



DRESS & DEPARTMENT

THE WEARING OF ORDERS, MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

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Common sense advice for Veterans

Remembrance Day will soon be upon us. Inevitably, as a former Sergeant-Major, expected to be knowledgeable in matters of dress, etiquette and protocol, I am frequently asked by fellow veterans, civilians and active service persons alike, how to dress for ceremonial occasions and on the correct manner of wearing of honours and awards of all kinds. Well, I would give you a Sergeant-Majors' answer – by the book. This notwithstanding, as the 'book' does not cover everything, here is some common sense advice for veterans. As for those of you active service personnel, do see your friendly Sergeant-Major or RCMP Staff Sergeant, he's got the book!

Don't dress up like a Christmas Tree

Before you walk out the door in your veterans outfit, go take a good look at yourself in the mirror. Is what you are wearing appropriate to the occasion you will attend and for the organization you represent? Wearing the lapel pin the mayor gave you at last years reception is not appropriate on Remembrance Day. Don't make a spectacle of yourself; otherwise nobody is going to take you seriously.

Dress for dinner

If you are attending a Regimental Mess Dinner, should you really be wearing all those medals from the two or three veterans' organizations you belong to on this particular occasion? The same goes for any other medals worn over the right breast you paid for or were given to you by some private group. With all due respect, they are absolutely meaningless to the Guest of Honour and your host! One single CD over your left breast is far more impressive.

Wearing Undress Ribbons

Undress Ribbons are worn on your veteran's military style shirt. They are not worn on your veteran's blazer. Most veterans' organizations permit the wear of undress ribbons on the short-sleeve shirt as part of summer dress. Private purchase and association medal ribbons and lapel pins should not be worn on the shirt. Take care not to wear your ribbons upside down or on the wrong side! A rule of thumb: *medals and ribbons are worn over the heart.*



I got this one for being at the right place at the right time...



Mounting & Wearing Service Medals

Service medals are worn at appropriate ceremonial functions such as parades, presentations, general meetings and funerals. All service medals must be worn over the left breast, in order of precedence from the centre of the body outwards. When there are more than five medals, they are to be overlapped. Medals are never worn in more than one row. They shall not extend beyond the centre of the body and the seam of the left arm sleeve. Medals must be centered over the left breast and fastened horizontally at a height level with the base of the lapel button hole Navy style. They must not cover the breast pocket crest. Some veterans use a plastic pocket insert to suspend their medals. This practice rarely results in the proper alignment of the medals and therefore should be avoided. Don't attach medals in a haphazard manner or on the lapel of your blazer as this does not inspire respect and diminishes the value of the service, the sacrifice and the merit for which they were awarded.

Other people's medals

Never wear another person's medals, including a relative! This is a criminal offence in Canada. Medals are worn by the recipient – nobody else. They are yours for life. Furthermore, it is forbidden by the Chancellery rules for the official Canadian Order of Precedence to juxtapose (mix together) private medals with your service medals.

Standard Medals

Standard full-size medals are never worn with the summer dress shirt. They are only worn on the blazer and only on appropriate occasions as indicated by the host or the president of your association branch, unit or chapter. Should you be attending a full-dress parade, it is not necessary to remove your medals in the mess afterward, as some young PMC insisted I do after last year's battalion parade. The rule of thumb here is; *nobody tells a veteran how to dress – except a knowledgeable veteran!*

Miniature Medals

Miniature medals are only worn for protocol dinners and gala balls such as regimental mess dinners and the annual military or police ball. Miniatures are never worn on parade or on the summer shirt. The rule of thumb is that *miniatures are worn after sundown*. It is a matter of proper etiquette to obtain the hosts' permission to wear mess kit and miniatures. If the host has sent you an invitation that indicates 'Mess Kit' and 'Miniatures' this may be taken as permission for wear.

Lapel Pins

Lapel pins are meant to be worn on the lapel of the blazer and nowhere else. The Canadian Forces Service Insignia should be worn on the left lapel. Only one association pin of the same organization should be worn on the right side only. Unit, Branch or Corps pins may also be worn on the left side if they are not the same as your blazer crest. Wearing two or more association or unit lapel pins is bad form. Is it really necessary to wear a half dozen lapel pins representing every unit or veterans' association you ever served with at one time? Wearing lapel pins and a second badge on your beret is definitely not appropriate. If you're going to do that, go fishing!