Post-9/11 GI Bill Checklist

I. Brainstorm & Research potential colleges/programs/goals.

2. Research the various VA approved programs and schools: WEAMS list
3. Research possible VA approved licenses and certifications: WEAMS list
4. Gather the following information:
   - Zip code of school?
   - Is the school exclusively online?
   - Tuition Costs?
   - Does the college grant degrees (AA, BA, etc)
   - Fees Costs?
   - What course load is considered full time?

Here is a good resource if your school’s website does not clearly answer these questions.

You may also consider checking out the Department of Education's College Navigator site to compare and contrast institutions.

Also check out College Scorecard from the U.S. Department of Education’s College Affordability and Transparency Center. The tool can help you better understand a school's affordability and value.

II. Calculate GI Bill Benefits for each school & determine if the Post 9/11 GI bill or your old GI Bill benefits are better for you.

- For about 10% of veterans the old GI bill will be worth more, especially online students and students living in low cost regions (with a low BAH).
- If you have only a few months of Chapter 30 (MGIB) benefits remaining please consider that finishing the all of your MGIB benefits means you will get an addition 12 months of the new Post 9/11 GI bill.
- If you have questions about your eligibility under the Post-9/11 GI Bill or simply want to learn more about how your benefits work, check out our FAQs or ask our Education Specialist.
III. Enroll in the new GI Bill (or old one) through **VONAPP**. You will need the following to complete the application:

- Create username/password for use with eBenefits (For troubleshooting eBenefits, contact the VA main-line at 800-827-1000)
- Fill out VA Form 22-1990
- Have ready electronic DD-214 and if applicable **kicker contract** and/or proof of $600 buy-up
- Bank Information (Name of Bank, Routing Number & Account Number)
- If known, School Address, Educational Objection (degree or certificate), Date planning on enrolling
- Former College information (degree, address & dates)
- Non-military job information (type, length of time & any licensing)
- **ROTC/Service Academy/Student Loan Repayment Program information**

IV. Receive Certificate of Eligibility (CoE) in the mail from the VA.

- The CoE will tell you what percentage of benefits you qualify for and how many months of benefits you have left.
- If your benefits are wrong do not be afraid to **appeal** the decision to the VA. They are processing claims so quickly that errors are being made on a regular basis.

V. Identify & Contact the VA Certifying Official(s) on your campus.

- Don't wait for your VA Certificate of Eligibility to start this process, your submission can be verified through eBenefits.
- VA Certifying Officials process your paperwork proving to the VA you are enrolled in school so that you can get paid your GI Bill benefits. They get next to nothing from the VA for this job, but they are very important in the process. So it pays to be NICE.
- Most colleges have veterans info on their website, if not check [VA’s site](#) to see the name and contact information of your local Certifying Official.
- Fill out any paperwork the Certifying Official gives you.
- Be sure to tell your Certifying Official which GI Bill you are using. If they incorrectly enter your information into the VA system your payments may be delayed.

VI. Confirm that your school Certifying Official submitted your paperwork to the VA.

- GI Bill payments cannot be processed until your school submits your enrollment certification to the VA.
- Early submission of this paperwork is essential to timely payment.
- Check the status of your submission by calling the VA main-line at 888-442-4551.
VII. Ask about delaying billing of tuition/fees charges until the VA cuts a check.

- Although most schools will defer tuition/fee charges, a school is allowed to bill you before you can enroll or attend classes, regardless of whether the VA will be paying for the full cost of your education. That means in these few instances you will need to convince school officials to delay billing you. The Certificate of Eligibility you received from the VA will state what benefits you are entitled to and will be your best ammunition in this fight.
- Talk to the VA Certifying Official, registrar, bursar or billing department of your school and appeal to their patriotic sense of duty. Feel free to show them the American Council on Education's Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions discussing the need to defer charges for our veterans and remember that this type of deferment is already done with federal financial aid.
- If all else fails you can apply for financial aid, ask the financial aid office for a temporary loan (some schools provide this) or front the money yourself.

VIII. Tell the VA if you are changing schools & update direct deposit information.

- If you changed schools after starting to use the GI Bill please, complete and submit a “Request for Change of Program or Place of Training,” (VA Form 22-1995) through the VA’s online benefits program, called VONAPP.
- Direct deposit information can be updated by calling (877) 838-2778 (direct deposit only). You will need to provide an: 1) account number, 2) 9 digit bank routing number and 3) type of account (checking or savings).

IX. Apply for Federal Financial Aid by filling out a FAFSA form.

- Many veterans will be entitled to free federal education grants, such as Pell grants. This grant could be worth up to $5,550/yr. and is essentially “free money,” making the time spent filling out the FAFSA form well worth the hassle.
- Keep in mind that GI Bill benefits are NOT considered income on the form, but they will ask what benefit you will be receiving.
- Check out the various types of aid available through the Department of Education
- Another great resource to help make the most informed financial decisions about your education is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).

X. Expect you first living allowance check to be deposited in your account at the end of your first month of school or as soon as your claim is processed.

- Checks to the school for tuition and fees should be cut late September or early October and sent directly to the school for processing.
XI. Get college credit for your military Service.

- The American Council on Education will create a college transcript based on your military experience that you can take to your school and possibly get free college credits right away. Take 5 minutes and maybe you can skip an entire quarter/semester. Visit ACE’s Military programs site and click on “Military Guide Online.”

XII. Find other veterans on campus.

- Join your local student veterans group, start your own, or look for the local Student Veterans of America chapter.