



# THE UNIFORMED SERVICES BLENDED RETIREMENT SYSTEM (BRS) TRAINING FOR NEW ACCESSIONS

## INSTRUCTOR GUIDE



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## YOUR RETIREMENT SYSTEM

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this training is to ensure Service members receive current and effective training on the Blended Retirement System (BRS). This project revises the existing course to comply with 37 USC 356, 10 USC 992, DOWI 1322.31, DOWI 1322.34, and to reflect updated statutory requirements. This course will enable Service members to understand the basics of their retirement system, navigate available financial tools and resources, and be motivated to actively manage their finances.

**OVERALL COURSE OBJECTIVES:***Terminal Learning Objective:*

- Understand the purpose of preparing for retirement, including the components of the military retirement system and the options available through the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

*Enabling Objectives:*



- Explain how retirement planning supports financial readiness.
- Identify the key components of the Blended Retirement System (BRS).
- Understand the fundamentals of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and TSP accounts.
- Recognize how Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions are made.
- Understand how the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) affects future retirement savings and military pay.
- Understand managing retirement savings.

*Training Techniques:*

This training will use audio-visual materials, interactive discussions and supplementary handouts to support these topics.

## USING THIS GUIDE

This guide includes a script and easy-to-use prompts for discussions and activities.

PROMPT	SAMPLE	EXPLANATION
Script	<b>INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT</b>  This is a sample script.	<b>Read the script aloud.</b> The script will help you convey teaching points and transition between topics.
Instruction to Instructor	[ <i>Instructor</i> , don't read this aloud.]	These are reminders and tips for you. <b>Do not read aloud.</b>
Activity/ Discussion	<i>What are your thoughts?</i>	Activity and Discussion questions are designed to generate thoughtful discussion. Even if an issue does not seem to be of concern to your unit, all issues addressed are concerns to the Service.
Suggested Answer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a possible answer.	Suggested answers are not comprehensive. Use them to stimulate discussion, validate a Service member's responses, or present a concept not mentioned by the group.  Do not cover every suggested answer as doing so will result in exceeding the course's 30-minute time limit.
Play Video	 <b>Play Video</b>	These prompts indicate when the video sequence should be played.

**INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION**

This training will be taught in five sections:

- Section 1: Retirement Planning and Financial Readiness
- Section 2: The Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System (BRS)
- Section 3: Understanding the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Section 4: How TSP Affects Future Retirement Savings and Military Pay
- Section 5: Managing Retirement Savings

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

This training is intended for all active duty, National Guard and Reserve New Accessions with a Date of Initial Entry to Military Service (DIEMS) on or after January 1, 2018.

**AUTHORITY**

- Public Law 114-92, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, sections 631-635
- Public Law 114-328, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, sections 631-634
- Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, Implementation of the Blended Retirement System, January 27, 2017
- Title 37 United States Code (USC) 356 Continuation pay: full TSP members with 7 to 12 years of service
- Department of War Instruction (DOWI) 1322.31, Common Military Training
- Department of War Instruction (DOWI) 1322.34, Financial Readiness of Service members
- Title 10, USC 992 Financial Literacy Training: Financial Services

**MATERIALS**

- Instructor Guide (IG) and supplementary materials
- Participant Guide (PG) and supplementary materials
- BRS for New Accessions PowerPoint Presentation

- “Why Save Now for Retirement” video (if accessible)
- “The Military Retirement System” video (if accessible)
- “Thrift Savings Plan Basics” video (if accessible)

**OPTIONAL MATERIALS**

- Audio visual equipment, such as a computer and projector
- Classroom space to accommodate all participants
- Flipchart, whiteboard or piece of paper for recording comments

**COURSE TIME REQUIREMENT**

**This training is approximately 30 minutes.** This can vary slightly based on the number of participants and depth of the discussion, but it is the role of the instructor to manage the discussions and maintain focus on the topic.

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTOR GUIDANCE**

During this training, it is essential that you do not advise Service members on how much they should be contributing to their TSP, which tax treatment (Traditional or Roth) they should choose, or which TSP fund they should select.

## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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**Defined Benefit** – A retirement pension that provides a fixed payout upon retirement. A predetermined formula based on the Service member's qualifying years of service and average of the Service member's highest three years of basic pay determines the defined benefit amount.

**Defined Contribution** – A retirement plan under which the Service member and Service contribute to a member's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The total value of the account consists of Service member and Service contributions, plus earnings on those contributions.

**Discount rate** – The discount rate is published by the DOW each year for administration of the Lump Sum Option under the Blended Retirement System (BRS). It is based on the Department of the Treasury's published market rate, plus a factor that accounts for the unique aspects of military service.

**Lifecycle fund** – Lifecycle or "L" funds are professionally determined investment mixes that are tailored to meet investment objectives based on the member's anticipated retirement year. The objective is to strike an optimal balance between the expected risk and return associated with the fund.

**Portable retirement benefit** – A transferable account when you retire or separate from the uniformed services.

**Personal financial manager and counselor (PFM/PFC)** – Accredited managers or counselors who provide information on the Blended Retirement System (BRS) and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), assist with financial knowledge development, and offer strategies to support positive financial choices. This service is free to active, National Guard and Reserve Service members, their families, and survivors.

