

*The Order of Canada  
Royal Victorian Medal  
Medal of Military  
Order of Merit of the Police  
Order of Military  
Star of Military Valour  
The Victoria Cross  
The Star of Courage  
Meritorious Service Cross  
Exemplary Service  
The Cross of Valour  
The Sacrifice Medal  
The Medal of Bravery*

# Guide for the Wearing of Orders, Decorations and Medals



THE CANADIAN HONOURS SYSTEM





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Guide for the Wearing of  
**Orders, Decorations and Medals**



### **The Viceregal Lion**

The emblem used by the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General is the crest from the Royal Arms of Canada. It consists of a gold lion wearing the Royal Crown and holding in its right paw a red maple leaf. The lion stands on a wreath of the official colours of Canada, red and white.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
About Canadian Honours .....	5
Types of Insignia .....	6
When to Wear Your Insignia .....	8
Wearing of Insignia by Unauthorized Individuals .....	9
Official Insignia.....	9
Business Attire — Daytime.....	10
Business Attire — Evening .....	12
Black Tie — Evening.....	14
Long or Short Dress — Evening.....	15
Morning Dress — Daytime .....	16
Overcoats .....	18
Uniform .....	19
Undress Ribbons .....	19
Ceremonial Dress with Decorations .....	19
Mess Dress .....	20
Methods of Mounting Insignia .....	21
Annex A.....	22
Order of Precedence .....	22
Foreign Honours .....	22
Use of Post-Nominal Letters.....	22
Annex B .....	24
Useful Addresses.....	24
Annex C .....	25
Reference Works .....	25

## INTRODUCTION

The insignia of orders, decorations or medals are the outward, material symbols of honours conferred on individuals.

The wearing of the official insignia is governed by a number of rules, which vary depending on the dress and the type of event. This short guide is designed to demystify the wearing of insignia, and to help Canadians to wear their insignia appropriately.

As a basic rule, an insignia must be worn in a way that does credit to its recipient and to the honour it represents. The rules applicable to the wearing of Canadian honours are directly inspired by Commonwealth traditions, as well as usage and customs respected throughout the world.



# ABOUT CANADIAN HONOURS

Honours are divided into three categories:

**Orders** are societies of merit, which recognize outstanding achievement and exceptional service over a long period of time. Orders usually have different levels or grades of membership and various ways to wear them according to the level. A person who has been promoted within an order wears only the insignia associated with the highest grade, and therefore must remove the insignia of the preceding grade and return it to the administrator of the Order.



Order of Canada



Order of Merit of the Police Forces



Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem

**Decorations** recognize an act of gallantry in combat, or of bravery or meritorious service in a single event or over a specific period of time. The insignia is only awarded once to an individual; if further actions meet the criteria for the same decoration, a bar is awarded and worn on the initial decoration in order to denote a second award.



Cross of Valour



Star of Military Valour



Meritorious Service Cross

**Medals** recognize participation in a military campaign or operation, service under exceptional circumstances, as well as long and loyal service. Medals also commemorate royal or national anniversaries. Bars may also be added to campaign or service medals to specify the service being recognized. On long service awards, bars denote additional periods of eligible service.



General Campaign Star



Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal



Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal

## TYPES OF INSIGNIA

Insignia of orders, decorations and medals take various forms:



**Chest Insignia:** Member of the Order of Canada

**Chest Insignia** is generally associated with the lower grades of orders as well as the majority of decorations and medals. It consists of a full-size insignia suspended from a ribbon, worn on the left side of the chest. Women with only one chest insignia can wear it mounted on a bow made from the appropriate ribbon. When more than one insignia is worn, they can be mounted on a medal bar in accordance with the established Order of Precedence (see page 22).



**Neck Badge:** Cross of Valour

**Neck Badge** consists of a full-size insignia worn around the neck and suspended from a ribbon. For all civilian dress, only one neck badge can be worn at a time. Women may wear this type of insignia mounted on a bow made from the appropriate ribbon.



**Miniature:**  
Queen Elizabeth II  
Golden Jubilee Medal

**Miniatures** are smaller replicas of insignia worn on a narrow miniature ribbon for evening functions in place of full-size chest insignia. If more than one miniature is worn, they can be mounted on a medal bar in accordance with the established Order of Precedence. Women with only one miniature may wear it mounted on a miniature bow made from the appropriate ribbon. The miniature bar must include all the miniatures an individual is entitled to wear, including the miniatures of all neck badges or breast stars. The miniature bar is worn in addition to one full-size neck badge (suspended from a miniature ribbon) and a breast star where applicable.



