



**Order of St. George**  
**Grand Priory of the United Kingdom**

**Office of the Director of Membership**  
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**THE UNITED KINGDOM PROTOCOLS and PROCEDURES for WEARING HONOURS, DECORATIONS and MEDALS  
for DIFFERENT EVENTS.**

**Applicable to UK Nationals and the Overseas Territories**

**(Not applicable to Foreign Nationals unless specific to the Order of St George. Foreign nationals will adhere to their own countries protocols and procedures)**

**Please note that the Order has a strict policy in regard to wearing of its regalia and the wearing of the regalia of other orders. That policy must be adhered to at all times, details of which are on this website and sent to all new members.**

British honours system is a means of rewarding individuals' personal bravery, achievement, or service to the United Kingdom and the British Overseas Territories. The system consists of three types of award - honours, decorations and medals:

Honours are used to recognise merit in terms of achievement and service;

Decorations tend to be used to recognise specific deeds;

Medals are used to recognise service on a particular operation or in a specific theatre, long or valuable service, and good conduct.

Honours that are not awarded by the Queen and/or the United Kingdom and the British Overseas Territories have different protocols applied in relation to when and how they can be worn. *The honours of the Order of St George currently fall into this category.*

**Which British honours, decorations and medals should be worn first?**

The Order of Wear places the Victoria Cross at the top of the list, followed by the George Cross. The various orders of knighthood are then arranged in order of date of creation and then by rank of order. For example, a Knight Grand Cross or Dame Grand Cross (GBE) always precedes a Knight Commander (KBE) or Dame Commander (DBE) in the Order of the British Empire.

Where honours within an order have the same rank, precedence is given to the honour which was received earliest. Single-rank honours, such as the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Distinguished Service Order and the Imperial Service Order are placed at positions of seniority on the Order of Wear.

The Order of Wear is currently split into the following categories (in order of precedence):

- Victoria Cross
- George Cross
- British Orders of Knighthood

- Decorations, Medals for Gallantry and Distinguished Conduct
- Badge of Honour
- Campaign Medals and Stars
- Polar Medals
- Imperial Service Medal
- Police Medals for Valuable Service
- Jubilee, Coronation and Durbar Medals
- Efficiency and Long Service Decorations and Medals
- Commonwealth Realm's Orders, Decorations and Medals
- Other Commonwealth Members Orders, Decorations and Medals
- Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals

It should be noted that official decorations, medals or emblems that you have been awarded should only be worn if you are entitled to wear them and have been approved for acceptance and wear.

If you are entitled to wear a deceased family member's medals then you may wear them on the right breast NOT the left. You would only normally wear them for Services of Remembrance.

#### **Commemorative medals**

Commemorative medals that you are entitled to wear are worn below other honours, decorations and medals.

Commemorative medals have usually been manufactured to commemorate some form of service, usually where no recognition has been previously given. They have grown in popularity over the last twenty five years or so.

Many veterans proudly wear commemorative medals underneath their official military medals or as stand-a-lone medals.

Veterans belonging to the Royal British Legion or other similar organisations are strongly advised to check they are allowed to wear commemorative medals when on parade or acting as a flag bearer.

**Take Care - Unofficial and purchased medals that you have no right to wear should not be worn with official orders, decorations and medals.** You can guarantee that there is always someone who will notice what you wear and either let you know or report it. The Royal British legion are particularly observant.

#### **Foreign Medals**

British Subjects are not allowed to wear the medals of other countries. An application can be made to allow the wearing of foreign medals by British subjects; this can be granted as restricted (instructed where the medal is to be worn) or unrestricted but in the Order of Precedence. If you look at members of the British Royal Family and other high ranking individuals you will note some approved, unrestricted foreign decorations and medals are worn.

## Protocols for wearing UK medals and honours for different event and functions

In most English-speaking countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, medals are mounted in a single row on a medal bar and worn on the left lapel or breast.

In all cases, if you have more orders than the guidelines permit to be worn at once, you should wear the most senior orders.

Well organised events will let you know what style of dress and regalia is expected. If in doubt as

### Service Personnel – Uniformed Civilian and Military.

Full medals are only worn on ceremonial uniforms (ribbons on service uniform), miniature versions with formal evening-dress (mess kit). Service personnel cannot wear their medals out of uniform. Veterans and retirees can.

### Morning Dress

According to Debrett's New Guide to Etiquette and Modern Manners, decorations are today rarely worn with morning dress and are largely restricted to special official public functions, religious services connected with the orders of chivalry (such as the Order of St George) or grand memorial services (such as Remembrance Sunday). In these cases whoever is organizing the event should indicate whether decorations are appropriate.

Wear your full sized medals on a mounting bar over the left lapel of your jacket/tailcoat so that the bottom is just above the breast pocket opening. You can wear up to 4 stars on the left breast of your jacket if you are wearing a tailcoat, if not one breast star. You can wear a full-sized neck jewel suspended on a **full-width ribbon**, if you choose to display one. The ribbon goes under your collar and hangs just below the tie knot. **This is the only time a full-width ribbon is worn apart from at the time of your investiture.**

These days, a dark suit is generally acceptable rather than morning dress.

### Black Tie (Dinner Jacket)

**Black tie attire is generally reserved for social functions and some evening events.**

Miniature medals and up to two other decorations (neck jewel and breast star) to wear with black tie attire.

Remember to mount all insignia on a medal bar situated over the left lapel or above the left pocket of your jacket.