**Service Automatic (1%) Contribution** – After 60 days of service, based on a Service member's pay entry base date (PEBD), the member's Service will contribute an amount equal to 1% of the member's basic pay each pay period to the member's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account. The member does not need to make a TSP contribution to receive the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution.

**Service Matching Contributions** – After completing two years of service, the Service will match up to 4% of a Service member's contribution to their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The Service

matches the first 3% of the Service member's contribution dollar for dollar and the next 2% is matched 50 cents on the dollar. This means that if a member contributes 5% of their basic pay, the Service will contribute 4% to the member's TSP account, in addition to the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Traditional (pre-tax) account – The Service member defers paying taxes on their contributions, and their earnings, until withdrawal. If they qualify to make tax-exempt contributions due to serving in a Combat Zone Tax Exclusion (CZTE) area or a Direct Support Area (DSA), their contributions will be tax free when withdrawn, but their earnings will be subject to tax.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Roth (after-tax) account – The Service member pays taxes on their contributions as they make them, and the earnings are tax-free at withdrawal provided they meet certain IRS requirements. If they qualify to make tax-exempt contributions due to serving in a Combat Zone Tax Exclusion (CZTE) area or a Direct Support Area (DSA), their contributions will be tax free when deposited and withdrawn, but their earnings may be subject to tax.

Vesting – Vesting refers to ownership of both Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions and earnings. Service members are always vested in their own contributions and earnings and are vested in the Service Automatic (1%) Contributions and Service Matching Contributions after two years of services from their pay entry base date (PEBD).



## INSTRUCTOR GUIDE – NO VIDEO REQUIRED VERSION

### SECTION 1: RETIREMENT PLANNING AND FINANCIAL READINESS



Slide 1

**Total Instruction Time: 5-6 minutes**

#### OBJECTIVE

Explain how retirement planning supports financial readiness.

#### KEY POINTS

- Retirement planning
- Being an active participant in your retirement

[**Instructor**, the first section of this training is designed to get the Service members thinking about their retirement.]



Slide 2

#### INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

Good morning/afternoon.

[**Instructor**, briefly introduce yourself.]

Welcome to the Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System (BRS) training.

This isn't just another mandatory training; it's about your future. Now, for many of you, retirement might seem incredibly far off. In fact, you might be thinking, 'This is my first real job! Why are we already talking about retirement?' And that's a fair question. We're talking about it now because the choices you make early have a HUGE impact on your long-term financial well-being.

We are here to empower you to take an active role in your retirement planning. This course will guide you through the BRS and show you how to make the most of its benefits as you prepare for your future.

Consider this class as your starting point. Throughout your career, you'll encounter congressionally mandated financial readiness trainings at personal and professional

touchpoints. They are strategically timed to build upon this foundation. Financial literacy isn't a one-time lesson; it's a lifelong journey.

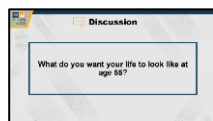
[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the “Consider” question on page 2 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

**Consider: What do you want your life to look like at age 55? (2 minutes)**

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

- ☑ Ask participants if they think they will have enough money to retire.
- ☑ What kind of life do you imagine having in the future – what would you like to be able to afford or experience?
- ☑ Ask the participants how they think they will be able to afford that lifestyle.
- ☑ What are some challenges Service members may encounter when saving money for the future?



Slide 3

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### Why Save Now for Retirement?

Stepping into a new chapter—and while you’re focused on training and your first assignment—there’s something else worth thinking about: your financial future. Retirement might seem like a lifetime away, but starting early is one of the smartest moves you can make. Why? Because time is your most powerful ally when it comes to growing your money.

Over time, things get more expensive. That’s called inflation—and it slowly reduces the value of your money. But there’s a way to stay ahead: compound earnings.

Understanding compounding is key to long-term investing in your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and can help you outpace inflation. When you save money, it can earn interest or returns. These returns, when reinvested, can generate further returns. The longer your money is invested, the greater the opportunity for compounding to work in your favor.

Let’s look at two 18-year-old new Service members:



Slide 4



Slide 5

- **Mike:** Starts contributing 5% of his basic pay to his TSP right out of basic training—about \$130/month. His Service gives him an automatic (1%) and after two years, matches up to 4% more. That’s extra money just for participating.
- **John:** Waits until he’s 24 to start contributing.

By age 62, Mike’s retirement savings are significantly larger than John’s. Why? Because he started early and took full advantage of Service Matching Contributions and compound growth.

That’s the power of compounding. Consistent contributions—especially when you start early—have the potential to result in substantial gains over time. And matching contributions? That’s money you don’t want to miss out on.

You’re under the Blended Retirement System—and that means you’ve got powerful tools to build your financial future. Start now, stay consistent and use compounding to your advantage. Your future self will thank you.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check question on page 2 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answer from the group; if not, provide the answer and continue with the course.]



Slide 6

Q.1

**Knowledge Check:** Retirement savings grow faster when they benefit from \_\_\_\_\_, because your money earns returns not only on the original contributions but also on the interest earned on those contributions.

☒ Compound earnings.