**Breast Star:** Knight or  
Dame of Grace of the  
Order of St. John

**Breast Star** consists of a metallic plaque, which is worn without a ribbon and attached directly to the clothing on the left side of the chest, just above the waist and below the chest insignia. The only Canadian insignia of this kind are worn by members of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at the following grades: Bailiff or Dame Grand Cross, Knight or Dame of Justice and Knight or Dame of Grace. This type of insignia can only be worn with a uniform, morning dress or evening dress (white tie and tails or black tie).





Undress Ribbons

**Undress Ribbons** are ribbons worn by uniformed personnel when the wearing of full-size or miniature insignia is not appropriate. Every honour has its own ribbon, and when more than one ribbon is worn, they must be placed in the established Order of Precedence and be arranged in rows, with the most senior ribbon at the left of the top row. Generally, no more than three ribbons are worn in a row, but this may vary according to the dress regulations of different organizations.



Lapel Pin: Companion of the Order of Canada

**Lapel Pins** are worn daily with civilian dress when the wearing of full-size or miniature insignia is not appropriate. Generally, only orders and decorations have associated lapel pins. When decorations are not worn, a lapel pin may be worn on the left lapel of the jacket or in a similar position on any other clothing. A person with more than one lapel pin may wear the most senior insignia or the one most appropriate for the occasion.

## WHEN TO WEAR YOUR INSIGNIA

Insignia are worn at all official occasions where it is appropriate, generally as indicated on the invitation. When in doubt, contact the event organizers. The wording of the invitation regarding dress may vary slightly; here are some examples:

Evening dress – decorations (although not specified, miniatures will be worn with evening dress)

Evening dress – miniatures

Business attire – full-size decorations

Business attire – miniature decorations

Full-size insignia are worn for all occasions before sundown and sometimes in the evening for certain occasions:

Parades and other military ceremonies: change of command, consecration of colours, graduations, military funerals, etc.

Remembrance Day and any other commemorative ceremonies

The Speech from the Throne

State funerals

New Year's Levee

Investitures (presentation of honours ceremonies)

Miniatures are worn only for formal evening events:

State dinners

Diplomatic receptions

Regimental dinners

### **Wearing of Insignia by Unauthorized Individuals**

Only the legitimate recipient may wear the insignia of an order, decoration or medal. In addition, although the insignia of a deceased person may be retained by the family as part of its heritage or given to a recognized museum, no one can wear them in any manner or under any circumstances.

### **Official Insignia**

Only official insignia included in the Canadian Order of Precedence, or honours (including foreign honours) which have been officially authorized by the Government of Canada, can be worn.



# BUSINESS ATTIRE — DAYTIME

Business attire is most commonly worn for daytime functions.

## MEN

Full-size chest insignia are suspended from a bar attached to the left side of the jacket, so that the bottom of the medals is just above the opening of the breast pocket.

Only one full-size neck badge can be worn suspended from a full-width ribbon. The ribbon is worn under the shirt collar so that the badge rests on the tie, immediately below the knot.

No breast stars or miniatures are worn with business attire during the day.



Single medal



Medal bar



Neck badge and medal bar

## WOMEN

Full-size chest insignia are suspended from a bar attached to the left side of the dress.

If only one chest insignia is worn, it may be suspended from a bow made from the appropriate ribbon for the insignia.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn at a time. It may be suspended from a bow made from a full-width ribbon or worn around the neck.

No breast stars or miniatures are worn with business attire during the day.



Insignia mounted on bow



Neck badge and chest insignia mounted on bows



Neck badge on bow and medal bar

## BUSINESS ATTIRE — EVENING

Business attire is sometimes worn for evening functions.

### MEN

Miniature insignia are mounted on a bar attached to the left lapel of the jacket.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn, suspended from a miniature-width ribbon. The ribbon is worn under the shirt collar so that the badge rests on the tie, immediately below the knot.

A miniature of this badge should be included with those mounted on a bar.

If the neck badge is the person's only insignia, the miniature is not worn.

No breast stars are worn with business attire.



Single miniature



Miniatures



Neck badge and miniatures

Miniature insignia are mounted on a bar attached to the left side of the dress.

