.dcoe.mil/Content/Navigation/Documents/Dizziness_Associated_with_Mild_TBI_Clinical_Recommendation.pdf*
3. Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. (2010). *Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Pocket Guide (CONUS)*. Retrieved January 26, 2013, from *http://www.dcoe.mil/Content/Navigation/Documents/Mild%20Traumatic%20Brain%20Injury%20Pocket%20Guide.pdf*
4. Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Defense. (2009). *VA/DoD clinical practice guideline for management of concussion/mild traumatic brain injury*. Washington, DC: Management of Concussion/mTBI Working Group. Retrieved Oct. 8, 2013, from *http://dvbic.dcoe.mil/case-management-resources*

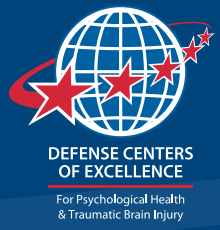
Make the Transition

1. Afterdeployment.org. (n.d.). Work adjustment. Retrieved from *http://www.afterdeployment.org/topics-work-adjustment*
2. Head, D., Griffiths, D.B., Molesky, J.E., Richins, D., Romesser, J. (n.d.). *From Combat to Classroom: Understanding student-veterans and servicemembers*. The George E. Wahlen Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs.
3. Naval Center Combat & Operational Stress Control. (n.d.). *Reconnect and rebuild*. Retrieved from *http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsd/nccosc/familiesv2/homecoming/reconnectandrebuild/Pages/default.aspx*
4. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2010). *Returning from the war zone: A guide for military personnel*. Retrieved from *http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/guide-pdf/smguide.pdf*
5. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2011). *What VA social workers do: How social workers help veterans*. Retrieved from *http://www.socialwork.va.gov/socialworkers.asp*
6. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Make the Connection. (2011). *Shared experiences and support for veterans*. Retrieved from *http://maketheconnection.net/events/students-higher-education*
7. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Make the Connection. (2013). *Student veterans/higher education*. Retrieved from *http://maketheconnection.net/events/students-higher-education*
8. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Make the Connection. (2011). *Transitioning from service*. Retrieved from *http://maketheconnection.net/events/transitioning-from-service*
9. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. (2011). *VA reaching out to veterans on campus through VetSuccess*. Retrieved from *http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2070*
10. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs RealWarriors Campaign. (2012). *Translating military experience to civilian employmen*t. Retrieved from *http://www.realwarriors.net/veterans/treatment/civilianresume.php*
11. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VetSuccess.gov. (2013). Military skills translators. Retrieved from *http://www.vetsuccess.va.gov/military_skills_translators*
12. VA National Center for PTSD. (2010). *Returning from the war zone: A guide for military personnel*. Retrieved from *http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/guide-pdf/SMGuide.pdf*

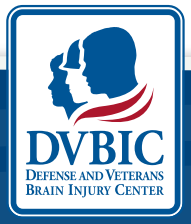
FAQs: Find the Right Tools

1. Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. (1998). *Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities*. Retrieved from *http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html*

Notes



DVBIC is proud to partner with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard on this product.



Released: October 2013

Email questions or feedback to info@dvbic.org

dvbic.dcoe.mil