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### Summary

Retirement might feel like it's far off, but it's one of the biggest financial goals you'll ever save for, so starting early is key. The sooner you begin and the more you contribute, the more time your money has to grow through compound interest—basically, your savings is earning money on top of money. That growth can help you stay ahead of rising costs and set you up for a solid future.

We are now going to discuss the BRS, and how you can use it to achieve your retirement goals.

## SECTION 2: THE UNIFORMED SERVICES BLENDED RETIREMENT SYSTEM (BRS)

**Total Instruction Time: 7-9 minutes**

### OBJECTIVE

Identify the key components of the BRS.

### KEY POINTS

- **Defined Benefit:** A pension payment at retirement that is determined by a formula based on the member's earnings history and length of service.
- **Defined Contribution:** Personal retirement savings plan that allows Service members to contribute to a TSP account with a Service Automatic (1%) Contribution and Service Matching Contributions.
- **Continuation Pay:** A one-time, mid-career incentive bonus in exchange for additional service commitment.
- **Lump Sum Option:** An option that allows eligible Service members to receive a discounted, upfront payment of either 25% or 50% of their estimated retired pay, in exchange for reduced monthly retired pay until they reach full Social Security retirement age.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the "Consider" question on page 3 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

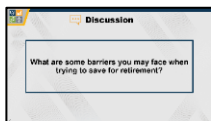
**Consider:** *What are some barriers you may face when trying to save for retirement?* (2 minutes)

[Ask for examples from the group and listen for the following responses.]

- ☒ Not enough money
- ☒ Debt
- ☒ Don't understand investments
- ☒ Afraid of losing money
- ☒ Isn't a priority right now

[You can use the following information to address these barriers.]

[**Not enough money** – Pay yourself first, make lifestyle changes that put money back in your pocket.]



Slide 7

[**Debt** – Work with a personal financial manager or counselor (PFM/PFC) to devise a plan. PFMs/PFCs are free, credentialed resources that provide help and offer strategies to support positive financial choices.]

[**Don't understand investments** – Use resources such as PFMs/PFCs, Military OneSource site.]

[**Afraid of losing money** – Yes, investing has risks. But over time, investments have the potential to help your money grow for retirement.]

[**Isn't a priority right now** – It is hard to see the future, but even small contributions have the potential to grow significantly over time through compounding, giving you more financial freedom later in life.]

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



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### Blended Retirement System

Did you know the choices you make early in your service career can have a big impact on your long-term financial future?

That's where the BRS comes in. It's the retirement plan for today's military member.

The BRS is made up of four key parts. Think of it as four puzzle pieces that fit together to build your retirement plan.

[**Instructor**, prior to covering the four components of the BRS, direct Service members to the Key Points section on page 3 of the Participant Guide. Inform them they will have time to fill in the key points of each component **after** the material is covered.]



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### Defined Benefit

If you serve for 20 qualifying years or more, you'll get a monthly retired pay for life known as a Defined Benefit. It's calculated using 2% times your years of service, times the average of your highest 36 months of basic pay. For National Guard and Reserve members, you will calculate your equivalent years of service as total retirement points divided by 360.

[**Instructor**, pause for a moment to allow the Service members to fill in Defined Benefit key points in the Participant Guide.]

[**Instructor**, there are **several key points** in the following Defined Contribution discussion that must be covered in class. Key points are in **bold** and enclosed in square brackets.]



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### Defined Contribution

This is your personal retirement savings account—kind of like a 401(k) in the civilian world.

**[Your Service will automatically set up your TSP account after you have served 60 days.]**

Once your account is created, you can access it at TSP.gov or on the app.

**[You're automatically enrolled in the BRS. This means 5% of your basic pay is deducted each month and contributed to your TSP after.]** These contributions are “traditional” or made with pre-tax dollars and the earnings grow tax deferred. You can always change your contribution election to a Roth (after-tax) contribution or a combination of both. You can adjust your contribution percentage using your Service's online pay portal. **[Keep in mind, if you choose a contribution rate at 0%, you'll be automatically re-enrolled at the 5% rate at the start of the next calendar year.]**

**[By default, all TSP contributions will go into an age-appropriate Lifecycle fund made up of professionally managed funds];** however, the choice is yours regarding how you manage your account.

**[Under the BRS, you may receive up to 4% in Service Matching Contributions on top of the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution. All Service contributions are always Traditional (pre-tax) contributions. The Service Automatic (1%) Contribution begins 60 days after your pay entry base date (PEBD) while the Service Matching Contributions start the 25th month from your PEBD.]** That means you could receive up to 5% in free money!

Being vested means having ownership. You're fully vested in your own contributions right away, and the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution after two years of service. That means if you leave the military before completing two years of service, you will forfeit the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution and earnings; however, you will still take your contributions, and their earnings, with you.

**[Instructor, pause for a moment to allow Service members to fill in Defined Contribution key points in the Participant Guide.]**

### Continuation Pay

Between your 7th and no later than 12th year of service, you may be offered a one-time, mid-career bonus payment—called Continuation Pay—in exchange for agreeing to



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perform additional obligated service. Each year, each Service individually establishes the timing, amount, and additional service required to receive Continuation Pay.