A single miniature may be suspended from a miniature bow made from the appropriate ribbon for the insignia.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn at a time. It may be suspended from a bow made from a full-width ribbon or worn around the neck on a miniature-width ribbon.

A miniature of this badge should be included with those mounted on a bar.

If the neck badge is the person's only insignia, the miniature is not worn.

No breast stars are worn with business attire.



Single miniature on bow



Miniatures



Neck badge on bow and miniatures

MEN

Miniature insignia are mounted on a bar attached to the left lapel of the jacket.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn, suspended from a miniature-width ribbon.

The ribbon of the neck badge is worn under the shirt collar so that the insignia hangs 2.5 cm below the bow tie.

A miniature of this badge should be included with those mounted on a bar.

If the neck badge is the person's only insignia, the miniature is not worn.

A single breast star is worn on the left side of the jacket.



Single miniature



Miniatures



Neck badge and miniatures

Note: the same rules apply to White Tie and Tails.



WOMEN

Miniatures of insignia are mounted on a bar attached to the left side of the dress.

A single miniature may be suspended from a miniature bow made from the appropriate ribbon for the insignia.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn at a time. It may be suspended from a bow made from a full-width ribbon or worn around the neck on a miniature-width ribbon.

A miniature of this badge should be included with those mounted on a bar.

If the neck badge is the person's only insignia, the miniature is not worn.

A single breast star is worn on the left side of the dress.



Single miniature on bow



Miniatures



Neck badge on bow  
and miniatures

## MORNING DRESS – DAYTIME

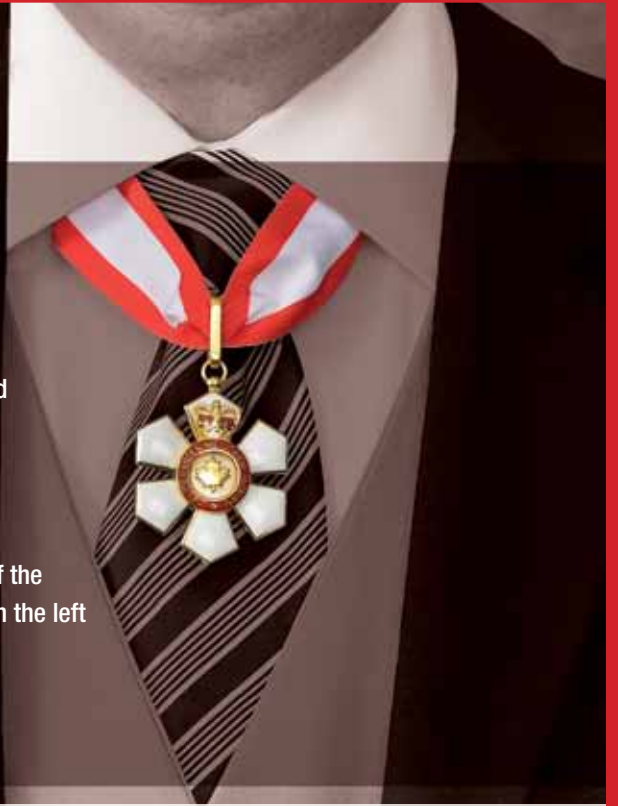
Morning dress consists of a director's coat or a tailcoat, waistcoat and formal striped trousers. Despite its name, morning dress may be worn to afternoon social events before five o'clock, but not to events beginning after seven o'clock in the evening.

### MEN

Full-size chest insignia are suspended from a bar attached to the left side of the coat, so that the bottom of the medals is just above the opening of the breast pocket.

Only one full-size neck badge can be worn suspended from a full-width ribbon. The ribbon is worn under the shirt collar so that the badge rests on the tie, immediately below the knot.

A single breast star is worn centred on the left side of the director's coat. Up to four breast stars can be worn on the left side of the tail coat.



Medal bar



Neck badge and medal bar



Neck badge with medal bar  
and breast star

## WOMEN

Full-size chest insignia are suspended from a bar attached to the left side of the dress.

If only one chest insignia is worn, it may be suspended from a bow made from the appropriate ribbon for the insignia.

Only one full-size neck badge is worn at a time. It may be suspended from a bow made from a full-width ribbon or worn around the neck.

A single breast star is worn centred on the left side of the dress.



