

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS - HOW, WHERE AND WHAT TO WEAR?

Guides to Wearing Honours. This note is a summary of principles to help when you want to know what to wear and when. Various regulations and instructions regulating the acceptance and wearing of honours apply to members in all the Services and others. Once you are a civilian, your respect for the Presidential office and for tradition and your personal discipline should ensure you continue to observe the rules.

- **Source of Honours.** South African honours (Orders decorations and medals) are awarded by the President as head of state in accordance with the provisions Section 84 (2) (k) of the *Constitution, 1996*, not by Ministers or Heads of Departments. Only official decorations and medals, South African or foreign, may be worn.
- **Discretion as to Wearing.** Military personnel do not have the discretion as to whether or not to wear honours bestowed on them. They must wear the ribbons and the insignia as the occasion warrants.
- **Only Full-size Insignia.** The *Presidential Warrants* leave no doubt that only the full-size badges of orders, decorations and medals are the authentic insignia of honours. Unless the dress ordered is Mess Dress or black tie, the full-size badges (insignia) must be worn for all ceremonies, e.g., parades or commemoration services.
 - Full-size insignia are presented at investitures.
 - Full-size insignia are marked with serial numbers or the names of recipients.
- **Order of Precedence.** The correct order of precedence is from the centre of the wearer's chest to the left shoulder. The first or senior honour must be fully visible. Medals are worn to show the obverse i.e., face or front. Except for *Die Medalje vir Troue Diens - Medal for Loyal Service* our medals for the SANDF have the coat of arms on the reverse. This seniority of all official South African honours is published in one consolidated list, known as the *Official Table of Precedence*, in the *Government Gazette*. The current *Consolidated Official Table of Precedence* was published in Government Notice No. 27376 dated 11 March 2005. All medals from the President must be worn as indicated in the *Table* - whether or not they were earned in different Services.
- **Miniatures.** Miniature badges of orders, decorations and medals and buttonhole replicas are not the insignia proper. They are not named or numbered. In the past they had to be bought by recipients. They are concessions for convenience in wearing on mess dress or in civilian evening dress and their separate status is implied in *Presidential Warrants*. Miniature decorations and medals are only worn during evening functions, i.e., after 18:00. They may be worn at a suitable formal civilian event when the invitation specifies "formal" or "dinner jacket: decorations" (i.e., dinner jacket and black tie for civilians).

Mounting Styles. In South Africa there are two styles of mounting decorations and medals - court mounting and standard mounting.

- **Court mounting** of medals means fixing the medals to a backing. The backing is itself covered with the medal ribbons and looks very attractive look while keeping medals firm and prevents damage from their banging against each other. Behind the medal you can see the ribbon extending to the middle of the medal.
- **Standard or swing mounting** of medals means they are threaded through the medal brooch hanger or ring and then hang loosely from the medal brooch. They may then bang against one another as they swing free. Some people prefer the look of ordinary mounting and it is very much a case of personal choice except in the SANDF.

Manner of Mounting. Decorations and medals are to be worn side by side, suspended on the left breast from a single line brooch. Brooches vary from one to five ribbons' width. The standard and court methods of mounting are customary in South Africa. When mounted, the ribbon and medals should measure 100 mm from the top of the ribbon to the bottom of each medal (the drop). For miniatures, the drop is 55 mm.

- **Width.** The custom for South African and Commonwealth medals is that the group is no more than five (5) medals wide. Miniatures are generally 10 medals wide. If you have more medals than those to mount, then the medals overlap from first to last, with the first entirely visible.
- **Width of Brooch.** The width of the brooch depends on the number of medals worn, but the maximum width is 160 mm, i.e., the width of five ribbons of 32 mm each. It must not extend under the left lapel, nor cross over the shoulder seam of the jacket.
- **Overlapping.** When insignia exceed five they are to overlap one another with the senior honour completely visible, i.e., the first over the second, the second over the third.
- **Bottom Edges.** When two or more decorations or medals are worn, they must be arranged so that their bottom edges are in line.
- **Dress No.2 or lounge suit.** Standard size decorations and medals are worn when members attend mess dinners in Dress No.2 (Service Dress) or a civilian lounge suit.
- **Wearing Miniatures.** Wear miniature decorations and medals, on a medal brooch, on the left lapel in a horizontal line through the point of the lapel of a dinner jacket. Becketts (loops) may be sewn to the lapel for convenience.
- **Emblems.** The various emblems of Bars, Miniature Replicas, Rosettes and Clasps are affixed so that they are equidistant from the top and bottom of the ribbon. The first bar or clasp awarded is nearest to the medal. There is no restriction on the number of bars or clasps worn with a medal.