[**Instructor**, pause for a moment to allow Service members to fill in Continuation Pay key points in the Participant Guide.]



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### Lump Sum Option

When you retire, you can choose to take part of your retired pay up front as a lump sum—either 25% or 50%. But heads up: it's discounted and taxable, and your monthly pay will be reduced until full Social Security retirement age.

And with that, you now have a high-level overview of the Blended Retirement System. Speak to a free, credentialed PFM/PFC, check out your TSP account, and start thinking long-term. Your financial future is in your hands. Start taking control today.

[**Instructor**, pause for a moment to allow the Service members to fill in Lump Sum Option key points in the Participant Guide.]

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check questions on page 3 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answers from the group; if not, provide the answers and continue with the course.]

#### Q.1

**Knowledge Check: How long do you have to serve in order to keep the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution and its earnings?**

- ☒ 2 Years.

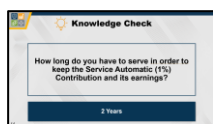
Once you've served for 2 years, you're considered "vested." That means you get to keep the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution your Service puts into your TSP, and its earnings, even if you leave the military before reaching retirement eligibility. Your contributions, and their earnings, are always yours to keep.

#### Q.2

**Knowledge Check: How many months after your pay entry base date (PEBD) do Service Matching Contributions begin?**

- ☒ 25 Months from PEBD.

The Service Matching Contributions begin at the 25<sup>th</sup> month from your PEBD.



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## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### *Summary*

Now that we have covered what is included in the BRS, let's explore the TSP in more detail.

## SECTION 3: UNDERSTANDING THE THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP)

**Total Instruction Time: 5-6 minutes**

### OBJECTIVES

Understand the fundamentals of the TSP and TSP accounts.

Recognize how TSP contributions are made.

### KEY POINTS

- TSP fundamentals
- Understand how TSP contributions are made

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



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### *Thrift Savings Plan Basics*

The TSP is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees and members of the uniformed services, similar to 401(k) plans offered by many civilian companies. Even if you don't serve a full 20 years, you can still benefit from contributing to the TSP.

Let's take a closer look at the TSP—a retirement savings account that's part of your overall compensation and benefits.

We'll break down how the TSP works, how your money can grow over time, and what steps you'll need to take to manage it. No financial background needed—just a willingness to learn how to take control of your future.

Think of your TSP like a personal retirement savings account. It grows based on three things:

- How much you contribute



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- Contributions your Service makes
- How well your investment choices perform

You can grow your TSP by putting in money from your paycheck. You can elect to contribute from 1% to 100% of any incentive pay, special pay, or bonus pay (even if you're not currently receiving them), as long as you elect to contribute at least 1% of your basic pay. If you're earning money while serving in a designated combat zone or a direct support area, you can contribute that pay to your TSP as well.

Just make sure you don't go over the calendar year (January through December) contribution limit set by the IRS, which may cause you to miss out on Service Matching Contributions.

If you're in the National Guard or Reserve and also have a civilian TSP or a private retirement plan, the same yearly IRS limit applies to all your accounts combined. Keep that in mind when deciding how much to contribute.

The TSP has a "How Much Can I Contribute" calculator on its [website](#) to help.

Managing your TSP is simple. Here's what you need to know:

- Make your contribution elections in your Service's pay system
- Decide whether to invest your contributions in a Traditional (pre-tax), a Roth (after-tax) account or a combination of both
- Choose how your money is invested across different funds. By default, all contributions go into an age-appropriate, professionally managed Lifecycle fund based on your retirement eligibility date
- Regularly monitor your account balance and performance
- Designate beneficiaries—so your money goes where you want it to

You can manage everything at TSP.gov by logging into "My Account," or by downloading the official TSP app. Both options let you:

- View your portfolio.
- Change your investments.
- Manage your beneficiaries.

Quick tip: Make sure your mailing address is up to date in your Service's pay system. The TSP uses that address for all account notifications.

And here's the best part—your TSP is portable. Whether you stay in the military or move on to a civilian career, your savings go with you.

When it's time to access your money, the TSP offers flexible distribution options, no matter your career path.

Your future doesn't wait—and neither should you. The decisions you make now can shape your financial life for years to come. Take action now to set yourself up for success later.

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### *Summary*

Let's review the key features of the TSP:

- **TSP overview:** Retirement savings plan for uniformed services, similar to a 401(k).
- **Key benefits:** Your contributions are yours to keep, even if you serve less than 20 years. Your account is portable and offers flexible distribution options.
- **Growth:** Your TSP grows through personal contributions, Service contributions, and investment performance.
- **Contribution guidelines:**
  - Elections made through your Service's pay system
  - Contribute special, incentive, or bonus pay (1-100%)
  - Know IRS annual contribution limits
  - Use the TSP's "How Much Can I Contribute?" calculator
- **Account Management:** Choose Traditional, Roth, or both, select funds, monitor accounts, and designate beneficiaries via TSP.gov or the TSP app.
- **Key feature:** Both online and app options are available to access your account and make management convenient.
- **Action:** Start saving now for future success!



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[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check questions on page 5 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answers from the group; if not, provide the answers and continue with the course.]

