

# Q: IS THERE A WAY TO KNOW IF MANUFACTURING IS RIGHT FOR ME?

A: YES. TAKE THE ASVAB. IT'S FREE.

MAY 2018 TECH BRIEF FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING TALENT NETWORK



## Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

Accessible and free to anyone eligible for enlistment, the US Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (**ASVAB**) is a set of tests that evaluate a far broader set of capabilities than are covered in an academic setting. ASVAB is a multiple-choice test that delves into practical knowledge of tools, electronics, shop and assembly, as well as mathematics and paragraph comprehension. In NJ, the ASVAB, pronounced "**As-Vab**", is offered to high school students in grades 10 and up. It is taken once, usually via computer.

## Labor Force Takeaway

The ASVAB is used to determine qualification for enlistment in all branches of the US Armed Forces. The "cost" of taking the exam is a conversation with one or more Armed Forces recruiters. While recruiters may offer a persuasive, heartfelt argument for joining a branch of the military, "No" is an acceptable answer. Meanwhile, the test results are quite enlightening. Fail the practical areas? Perhaps college or art school is right for you.

Advanced Manufacturing is a Conventional Occupational according to the ASVAB analysis. Conventional individuals prefer work activities that involve establishing or maintaining orderly and accurate records. They innately understand procedure and routine. They like working with machines and data, applying precise standards. They are comfortable in a setting where there is a clear line of authority and opportunities for promotion. They may also have realistic, enterprising, social, investigative and artistic traits.



# Tax Dollars Paid for ASVAB. It works. Use it.

Joining the Air Force, Navy, Army or Coast Guard is a well-known alternate career path. Today's Armed Forces require students to finish high school. Plus, they set high standards. Feelings about a military career for one's self or children may differ. Yet in NJ today, there is nothing but respect for those serving in the military. Every soldier, SEAL, band-member, ranger and sailor had their talents evaluated via the [ASVAB](#) – the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery of tests.

Unlike the SAT's which is a Scholastic Aptitude Test, the ASVAB is based on [Item Response Theory](#). The scoring method reflects the probability that an examinee, at a given level of ability, will respond correctly to an individual item with three characteristics: difficulty, "guess-ability", and discrimination (i.e. how well the item discriminates among examinees of differing levels of ability). In addition to reading, science and math, the ASVAB assesses mechanical comprehension, assembling objects, and information on electronics, automotive and shop.

ASVAB has a [career exploration program \(CEP\)](#) which considers college just one of many options. The program's list of alternatives includes starting a business, attending community college, learning a trade, taking online classes, working, volunteering, enlisting, trying an apprenticeship or attending a [work college](#). The apprenticeships highlighted are [Enstitute](#), [Echoing Green](#), [TechStars](#), [UnCollege Gap Year](#) and [Thiel Fellowship](#).

The CEP program adds two more exercises to the ASVAB. FYI or Find Your Interests is an interest inventory that measures work related interests. OCCU-Find offers a career catalog indexed by the six interest areas: Enterprising, Conventional, Realistic, Investigative, Artistic and Social. A young person's primary, secondary and tertiary interests are ranked.

**ASVAB and FYI results can provide encouragement for a teen to consider less-well-known alternate career paths, such as Advanced Manufacturing.**

Advanced Manufacturing firms may want to consider the level of scoring that one of the service branches finds acceptable in addition to a young applicant's academic grades. An applicant with an FYI result ranking Conventional first is likely to be a good fit. Depending on the firm, secondary interests that a hiring manager might value would be Realistic, Investigative or Enterprising.

The same parents and educators who push back against a non-college option, might be quite grateful to have their teens pondering a career path that is both closer to home, far less strenuous and potentially longer-term than service in the US Armed Forces. When marketing apprenticeship programs, one should consider leveraging the respect and visibility of the ASVAB.