Hints for Wearing Decorations and Medals. When you are invited to attend dinners, wreath laying and other ceremonies or reunions arranged by veterans associations or the members of a particular unit the following may help.

- **Occasions for Wearing.** Occasions for wearing honours are determined by the type of event, i.e., formal ceremonial parades or other ceremonies. Invitations should specify dress and the wearing of decorations and medals to avoid embarrassment.
- **Which Medals on Ceremonial Occasions?** Former members and members of veterans associations, e.g., the SA Legion, SAMVA or the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTHs), wear their standard size decorations and medals, on appropriate civilian dress when attending ceremonial occasions, memorial and wreath-laying services. Miniature insignia may not be worn as an alternative at such occasions.
- **Wearing Medal Ribbons.** Do not wear medal ribbons alone on civilian dress on formal occasions.
- **Order Rosettes.** When decorations and medals are not being worn people admitted to orders may wear the rosette of the senior order in the buttonhole of the left lapel of a civilian suit jacket.
- **Wearing on Civilian Jackets.** Often people complain about the difficulty of wearing medals on civilian jackets because the medals distort the cloth. The problem arises from wearing medals above the pocket as on tunics. It is much easier to use the previous style of pinning the medal brooch along a line through the lapel to the shoulder. The strain is then taken by the stronger part of the jacket which is braced by the shoulder padding. A useful alternative to holes in the cloth is to sew three or four becketts (small loops) onto the jacket through which to pass the brooch pin.

- **Next-of-kin's medals.** The next-of-kin of the fallen or any other heirs are *only* permitted to wear the decorations or medals of deceased personnel at commemoration parades and services, e.g., on Remembrance Sunday in November each year. On those occasions only, the direct next-of-kin may wear the awards on the right breast to commemorate their dead. The decorations and medals of *only one person* may be worn in this way.

Foreign Honours. No foreign honours may be accepted and worn until permission has first been obtained from the President.

- **Permission.** Permission for acceptance and wearing will only be considered if the honours have been offered by foreign heads of state or governments, according to the particular country's usage, or by recognised international, e.g., the United Nations, the African Union or NATO.
- **Serving Personnel.** If you are in the Services ask for permission through official channels.
- **Retired or Resigned Personnel.** If you are out of the Services write to the Chancellor of Orders, The Presidency, Union Buildings, Pretoria asking for permission.

Unauthorised Medals

- **Private Organisations Medals.** Medals awarded by private organisations may not be worn on a military uniform or with official honours. However, the medals of some Life-Saving Societies have been given limited official recognition, enabling recipients to wear them when official honours were worn, usually on the right breast - after permission has been granted through official channels. Two examples are the *Medal of the Royal Humane Society* and the *Medal for Life Saving at Sea of the German Society for Saving the Shipwrecked*. Medals awarded by recognised private associations, such as the Scouts or military veterans' associations, are not to be worn in uniform. If they are worn in civilian dress or the association uniform they are worn them after official SA honours or on the right breast as prescribed.
- **False Orders.** There are numerous false orders on sale. Many resemble genuine orders whose names have been adopted wrongly or illegally. The only orders recognized are those subordinate to heads of state or governments. They are not to be worn with official honours.
- **Commercial Medals.** Various commercial ventures sell medals called commemorative medals. These have private origins and have no official sanction. Many are advertised and sold. They include medals for former Prisoners of War, for various campaigns and engagements for which no official medals have ever been instituted or for National Service. Periodically rumours are put out that they have been accorded official recognition. It is essential to be aware of these spurious medals. To wear them with official honours lowers the status of earned South African honours. Do not wear them with official honours in any circumstances.