**Q.1**

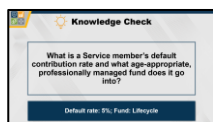
**Knowledge Check: Where do you make changes to your TSP contribution elections?**

- ☒ Service payroll system.

**Slide 19****Q.2**

**Knowledge Check: What is a Service member's default contribution rate and what age-appropriate, professionally managed fund does it go into?**

- ☒ Default rate: 5%; Fund: Lifecycle

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[**Instructor**, encourage Service members to complete the Activity on page 5 of the Participant Guide on their own time or when meeting with a PFM/PFC.]

## SECTION 4: HOW TSP AFFECTS FUTURE RETIREMENT SAVINGS AND MILITARY PAY

**Total Instruction Time: 1-2 minutes**

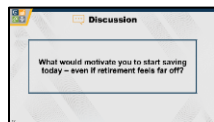
### OBJECTIVE

Understand how the TSP affects future retirement savings and military pay.

### KEY POINT

- Saving early gives your money time to grow, which is key to a secure retirement.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the first “Consider” question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]



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**Discussion**

***Consider: What would motivate you to start saving today – even if retirement feels far off? (2 minutes)***

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

- ☑ The sooner you start saving for retirement, the more time your money has to grow.
- ☑ You're already earning benefits—saving helps you keep them working for you.
- ☑ Saving early can help protect your future.

[You can use the following information to further elaborate on these thoughts.]

**[The sooner you start saving for retirement, the more time your money has to grow –** Even small contributions today—combined with matching contributions and long-term growth—can turn into a significant nest egg by the time you retire.]

**[You're already earning benefits—saving helps you keep them working for you –** In systems like the BRS, contributions, matching, and growth work best over time. Starting early helps maximize benefits you're already eligible for, instead of leaving value on the table.]

**[Saving early can help protect your future –** Even if retirement feels far off, taking action may give you flexibility, security, and more choices later.]

**INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT**

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Start planning for your financial future today by exploring retirement savings options like the TSP. Known for its accessibility, the TSP offers a straightforward way to contribute toward long-term financial goals.

While contributing to the TSP may reduce your take-home pay now, it is an investment in your financial future.

Saving early in your military career gives your money more time to grow through compound earnings. Even small monthly contributions made early in your career have the potential to grow into a large nest egg by retirement thanks to the compounding effect.

By contributing early and consistently, you're not only increasing your own retirement savings, but you're also maximizing the full benefit of your Service Matching Contributions.

## SECTION 5: MANAGING RETIREMENT SAVINGS

**Total Instruction Time: 6-7 minutes**

### OBJECTIVE

Understand managing retirement savings.

### KEY POINTS

- How to access and manage your TSP
- Portability of your TSP Savings account: Your TSP stays with you even if you leave military service before becoming military retirement eligible.
- PFMs/PFCs: Free, credentialed professionals who provide financial education and counseling on creating a budget, setting financial goals, and provide financial education resources.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the second “Consider” question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

***Consider: Why is it important to actively manage your TSP account, instead of simply setting it up and leaving it alone? (2 minutes)***

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

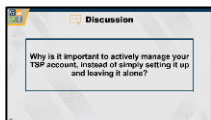
- ☑ Your financial goals may change over time. You may decide to buy a house or start a family, and those events may impact how you choose to invest your money.
- ☑ While deployed in a combat zone, you're likely earning more. You may want to temporarily increase your TSP contributions to take advantage of the extra income, especially if it's tax-free.

[**Instructor**, there are **two key points** in the following discussion that must be covered in class. Key points are in **bold** and enclosed in square brackets.]

### INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

It is important to understand that [**maximizing your retirement savings requires you to be an active manager of your TSP.**]

Active management involves making contribution elections, choosing your investment



Slide 23



Slide 24

allocation among the various funds, monitoring your account balance and performance, and keeping designated beneficiary selections current.

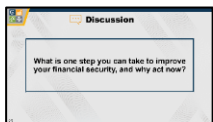
**[You can access and manage your TSP account at TSP.gov by logging into "My Account," or by downloading the official TSP app.]** Both platforms allow you to view your portfolio, manage investments, change future allocations and update beneficiaries.

If you've lost your account number or password, visit [TSP.gov/access-your-account](https://www.tsp.gov/access-your-account) for recovery instructions. Remember to verify and update your mailing address in your Service's pay system, if needed. You can also call the ThriftLine at 1-877-968-3778 and speak to a representative for personalized support.

Remember, a key advantage of the TSP is its portability; your account stays with you regardless of your career path. You retain control even after separating from service.

Take advantage of your installation's free, credentialed PFM/PFCs who can help you with evaluating your individual financial circumstances, setting and meeting financial goals, and developing the skills and strategies necessary to meet financial obligations and maintain financial readiness (and mission readiness).

**[Instructor,** ask Service members to write a response to the third "Consider" question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]



Slide 25

### Discussion

***Consider: What is one step you can take now to improve your financial security, and why act now? (2 minutes)***

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

- ☒ Set specific and achievable financial goals
- ☒ Track spending
- ☒ Create a spending plan
- ☒ Create a financial safety net or emergency savings
- ☒ Make an appointment to meet with a PFM/PFC

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



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**Conclusion**

The unique challenges and opportunities presented by military life require a proactive and adaptable approach to retirement planning. Regular monitoring, informed decision-making and adjustments based on life events are crucial for achieving long-term financial security.

