



Caring for your medals

Medals are valued possessions which reflect service and achievement. The following information is advice regarding the care of your medals. Expert advice on the treatment of medals can be obtained from qualified sources such as jewellers or professional medal mounters.

Storing medals

It is recommended that medals be stored in a clean and dry area such as boxes made of hoop pine plywood or acid-free cardboard. Unmounted medals should be individually wrapped in acid-free tissue paper, or undyed soft cotton or linen to prevent them from touching and possibly scratching.

Medals should be kept away from extremes of temperature, humidity and light. Damp conditions can cause the metal of medals to corrode, and the fabrics to rot. High temperatures and a very dry environment, and light damage can make fabric brittle and weak.

If the medals are to be worn, it is best they are properly mounted. 'Court mounting' is the preferred style as medals are fixed so that they do not swing freely to hit each other and possibly chip. Professional medal mounters are listed in the Yellow Pages and online search directories.

Replica medals can be purchased to be worn or displayed, while original medals are stored safely.

Cleaning medals

Cleaning medals should only be done when necessary as the process may damage the sharpness of the design, or remove metal from the surface.

Some chemicals used for cleaning may irritate if they touch the skin or are inhaled. It is recommended that the safety instructions are read prior to use and to try the cleaning method on a small area of the medal first – such as part of the edge – before cleaning the whole medal. Take care not to damage the medal ribbon during the cleaning process.

It is recommended that a non-acidic cleaner, or damp cloth be used to clean most medals. A non-abrasive pencil eraser is also a good choice for cleaning up marks on medals. Medals which have a silver appearance, such as the Australian Defence Medal, can be cleaned by using a silver polishing cloth if required.



*Australian Defence Medal
A silver polishing cloth can be used to clean medals like this.*



Cleaning medal ribbons

Medal ribbons can be cleaned gently with a soft brush and vacuum cleaner.

Use the smallest nozzle of your vacuum cleaner and cover it with a piece of open-weave fabric, such as net curtain or gauze bandage, to prevent damage to the ribbon. Set the cleaner to its lowest suction level and gently vacuum the ribbon, using the soft brush to loosen ingrained dirt.

If the ribbon requires further cleaning, or is badly deteriorated and needs to be replaced, a medal dealer/mounter will be able to assist. Medal dealers/mounters are listed in the Yellow Pages and in online search directories.

Our history is in your care

Australians can be proud that in their major institutions there are comprehensive collections of items of all types that tell of the service, sacrifice, courage, hopes and fears of our forebears in time of war and conflict. They can be proud, too, that individual families continue to hold and cherish items that tell of the experiences of relatives and friends.

Usually the most appropriate place for wartime memorabilia to be kept is within the family. However there may come a time when there is no one left in the family to receive the items, or the desire to keep such pieces has faded. When this is the case, the memorabilia ought not to be thrown away.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs Commemorations Branch (<https://www.dva.gov.au/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves>) can assist in arranging for memorabilia items to be presented to a suitable collecting institution, museum or historical organisation.

Should you wish to bequeath your memorabilia items to a museum or heritage collection, you will need to include instructions to this effect in your will. If you are unsure, consult your legal adviser.

For further information call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) or visit www.defence.gov.au/Medals/