ABBREVIATED PRECEDENCE TABLE OF ORDERS & MILITARY HONOURS

Serial No.	Name of Honour	Post-Nominal Abbreviation
1/1	Order of Mapungubwe (Platinum)	OMP
2/5	Gold Star for Bravery (MK)	GSB
3/6	Star for Bravery in Gold (APLA)	SBG
4/7	Nkwe ya Gauta – Golden Leopard	NG
5/8	Mendi Decoration for Bravery (Gold)	MDG
6/10	Grand Cross of Order of the Star of South Africa (Class 1)	GCSSA or SSA
7/15	Order of Mapungubwe (Gold)	OMG
8/16	Order of Baobab- Supreme Counsellor	SCOB
9/17	Order of Luthuli (Gold)	OLG
10/18	Order of Ikhamanga (Gold)	OIG
11/20	Order of the Companions of OR Tambo (Supreme Companion)	SCOT
12/22	Grand Officer of Order of SA (OSSA - SSAS) (Class 2)	GOSSA or SSAS
13/29	Order of Baobab- Grand Counsellor	GSOB
14/30	Order of Luthuli (Silver)	OLS
15/31	Order of Ikhamanga (Silver)	OIS
16/33	Order of the Companions of OR Tambo (Grand Companion)	GCOT
17/34	Commander of the OSSA (Class3)	CSSA
18/43	Order of Mapungubwe (Bronze)	OMB
19/44	Order of Baobab (Counsellor)	COB
20/45	Order of Luthuli (Bronze)	OLB
21/46	Order of Ikhamanga (Bronze)	OIB
22/48	Order of the Companions of OR Tambo (Companion)	COT
23/85	Honoris Crux Silver	HCS
24/96	Honoris Crux	HC
25/108	Bravery Star in Silver (APLA)	BSS
26/109	Star for Bravery in Silver (MK)	SBS
27/110	Nkwe ya Selefera – Silver Leopard	NS
28/111	Mendi Decoration for Bravery (Silver)	MDS
29/112	Pro Virtute Decoration	PVD
30/113	Southern Cross Decoration	SD
31/114	Pro Merito Decoration	PMD
32/115	Conspicuous Leadership Star (MK)	CLS
33/116	Star for Conspicuous Leadership (APLA)	SCL
34/136	Decoration for Merit in Gold (MK)	DMG
35/137	Gold Decoration for Merit (APLA)	GDM
36/138	iPhrothiya yeGolide – Golden Protea	PG
37/139	Officer of the Order of the Star of SA (Class IV)	OSSA
38/146	Member of the Order of the Star of SA (Class V)	MSSA
39/156	Nkwe ya Boronse - Bronze Leopard	(NB)
40/157	Mendi Decoration for Bravery (Bronze)	MDB
41/158	Ad Astra Decoration (AAD)	
42/159	Army Cross	CM
43/160	Air Force Cross	CA
44/161	Navy Cross	CN
45/162	South African Medical Service Cross	CC
46/180	Southern Cross Medal	SM
47/181	Pro Merito Medal	PMM
48/193	Merit Medal in Silver (MK)	MMS

49/194	Silver Medal for Merit (APLA)	SMM
50/196	iPhrothiya yeSiliva - Silver Protea	PS
51/199	Danie Theron Medal	DTM
52/201	Military Merit Medal	MMM
53/211	Bronze Medal for Merit (APLA)	BMM
54/212	Merit Medal in Bronze (MK)	MMB
55/213	iPhrothiya yeBhronzi – Bronze Protea	PB

Wearing Badges

- Lately South Africans attending memorial services and parades have been plastering their jackets with qualification, proficiency, unit, veteran association and other badges. Of course, one is proud of what some badges indicate. However, cluttering civilian dress with badges makes them look like cheap tourist pins.
- Several badges are meant for wearing in uniform not on civilian dress. Wearing an array of badges, including, qualification and proficiency badges, makes the wearer look so unprofessional and unmilitary. Badges are not the equivalent of decorations and medals. Wearing several detracts from the dignity and significance of the decorations and medals you are wearing.
- Instead of wearing everything select what is the single the most important to you – your regimental association badge, unique proficiency badge or other veterans' association badge - something really special for you. Maximum of two is preferable. If you wear medals as described above, place the badge high up on the lapel or on the right lapel.
- Being a civilian should not make you lose your respect for the Service in which you served and of which you were proud and its traditions. Your personal discipline should ensure you continue to observe the rules.