It is important to remember that the BRS has four components:

- Defined Benefit
- Defined Contribution
- Continuation Pay
- Lump Sum Option



Slide 27

Your financial future is your responsibility, but your Service provides financial readiness education and PFM/PFCs to help you. Starting your retirement savings early may lead to greater long-term financial security.

Explore these resources for additional information and to better understand the benefits available to you.

- <https://militarypay.defense.gov>
- [TSP.gov](https://www.tsp.gov)
- <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>
- <https://finred.usalearning.gov/PFCMAP>
- <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>
- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>

[**Instructor**, direct Service members to page 7 of the Participant Guide. Encourage them to use the resources there for further information and to better understand the benefits available to them.]



FINRED Financial  
Counselor  
QR Code



Military  
Compensation QR  
Code



Military OneSource  
QR Code



BRS Guide QR Code



MyPay



Coast Guard  
Direct Access



Marine Online



## INSTRUCTOR GUIDE – VIDEO SUPPORTED VERSION

### SECTION 1: RETIREMENT PLANNING AND FINANCIAL READINESS



Slide 1

**Total Instruction Time: 5-6 minutes**

#### OBJECTIVE

Explain how retirement planning supports financial readiness.

#### KEY POINTS

- Retirement planning
- Being an active participant in your retirement

[**Instructor**, the first section of this training is designed to get the Service members thinking about their retirement.]

#### INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

Good morning/afternoon.

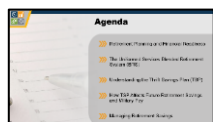
[**Instructor**, briefly introduce yourself.]

Welcome to the Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System (BRS) training.

This isn't just another mandatory training; it's about your future. Now, for many of you, retirement might seem incredibly far off. In fact, you might be thinking, 'This is my first real job! Why are we already talking about retirement?' And that's a fair question. We're talking about it now because the choices you make early have a HUGE impact on your long-term financial well-being.

We are here to empower you to take an active role in your retirement planning. This course will guide you through the BRS and show you how to make the most of its benefits as you prepare for your future.

Consider this class as your starting point. Throughout your career, you'll encounter congressionally mandated financial readiness trainings at personal and professional



Slide 2

touchpoints. They are strategically timed to build upon this foundation. Financial literacy isn't a one-time lesson; it's a lifelong journey.

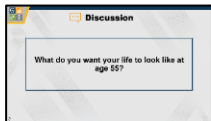
[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the “Consider” question on page 2 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

**Consider: What do you want your life to look like at age 55? (2 minutes)**

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

- ☒ Ask participants if they think they will have enough money to retire.
- ☒ What kind of life do you imagine having in the future – what would you like to be able to afford or experience?
- ☒ Ask the participants how they think they will be able to afford that lifestyle.
- ☒ What are some challenges Service members may encounter when saving money for the future?



Slide 3

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



Let's watch a video that highlights the importance of starting your retirement planning early and the potential impact it can have on your future.

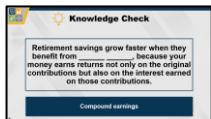
**PLAY VIDEO 1 – Why Save Now for Retirement?** (Estimated runtime: 2:00)

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check question on page 2 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answer from the group; if not, provide the answer and continue with the course.]

### Q.1

**Knowledge Check: Retirement savings grow faster when they benefit from \_\_\_\_\_, because your money earns returns not only on the original contributions but also on the interest earned on those contributions.**

- ☒ Compound earnings.



Slide 5

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### *Video Summary*

Retirement might feel like it's far off, but it's one of the biggest financial goals you'll ever save for, so starting early is key. The sooner you begin and the more you contribute, the more time your money has to grow through compound interest—basically, your savings is earning money on top of money. That growth can help you stay ahead of rising costs and set you up for a solid future.

We are now going to discuss the BRS, and how you can use it to achieve your retirement goals.

## SECTION 2: THE UNIFORMED SERVICES BLENDED RETIREMENT SYSTEM (BRS)

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**Total Instruction Time: 7-9 minutes**

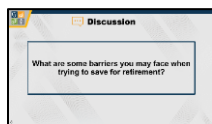
### OBJECTIVE

Identify the key components of the BRS.

### KEY POINTS

- **Defined Benefit:** A pension payment at retirement that is determined by a formula based on the member's earnings history and length of service.
- **Defined Contribution:** Personal retirement savings plan that allows Service members to contribute to a TSP account with a Service Automatic (1%) Contribution and Service Matching Contributions.
- **Continuation Pay:** A one-time, mid-career incentive bonus in exchange for additional service commitment.
- **Lump Sum Option:** An option that allows eligible Service members to receive a discounted, upfront payment of either 25% or 50% of their estimated retired pay, in exchange for reduced monthly retired pay until they reach full Social Security retirement age.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the “Consider” question on page 3 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

**Discussion****Slide 6**

*Consider: What are some barriers you may face when trying to save for retirement? (2 minutes)*

[Ask for examples from the group and listen for the following responses.]