A single star can be worn on the left breast of your jacket or just below, as well.

If you have one, you can also display a full-sized neck jewel suspended by a **miniature-width ribbon**. The badge should itself fall just below a bow tie or the knot of a long tie.

Black tie wear options for women are more varied. They typically wear floor-length dresses such as evening gowns, but mid-length cocktail dresses are also accepted for these events. Women also carry clutches and shawls.

Women wear full-sized honours etc suspended from a bow or bows, which is mounted to the left lapel. Women who are entitled can also wear a sash.

### White Tie (Evening Dress)

**White tie is the most formal dress code and men wear a tailcoat. It is usually used for formal weddings, state dinners, and other ceremonial or official events. White tie is typically worn in the evening.**

You can wear wide array of decorations for white tie attire. White tie attire, also known as “evening dress,” is the most formal style of civilian dress.

Arrange your various medals on a mounting bar positioned on the left lapel or above the left pocket, the same way you would with black tie attire.

Along with these insignia, you have the option of affixing up to 4 stars to the left breast pocket of your tailcoat and slightly below. If desired, you can wear a full-sized neck Jewel suspended on a **miniature-width ribbon.**

Since it's only worn for very special occasions, you are permitted to sport more decorations than you are with standard black tie attire.

If you're expected to wear a sash (Knight Grand Cross) with white tie attire, drape it over the appropriate shoulder (as dictated by the type of sash) between your waistcoat and tailcoat.

There is not much of a difference in women's attire for white tie events. They can wear floor length dresses such as ball gowns or evening dresses. Elbow-length white gloves are also worn by some women as accessories.

### National Dress – Kilt etc.

For members who are entitled to and choose to wear their **National Dress** then the specific protocols and procedures for wearing such will apply.

The rules for medals and honours are for those above unless specific to a member's country of citizenship - Foreign Nationals.

### In Europe.

Throughout much of Europe, white tie is the only attire considered formal enough to display one's honours. That is why in countries such as Italy, Germany, France, and Spain it is generally considered socially awkward to adorn your attire with a sash, star or neck jewel. To avoid being taken for a self-important person, you may want to consider the custom of confining one's black-tie decorations to a rosette for women or for men, less traditionally, a maximum of six miniature medals, but that is a lot.

Daytime affairs grand enough to warrant full decorations will specifically call for Court Dress, High Uniform or even White Tie. If a man chooses to wear morning dress to such an occasion it would be prudent to limit himself to two miniature medals unless protocols have been stated.

For private functions limited to members of specific societies and orders, the dress code of that society or order may apply.

### Private Functions and Events of the Order of St George.

For private functions and events organised by the Order you can wear military, civilian and the Order's honours, decorations and awards, appropriately displayed.

### **The Legal Aspect.**

While it is not an offence to own medals which have not been awarded to you, it is illegal under section 197 of the Army Forces Act 2006 to use these to pretend to be a member of the armed forces.

The act makes wearing any military decoration, badge, wound stripe or emblem without authority a criminal offence. It is also illegal to wear a replica "as to be calculated to deceive", and to falsely represent yourself as someone entitled to wear any such award.

### **Further Guidance.**

*Members of the Order of St George who are still in military service or uniformed civilian service (Police, Fire etc) may not currently wear the Order of St George's honours or medals with their uniform in public or when on duty.*

*\*If you are not in military or uniformed dress but still in service then you may choose to wear the Order of St George honours, decorations and medals but only if you have been awarded them.*

*\*Different rules apply to veterans and those retired from service – civilian and military - where both could be worn (when not in their uniform if they are entitled to wear one as a veteran or retiree) with permission from the organiser and the Grand Prior of the Order; such as the RAFA Wings Ball we attend.*

*\*Members of the Order who are not veterans or retired uniformed civilian or military personnel can wear the honours, decorations and medals awarded by the Order. For official national, regional and locally organised events, it is polite to seek permission from the organiser and the Grand Prior.*

*\* We have had permission from the Protocol Officer at the Royal Hospital Chelsea to wear our regalia at their events, including Founders Day. This is in part because of our connection to the RHC.*

*\* There may be local customs eg City Livery /Guild of Freemen events where livery and Rotary jewels are often worn. Our regalia can acceptably be worn as well unless the invitation is more restrictive.*

*\* For all events, if not already known, members are advised to contact the organisers in advance if protocols have not been stated and also seek the advice of the Grand Prior through the Office of the Director of Membership before wearing honours, decorations and medals.*

*\* Whilst the Order is recognised and has UN recognition as a NGO, until such time as members are advised by the Grand Prior that we have either Royal Patronage (UK or Foreign) or Official Government Recognition (UK or Foreign) then the protocol in bold above MUST apply at all times.*

*\* Medals awarded by societies, associations or clubs such as the Orders and Medals of Merit of the Scout and Guide Association, must only be worn on the right breast and not with military or civilian uniform. If you were in your Scout Leader uniform then you could wear the neck decoration such as the Wolf and Acorn awards if you are entitled to do so. The 'right breast' protocol applies in and out of uniform. Similar protocols will apply to other groups where a uniform forms part of your membership.*

### **Seeking Advice**

Members who are not sure when and how to wear medals and honours for different functions are strongly advised to contact the Director of Membership. Please allow 48 hours for a response.

*Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information and advice given here, if inaccuracies are noted please inform the Director of Membership stating the inaccuracy and the correct protocol or procedure and your source.*

**The basics without honours, decorations or medals.**



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