

## Examining the Oath

**I (name) do solemnly swear (or affirm):**

Signifies a public statement of commitment. You are accepting responsibility for your actions. (Integrity First and Service Before Self)

**That I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States:**

You are not swearing to support the President, the Country, the flag or a particular service, but rather the Constitution which symbolizes all of these things. (Airman's Creed)

**Against all enemies, foreign and domestic:**

We must always be prepared for current and future wartime operations. (Service Before Self and Airman's Creed)

**That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same:**

An active decision on your part, delegated to no other, yours alone to make. Weighing the costs, in liberty you choose. (Service Before Self)

**And that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States; and the orders of the officers appointed over me:**

I respect senior leaders and decision makers and will follow all legal orders. (All Core Values and Airman's Creed)

**According to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice:**

I will honor and uphold all military rules and regulations. (All Core Values and Airman's Creed)

**So help me God (optional):** Signifies truth and commitment to what you have sworn to in the oath. It is a call to a higher being or divine agency to assist with ensuring your own integrity and honesty. (Integrity First)

## The Oath of Enlistment

“I [*state your full name*], Do solemnly swear (*or affirm*) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God (*optional*).”

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<http://www.airman.af.mil>



## The OATH OF ENLISTMENT

**You know the Air Force  
Core Values and the  
Airman's Creed...**

**But, do you understand the  
meaning and history of the  
Oath of Enlistment?**



## Purpose

As an Airman who has taken and possibly administered the Oath... how well do you understand the history, importance and significance of the words of this oath?

All Airmen take an oath upon entry into the service. Officers take the Oath of Office upon commissioning and renew that oath with each promotion. Civilians also take an Oath of Office. Enlisted members take the Oath of Enlistment upon entry and again each time they re-enlist.

The purpose of this document is to equip you with some background information. We challenge you to take this information and educate those taking the oath on the important act of swearing to support and defend our Constitution.

When taking the oath we must better understand its significance and how it ties into our Air Force Core Values, our Airman's Creed, and our Profession of Arms.

Take this information and apply it the next time you are asked to perform a re-enlistment or officer promotion. Reemphasize their solemn duty as an American Airman!

## History of the Oath

There are many different Oaths, but all include some form of formal declaration or promise to fulfill a pledge, often calling on God, a higher being, or a sacred object as witness to truth, commitment, sincerity of your statement/promise; with an implication of divine judgment in the event of falsehood or breach of obligation.

Military oaths call on a higher power (So help me God), to perform to the best of our ability (Excellence In All We Do), a sense of honor (without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion), consequences of failing to live up to one's word. (Uniform Code of Military Justice)

Military oaths have been around since the ancient Roman times; many pledged loyalty to a specific general officer for a specific campaign.

Oaths existed in the US since early colonial days; in the 1600s, the Pilgrims established the Mayflower Compact—which served as an oath, a covenant, and a constitution.

Two years after the Constitution of the United States of America was signed, the first bill in the first session of the first Congress on 1 June 1789 was passed into law. It was Statute 1, Chapter 1 and it was titled: "An act to regulate the time and manner of administering certain oaths, which established the oath required by civil and military officials to support the Constitution".

Originally, both officers and enlisted personnel took the same oath, as required by Congress in April 1790.

In 1862, the officer oath became separated from the enlisted oath, and the word defend was added to verify their loyalty during the Civil War.

On 11 July 1868, the Oath of Office changed to require "I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States" from "bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America".

On 5 October 1962, the enlisted oath wording changed to support the Constitution.

Our oath is more than a formality that adds flair to a commissioning or promotion ceremony. It provides the foundation of our military.