- ☒ Not enough money
- ☒ Debt
- ☒ Don't understand investments
- ☒ Afraid of losing money
- ☒ Isn't a priority right now

[You can use the following information to address these barriers.]

**[Not enough money]** – Pay yourself first, make lifestyle changes that put money back in your pocket.]

**[Debt]** – Work with a personal financial manager or counselor (PFM/PFC) to devise a plan. PFMs/PFCs are free, credentialed resources that provide help and offer strategies to support positive financial choices.]

**[Don't understand investments]** – Use resources such as PFMs/PFCs, Military OneSource site.]

**[Afraid of losing money]** – Yes, investing has risks. But over time, investments have the potential to help your money grow for retirement.]

**[Isn't a priority right now]** – It is hard to see the future, but even small contributions have the potential to grow significantly over time through compounding, giving you more financial freedom later in life.]

**INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT****Slide 7**

[**Instructor**, prior to playing the video, direct Service members to the Key Points section on page 3 of the Participant Guide. Inform them they will have time to fill in the key points of each component after the video.]

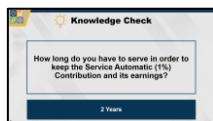


There are four key components to the BRS, which include Defined Benefit, Defined Contribution, Continuation Pay, and a Lump Sum Option. Let's watch a video to break these elements down in further detail.

**PLAY VIDEO 2 – The Military Retirement System** (Estimated runtime: 4:00)

[**Instructor**, pause for a few moments to allow the Service members to fill in Defined Benefit, Defined Contribution, Continuation Pay, and Lump Sum Option key points in the Participant Guide.]

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check questions on page 3 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answers from the group; if not, provide the answers and continue with the course.]



Slide 8

### Q.1

**Knowledge Check: How long do you have to serve in order to keep the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution and its earnings?**

- ☒ 2 Years.

Once you've served for 2 years, you're considered "vested." That means you get to keep the Service Automatic (1%) Contribution your Service puts into your TSP, and its earnings, even if you leave the military before reaching retirement eligibility. Your contributions, and their earnings, are always yours to keep.



Slide 9

### Q.2

**Knowledge Check: How many months after your pay entry base date (PEBD) do Service Matching Contributions begin?**

- ☒ 25 Months from PEBD.

The Service Matching Contributions begin at the 25<sup>th</sup> month from your PEBD.

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### Video Summary

Now that we have covered what is included in the BRS, let's explore the TSP in more detail.

## SECTION 3: UNDERSTANDING THE THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP)

**Total Instruction Time: 5-6 minutes**

### OBJECTIVES

Understand the fundamentals of the TSP and TSP accounts.

Recognize how TSP contributions are made.

### KEY POINTS

- TSP fundamentals

- Understand how TSP contributions are made

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



Slide 10

### *Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Fundamentals*

The TSP is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees and members of the uniformed services, similar to 401(k) plans offered by many civilian companies. Even if you don't serve a full 20 years, you can still benefit from contributing to the TSP.



Let's watch a video that will give you a closer look at what the TSP is, how it works, and how you can manage it to grow your money.

**PLAY VIDEO 3 – Thrift Savings Plan Basics** (Estimated runtime: 3:45)

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



Slide 11

### *Video Summary*

Let's review the key features of the TSP:

- **TSP overview:** Retirement savings plan for uniformed services, similar to a 401(k).
- **Key benefits:** Your contributions are yours to keep, even if you serve less than 20 years. Your account is portable and offers flexible distribution options.
- **Growth:** Your TSP grows through personal contributions, Service contributions, and investment performance.
- **Contribution guidelines:**
  - Elections made through your Service's pay system
  - Contribute special, incentive, or bonus pay (1-100%)
  - Know IRS annual contribution limits
  - Use the TSP's "How Much Can I Contribute?" calculator

- **Account Management:** Choose Traditional, Roth, or both, select funds, monitor accounts, and designate beneficiaries via TSP.gov or the TSP app.
- **Key feature:** Both online and app options are available to access your account and make management convenient.
- **Action:** Start saving now for future success!

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to complete the Knowledge Check questions on page 5 of the Participant Guide. If time permits, solicit the answers from the group; if not, provide the answers and continue with the course.]

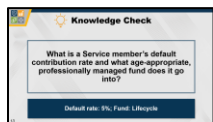


Slide 12

Q.1

**Knowledge Check:** *Where do you make changes to your TSP contribution elections?*

- ☒ Service payroll system.



Slide 13

Q.2

**Knowledge Check:** *What is a Service member's default contribution rate and what age-appropriate, professionally managed fund does it go into?*

- ☒ Default rate: 5%; Fund: Lifecycle

[**Instructor**, encourage Service members to complete the Activity on page 5 of the Participant Guide on their own time or when meeting with a PFM/PFC.]

## SECTION 4: HOW TSP AFFECTS FUTURE RETIREMENT SAVINGS AND MILITARY PAY

**Total Instruction Time: 1-2 minutes**

### OBJECTIVE

Understand how the TSP affects future retirement savings and military pay.

