



A U.S. FAMILY'S GUIDE

The Parent's IDF Roadmap

Your step-by-step map to the Lone Soldier path —
from the decision to serve, all the way to enlistment day.

Guidance from Col. (Res.) Sammy Tzemah
31 Years IDF Command · Former Head of Navy Training

1,000+
Teens coached

300+
Garin Tzabar prepared

60+
School partnerships

31 yrs
IDF command

Start Here: The Whole Journey on One Map

If your son or daughter dreams of serving in the IDF — from right here in the States — you're probably staring at a wall of Hebrew acronyms, forms, and timelines that nobody designed for an American family. Take a breath. This roadmap lays out the **entire journey** in plain English, stage by stage, so you can see the whole path at once and know what's coming next.

Print it. Keep it on the fridge. Come back to it at every milestone. And remember: thousands of families have walked this exact road — most of them with a guide who'd done it before.



How to use this guide

- Each stage shows **what happens, when, and what you can do** as a parent.
- The path differs by route — **Garin Tzabar, Mahal, or independent Aliyah**. We flag the differences.
- This is an **orientation map, not legal advice** — the IDF process evolves and every recruit is different. When the details matter, that's exactly what Army Now is for.

The 7 Stages — Step by Step

1

18–24 MONTHS BEFORE SERVICE

Decide & Choose Your Path

Before any form, your family picks a **route into the IDF**. The three main paths for Americans:

- **Garin Tzabar** — group Aliyah with a built-in Lone Soldier community, kibbutz home and adoptive family. The most supported path (Army Now is their selected prep provider).
- **Mahal** — volunteer service for non-citizens (~18 months); serve without making Aliyah.
- **Independent Aliyah** — make Aliyah on your own, then enter the standard draft.

Parent move: start the conversation early. Talk through combat vs. non-combat ambitions, timing around high-school graduation, and which route fits your family.

2

6–12 MONTHS BEFORE

Aliyah, Hebrew & a Soft Landing

- Make Aliyah (via **Nefesh B'Nefesh** / the Jewish Agency) or arrive with your Garin.
- **Michve Alon** — the IDF's absorption & Hebrew base where many Olim begin, building the Hebrew they'll need to thrive.
- Garin Tzabar provides housing, a peer group, and an adoptive Israeli family — the answer to every parent's first question: "Will my child be alone?"

Parent move: understand the Lone Soldier support network now, so arrival day feels like a landing, not a leap.

3

AT THE RECRUITMENT OFFICE

Tzav Rishon — The First Summons

The official entry point — a day at the **Lishkat Giyus** (recruitment office), usually 6–12 months after Aliyah. In one day they assess:

- **Medical exam** → your **Medical Profile** (scale 21–97) — which determines combat eligibility.
- **DAPAR** cognitive test — taken **in English** for Olim (see next page).
- **Hebrew-level & personal interviews** — first impressions that shape your options.

Why it matters: this single day opens — or closes — doors to units, tracks, and officer paths.

Stage 4 — The DAPAR: Your Door-Opener

For Olim, the **DAPAR** (first psychometric classification) is the test that most directly decides which units, officer tracks, and elite roles you can qualify for. The good news: as a new immigrant you take it in your **native language** (English), in a **fixed format** — not the adaptive version native Israelis face.

The score that opens doors

90

Elite intel & tech units
(8200, Talpiot, Mamram)

60+

Minimum for
Officer Training

50

National average —
opens most tracks

<40

May limit combat &
specialized roles

5 test-day truths most families never hear

- **Choose your language before you start** — confirm the English version; you can't switch mid-exam.
- **Never leave a blank.** There's no penalty for wrong answers — a blank is a guaranteed zero, a guess is a chance.
- **ADHD or dyslexia?** Upload diagnostic documents to the Mitgaisim portal at least **two weeks before** Tzav Rishon for up to 25% extra time.
- **Don't test sick or exhausted.** Once you begin, the score is usually permanent — request a new date instead.
- It measures **cognitive processing, not school knowledge** — the right kind of practice genuinely moves the score.

5

THE TRYOUT STAGE

Classification, Gibush & Selection

- Further sorting days classify candidates by ability and fit.
- **Gibush** — multi-day tryouts for elite & combat units: physical tests, sleep-deprivation, teamwork, and assessors watching **attitude** as much as fitness.
- Choosing **which** gibushim to attend — and arriving genuinely prepared — is a strategy in itself.

Insider truth: grit, coachability, and how you treat your teammates often matter more than raw athleticism.

6

STRATEGIC PLACEMENT

The Preferences Questionnaire

The **Sheelot Ha'adafot** (preferences form) is where you rank the roles you want — arguably the single most influential document in the whole process.

- Map every option your profile actually unlocks.
- Build a **strategic hierarchy** — not just a wish list — to maximize placement odds.
- Done well, it's the difference between a **dream role** and a random assignment.

7

ENLISTMENT DAY ONWARD

Enlistment & Lone Soldier Life

- **Tzav Giyus** (draft order) arrives, then enlistment day and **Tironut** (basic training).
- Your teen is now a soldier — and, as an Olah/Oleh serving without parents in Israel, a recognized **Lone Soldier** with real support and benefits.

A Lone Soldier's rights & benefits — what your child is entitled to

- **Higher salary** than regular conscripts, plus a living/rent stipend.
- **One paid flight home** during service to visit family abroad.
- **Extra leave** days and a monthly “yom siddurim” for errands.
- **Housing support** — a kibbutz home or subsidized apartment between base stays.
- **A support ecosystem**: the Lone Soldier Center, FIDF, Nefesh B'Nefesh, and Garin Tzabar — meals, care packages, holidays, and a family away from home.

What parents worry about most — answered

- “Will my child be alone?” — No. The Lone Soldier network is built precisely so they're not.
- “What if they end up in the wrong role?” — That's what strategic prep at the DAPAR, gibush, and preferences form prevents.
- “We don't speak the language / know the system.” — That's the entire reason Army Now exists.

You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

This roadmap is the map. A guide who has walked the road 1,000+ times is what turns a confusing, intimidating process into a clear, confident plan — and helps your teen reach the placement they're actually capable of.

Why families trust Army Now

- Led by **Col. (Res.) Sammy Tzemah** — 31 years in the IDF; former Head of Navy Training. He didn't just serve the system, he helped run it.
- **1,000+** young men and women coached · **300+** Garin Tzabar participants prepared · **60+** school partnerships.
- The **selected prep provider for Garin Tzabar** — the premier Lone Soldier Aliyah program.
- English-first guidance built specifically for families navigating the IDF from abroad.

Start with a free consultation

A no-commitment conversation about your teen's goals, strengths, and the path that fits. We'll map their next step together.

Call / WhatsApp 775-313-5519 · eng.army-now.com · [@armynow.eng](https://www.instagram.com/armynow.eng)

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