Insignia mounted on bow



Neck badge and chest insignia mounted on bows



Neck badge on bow with medal bar and breast star

For outdoor functions such as Remembrance Day ceremonies, inspections or parades, only the full-size medals mounted on a bar are worn on the left side of the overcoat. Other types of insignia, such as neck decorations and breast stars, may be worn on clothing under the overcoat.



# UNIFORM

Individuals wearing a uniform (e.g. military and police officers) should wear their insignia as set out in their respective regulations.

Unlike civilian dress, insignia are worn identically by men and women in uniform.

## Undress Ribbons

**Short-sleeves:** When tunics are not worn, undress ribbons are worn centred immediately above the left breast pocket.

**Tunics:** Undress ribbons are worn centred immediately above the left breast pocket.



## Ceremonial Dress with Decorations

**Army / Air Force Open-Neck Tunics:** The group of full-size medals mounted on a bar is suspended over the left breast pocket flap.

Two neck badges can be worn (generally the first and second most senior). The ribbon of the senior insignia is full-width and is worn under the shirt collar. The insignia rests on the tie, immediately below the knot.

The second neck decoration emerges 2 cm below the top button hole of the jacket with a small eye stitched inside the jacket to which the ribbon is attached by a hook.

Up to four breast stars can be worn on the left side of the tunic, above the waist.

**Navy Blue Tunic:** The group of full-size medals mounted on a bar is suspended above the opening of the left breast pocket.

Two neck badges can be worn around the neck (generally the first and second most senior). The ribbon of the senior insignia is full-width and is worn under the shirt collar. The insignia rests on the tie, immediately below the knot.

The second neck decoration is worn immediately below the first (the ribbon passing under the senior one) with the lower part of the badge resting on the cross of the lapel of the jacket.

Up to four breast stars can be worn on the left side of the tunic, above the waist.

**High-Collared Tunics and Jackets such as the Navy White Tunic or the RCMP Tunic:** The group of full-size medals mounted on a bar is suspended above the pocket of the left breast.

Three neck badges can be worn. The most senior insignia is worn at the neck suspended from a full-width ribbon with the ribbon worn inside the collar of the tunic in such a way that the badge hangs out with approximately 2 cm of the ribbon protruding from the base of the collar.

The second and third decorations are worn with a full-width ribbon protruding from the second and third button holes respectively (the ribbon attached to the interior of the tunic by an eyelet).

Up to four breast stars can be worn on the left side of the tunic, above the waist.

## **Mess Dress**

Mess dress consists of a dinner jacket, waistcoat or cummerbund. It is worn at formal functions such as mess dinners, dining-ins, formal balls and any other function where the invitation states mess dress.

Only one full-size neck decoration can be worn. It is suspended from a ribbon of miniature-width around the neck. The ribbon is worn under the shirt collar so the insignia hangs 2.5 cm below the black bow tie.

A miniature of this same insignia should be included with those mounted on a bar attached to the left side of the jacket.

If the neck badge is the person's only insignia, the miniature is not worn.

Up to four breast stars can be worn on the left side of the jacket, above the waist.

**Army / Air Force Mess Dress:** The miniatures are worn on the left breast, centred between the seam of the sleeve and the edge of the lapel, 11.5 cm down from the shoulder seam.

**Navy Mess Dress:** The miniatures are worn centred on the left lapel, 1 cm below the horizontal edge of the lapel.

## METHODS OF MOUNTING INSIGNIA

There are various methods for mounting insignia, but they all serve a common purpose, which is to present insignia in an orderly manner. Insignia must always be mounted in accordance with the current Order of Precedence.

Two methods are possible: swing mounting and court mounting. Both methods apply to full-size insignia and to miniatures, and both mount the insignia on a medal bar in a homogeneous group, with all insignia having the same length, easing installation and wearing.

**Swing mounting** is the traditional method of mounting and is used by many veterans. The insignia ribbons are sewn to a metal bar brooch to pin the group to the clothing. The length of the ribbons is adjusted so that the bottom edge of the insignia form a straight line, but the insignia hang freely from their ribbons.

**Court mounting** has become the preferred method of mounting since the Second World War. The insignia ribbons are mounted to a hard panel, and the insignia are then securely attached to the base of the panel. Court mounting is mandatory for members of the Canadian Forces.