### KEY POINT

- Saving early gives your money time to grow, which is key to a secure retirement.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the first “Consider” question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

**Consider: What would motivate you to start saving today – even if retirement feels far off?**  
(2 minutes)

[Allow Service members to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. If the group is slow to respond, share one of the thoughts below:]

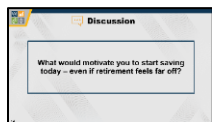
- ☑ The sooner you start saving for retirement, the more time your money has to grow.
- ☑ You’re already earning benefits—saving helps you keep them working for you.
- ☑ Saving early can help protect your future.

[You can use the following information to further elaborate on these thoughts.]

**[The sooner you start saving for retirement, the more time your money has to grow –** Even small contributions today—combined with matching contributions and long-term growth—can turn into a significant nest egg by the time you retire.]

**[You’re already earning benefits—saving helps you keep them working for you –** In systems like the BRS, contributions, matching, and growth work best over time. Starting early helps maximize benefits you’re already eligible for, instead of leaving value on the table.]

**[Saving early can help protect your future –** Even if retirement feels far off, taking action may give you flexibility, security, and more choices later.]



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## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

Start planning for your financial future today by exploring retirement savings options like the TSP. Known for its accessibility, the TSP offers a straightforward way to contribute toward long-term financial goals.

While contributing to the TSP may reduce your take-home pay now, it is an investment in your financial future.

Saving early in your military career gives your money more time to grow through compound earnings. Even small monthly contributions made early in your career have the potential to grow into a large nest egg by retirement thanks to the compounding effect.

By contributing early and consistently, you’re not only increasing your own retirement savings, but you’re also maximizing the full benefit of your Service Matching Contributions.



Slide 15



## SECTION 5: MANAGING RETIREMENT SAVINGS

**Total Instruction Time: 6-7 minutes**

### OBJECTIVE

Understand managing retirement savings.

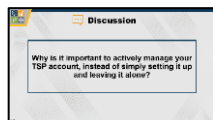
### KEY POINTS

- How to access and manage your TSP
- Portability of your TSP Savings account: Your TSP stays with you even if you leave military service before becoming military retirement eligible.
- PFM/PFCs: Free, credentialed professionals who provide financial education and counseling on creating a budget, setting financial goals, and provide financial education resources.

[**Instructor**, ask Service members to write a response to the second “Consider” question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]

### Discussion

*Consider: Why is it important to actively manage your TSP account, instead of simply setting it up and leaving it alone? (2 minutes)*



Slide 16

[Listen for the following components.]

- ☒ Your financial goals may change over time. You may decide to buy a house or start a family, and those events may impact how you choose to invest your money.
- ☒ While deployed in a combat zone, you're likely earning more. You may want to temporarily increase your TSP contributions to take advantage of the extra income, especially if it's tax-free.

[**Instructor**, there are **two key points** in the following discussion that must be covered in class. Key points are in **bold** and enclosed in square brackets.]

### INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

It is important to understand that [**maximizing your retirement savings requires you to be an active manager of your TSP.**]

Active management involves making contribution elections, choosing your investment allocation among the various funds, monitoring your account balance and performance,



Slide 17

and keeping designated beneficiary selections current.

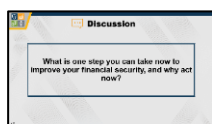
**[You can access and manage your TSP account at TSP.gov by logging into "My Account," or by downloading the official TSP app.]** Both platforms allow you to view your portfolio, manage investments, change future allocations and update beneficiaries.

If you've lost your account number or password, visit [TSP.gov/access-your-account/](https://www.tsp.gov/access-your-account/) for recovery instructions. Remember to verify and update your mailing address in your Service's pay system, if needed. You can also call the ThriftLine at 1-877-968-3778 and speak to a representative for personalized support.

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**[Instructor,** ask Service members to write a response to the third "Consider" question on page 6 of the Participant Guide. Pause briefly to allow time for this task. During the Discussion below, encourage Service members to share their responses.]



Slide 18

### Discussion

***Consider: What's one step you can take now to improve your financial security, and why act now? (2 minutes)***

[Listen for the following steps.]

- ☒ Set specific and achievable financial goals
- ☒ Track spending
- ☒ Create a spending plan
- ☒ Create a financial safety net or emergency savings
- ☒ Make an appointment to meet with a PFM/PFC

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

### Conclusion

The unique challenges and opportunities presented by military life require a proactive and adaptable approach to retirement planning. Regular monitoring,



Slide 19

informed decision-making and adjustments based on life events are crucial for achieving long-term financial security.

It is important to remember that the BRS has four components:

- Defined Benefit
- Defined Contribution
- Continuation Pay
- Lump Sum Option



Slide 20

Your financial future is your responsibility, but your Service provides financial readiness education and PFM/PFCs to help you. Starting your retirement savings early may lead to greater long-term financial security.

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- <https://militarypay.defense.gov>
- [TSP.gov](https://tsp.gov)
- <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>
- <https://finred.usalearning.gov/PFCMAP>
- <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>
- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>

[**Instructor**, direct Service members to page 7 of the Participant Guide. Encourage them to use the resources there for further information and to better understand the benefits available to them.]



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