Generally, no more than five full-size insignia are mounted side by side, and where six or more are worn, it will be necessary to overlap the ribbons, so as to minimize the overall width of the group. With miniatures, it is generally necessary to overlap where ten or more are worn. When insignia are overlapped, the insignia that has precedence must always be fully visible, with the next ones partially hidden: the more insignia there are, the more they will have to overlap.

Women have the option of having one insignia mounted on a bow made from the appropriate ribbon.

Mounting medals is an art which may be relatively complex depending on the number and type of insignia. It is preferable to consult specialists in this field to ensure that the final product will meet prevailing standards. Most military tailors provide such a service. Please contact the Chancellery of Honours for more information on service providers.



Swing Mounting



Insignia Mounted on Bow



Court Mounting  
Non-overlapping Medals



Court Mounting  
Overlapping Medals

## Order of Precedence

Insignia of all types must be worn in accordance with the Order of Precedence, which is available on the Governor General's Web site at [www.gg.ca/honours](http://www.gg.ca/honours).

## Foreign Honours

Commonwealth or foreign honours that have been approved for wear by the Government of Canada must generally be worn after all Canadian honours, and in order of the date of the approval granted. As the rules regarding foreign honours can be very complex, it is advisable to consult the appropriate authorities in case of doubt, using the contact information in the *Useful Addresses* section.

## Use of Post-Nominal Letters

Post-nominal letters are groups of letters placed after an individual's name to indicate the honours that person has received. Examples include the following:

Companion of the Order of Canada	C.C.
Officer of the Order of Canada	O.C.
Member of the Order of Canada	C.M.
Commander of the Order of Military Merit	C.M.M.
Meritorious Service Cross	M.S.C.
Canadian Forces' Decoration	C.D.

Only the admission to orders and the awarding of decorations confers the use of post-nominal letters.

Each group of letters is separated by a comma and periods should be used between each letter of the orders and decorations. For example:

Mr. Oscar E. Peterson, C.C., C.Q., O.Ont.

Post-nominal letters may be used on all formal documents, correspondence, biographies and business cards. In correspondence, the initials appear on the letterhead and in the address.

Only officially recognized post-nominal letters may be used, and they must be placed in a specific order, as indicated in the Order of Precedence.



**Privy Councillors:** Members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada are entitled to the use of the post-nominal letters "P.C." These initials have precedence over all Crown honours with two notable exceptions: the Victoria Cross ("V.C.") and the Cross of Valour ("C.V."). Recipients of the V.C. or the C.V. shall place their post-nominal letters ahead of P.C.

**Order of St. John:** Post-nominal letters related to the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem are authorized only for internal use of the Order.

**Before July 1, 1972:** Post-nominal letters signifying admission to a British order (O.B.E., M.B.E., etc.) or the award of a British decoration (M.C., D.F.C., M.M., etc.) may be included with Canadian post-nominal letters in accordance with a special joint order of precedence available on the Governor General's Web site, if the admission or award took place before July 1, 1972. For example:

The Right Honourable Vincent Massey, P.C., C.H., C.C.



### Useful Addresses

To obtain information on the Canadian Honours System, to make a nomination, to obtain replacements for a Canadian order, decoration or medal, or for information regarding the approval of Commonwealth or foreign honours for Canadian citizens, contact:

The Chancellery of Honours  
Rideau Hall  
1 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A1  
Phone: 1-800-465-6890  
Fax: 613-991-1681  
Email: [info@gg.ca](mailto:info@gg.ca)  
[www.gg.ca](http://www.gg.ca)

To obtain information on military honours or to make an application for or obtain a replacement of modern Canadian, United Nations or NATO medals, contact:

Directorate of Honours and Recognition  
National Defence Headquarters  
101 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0K2  
Phone: 1-877-741-8332  
Fax: 613-990-4390  
<http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhr-ddhr/>

To make an application for or to obtain replacements of Second World War medals, as well as those related to the Korean conflict (with the exception of the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea), contact:

Honours and Awards  
Veterans Affairs Canada  
66 Slater Street, Suite 1411  
Ottawa ON K1A 0P4  
Phone: 1-877-995-5003  
[www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca)

For information on the RCMP's Uniform and Dress Manual, contact:

RCMP  
Honours & Recognition  
73 Leikin Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0R2  
Email: [Honours\\_Recognition.NHQA.NCR\\_LEIKIN@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:Honours_Recognition.NHQA.NCR_LEIKIN@rcmp-grc.gc.ca)

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